



# EVANSTON SUN POWER PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & GUIDELINES

2026

## **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Evanston is dedicated to promoting healthy and climate resilient housing. To facilitate this, the City created the Evanston Sun Power Program, funded by the Department of Energy, through a Congressionally Directed Spending request from the Office of Senator Dick Durbin in the Federal 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. The funding will install solar panels on homes occupied by low and moderate income households. The City's installation partner is Windfree Solar, LLC (Windfree), located at 517 Dempster St, Evanston, IL 60201.

## **PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES**

The City of Evanston's Sun Power Program will install approximately 20 residential solar projects for low to moderate-income households. This program reflects the City of Evanston's commitment to preserving affordable housing while reducing the citywide carbon footprint. As a result of the solar installations, participants will experience a reduced energy burden - monthly electricity bills will be significantly reduced thanks to the onsite solar electricity generation.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

1. To provide solar panel installations at no upfront cost;
2. To produce onsite solar electricity, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
3. To reduce utility costs for cost-burdened homeowners and renters.

### **PROGRAM PRIORITIES & ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

Solar installation applications will be considered based on the following:

- Household income
- Roof age and condition
- Feasibility of solar installation (shading, electrical panel capacity, etc.)

The intention of this program is for the solar photovoltaic system to meet its useful life expectations (25-30 years), which is only possible with an intact roof. Minor roofing repairs may be made under