

BEFORE THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of Willowbrook Solar I, LLC for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need)))))	Case No. 18-1024-EL-BGN
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DIRECT TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW ROBINSON

Q.1. Please state your name, title and business address.

A.1. My name is Matthew Robinson. I am a Visualization Project Manager for EDR.
My business address is 217 Montgomery Street, Suite 1000, Syracuse, New York 13202.

Q.2. What are your duties as a Visualization Project Manager?

A.2. As Visualization Project Manager I am responsible for overseeing and managing various visual impact assessment projects from start to finish. This includes identification of visually sensitive resources, in-field evaluation and documentation, visibility analyses, development of detailed and accurate computer renderings for visual simulations, creation of mitigation concepts and final report production.

Q.3. What is your educational and professional background?

A.3. I graduated from the University of Vermont in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and from Cornell University in 2010 with a Master's in Landscape Architecture. After the completion of each degree I worked for LandWorks in Middlebury, Vermont. I started as an intern eventually making my way up to an Associate Landscape Architect and Project Manager. At LandWorks I managed a variety of visual impact assessment, visual mitigation, and other landscape architecture and planning projects.

Q.4. On whose behalf are you offering testimony?

1 **A.4.** I am testifying on behalf of the Applicant, Willowbrook Solar I, LLC, in support
2 of its application filed in Case No. 18-1024-EL-BGN.

3 **Q.5. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

4 **A.5.** The purpose of my testimony is to describe the Visual Resource Assessment
5 (“VRA”) my firm undertook on behalf of the Applicant and to summarize the results of
6 that assessment.

7 **Q.6. Please describe the study that you and your firm undertook on behalf of the**
8 **Applicant.**

9 **A.6.** A VRA was prepared to satisfy those portions of the requirements of OAC
10 Chapter 4906-04-08(D)(4) that relate to the identification of visually sensitive resources
11 and potential visual impacts. Our firm conducted background research to compile a list of
12 any potential visually sensitive resources located in the visual study area (a 5-mile radius
13 area around the Project site). A viewshed analysis of Project visibility was performed to
14 identify those locations within the visual study area where there is potential for the
15 Project to be seen from ground-level vantage points. The viewshed analysis included
16 identifying potentially visible areas on viewshed maps and verifying visibility in the
17 field. This analysis incorporated the screening effect of structures and vegetation, as
18 captured in the Ohio Statewide Imagery Program’s 2007 lidar data for Brown and
19 Highland Counties. After the visually sensitive resources were identified and the
20 viewshed visibility was confirmed through field reconnaissance, visual simulations were
21 produced from a selected subset of six viewpoints that represent the different distance
22 zones, user groups and landscape similarity zones found throughout the visual study area.
23 The simulations were then evaluated against the existing conditions and used to

1 characterize the type and extent of visual impact likely to result from construction of the
2 Project. Conclusions were then drawn from the results of the viewshed analysis, field
3 review and evaluation of the visual simulations. .

4 **Q.7. What was your role in the VRA conducted for the Application?**

5 **A.7.** My role was to conduct and/or provide management of the various aspects of the
6 VRA, including 1) planning, scheduling, organization, and management of desktop
7 investigations, 2) conducting field reviews, including obtaining photos for use in the
8 development of visual simulations, 3) performing review and quality assurance on the
9 study products (e.g., report, figures, tables, and visual simulations), and 4) providing
10 communication with the Applicant regarding the study's progress, results and Project
11 implications.

12 **Q.8. What were the results of the VRA you performed?**

13
14 **A.8.** The viewshed analysis indicated that the proposed solar panels could potentially
15 be visible from approximately 5.8% of the 5-mile radius visual study area, and the
16 proposed substation would potentially be visible from only 1.4% of the visual study area.
17 Visibility is concentrated within the Project Area and adjacent open fields. The viewshed
18 analyses indicates that the Project will generally not be visible from areas located more
19 than 2 miles away.
20 Field review suggested that the Project will be clearly visible from roadways and
21 residences adjacent to the Project Area, especially where the panels are proposed to be
22 sited in open fields directly adjacent to public roadways. However, field review also
23 confirmed viewshed analysis results indicating minimal Project visibility beyond 0.5 mile
24 from the proposed panels.

Visual simulations from selected viewpoints where the Project is proposed in open agricultural fields adjacent to the viewer, indicate high visibility and appreciable visual contrast with the existing landscape. The visual simulations also showed how intervening vegetation and structures are effective in screening the Project with increasing distance. The simulation of the Project at a distances of over one mile, shows relatively little visual impact.

Q.9. Are measures being proposed to mitigate potential Project visibility and visual impact?

A.9. Yes, approaches to visual mitigation for this Project include the selection of solar panels less than 15 feet in height, siting the facility away from visually sensitive resources, complying with appropriate setback distances based on the sensitivity of the adjacent use, and the use of vegetative screening.

To provide appropriate distances between the Project and the general public, the solar fields will be designed to incorporate several minimum setbacks. These will include (1) a 25-foot setback between the perimeter fence of a solar field and the edge of pavement of any public road; (2) a 40-foot setback between any above-ground equipment within a solar field and the edge of pavement of any public road; (3) a 10-foot setback between the perimeter fence of a solar field and the property line of any parcel whose owner is not participating in the Project (“Non-participating Parcel”); (4) a 25-foot setback between any above-ground equipment within a solar field and any property line of a Non-participating Parcel; and (5) a 100-foot setback between any above-ground equipment within a solar field and any habitable residence located on a Non-participating Parcel. Additionally, a landscape plan will be included as part of the final design for the Project

1 and will be submitted to OPSB Staff prior to the start of construction. The Applicant will
2 incorporate where appropriate pollinator-friendly grasses and wildflowers along selected
3 roadsides and fence lines. Additionally, the Applicant will incorporate, where
4 appropriate, native shrubs and plantings in selected sensitive areas, such as along fence
5 lines adjacent to residences. Use of native shrubs and plantings will not completely
6 screen views of the Project, but instead would serve to soften the overall visual effect of
7 the Project and help to better integrate the Project into the surrounding landscape.
8 Plantings would be selected based on aesthetic properties, to match or complement the
9 existing vegetation at a given location. In addition to helping to blend the Project into the
10 surrounding landscape, use of native plant species would also provide environmental
11 benefits to the local animal and insect communities. The Applicant anticipates that
12 selecting locations for the potential placement and/or installation of plantings for visual
13 mitigation will be determined based on review of public comments and/or concerns
14 raised by individual landowners
15 The Project substation has been co-located with the existing Wildcat Substation located
16 off of County Route 61 (Wildcat Road). This avoids the introduction of electrical
17 infrastructure in new areas where that infrastructure could contrast with existing
18 landscape character. Site selection for the proposed substation further minimizes visual
19 impacts because it is set back approximately 350 feet from the nearest public road and
20 460 feet from the nearest adjacent residential property.

21 **Q.10. What is your overall assessment of the potential visual impact of the Willowbrook**
22 **Solar Project?**

1 **A.10.** The results of the viewshed analysis, field review, and visual simulations
2 performed by EDR indicate that the proposed solar panels should be screened from view
3 in over 94% of the 5-mile radius visual study area. The proposed substation should be
4 screened from view in over 98% of the visual study area. Where views of the Project are
5 available, its visibility and visual impact will be minimal at distances beyond 0.5 mile.
6 Where visible, the Project will introduce a new contrasting use to the landscape.
7 However, as noted in my testimony above, Applicant's use of setbacks and plantings will
8 soften the visual effect of the Project where open views are available.

9 **Q.11. Does this conclude your direct testimony?**

10 **A.11.** Yes, it does.
11

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

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/s/ Michael J. Settineri

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Summary: Testimony of Matthew Robinson electronically filed by Mr. Michael J. Settineri on behalf of WILLOWBROOK SOLAR I LLC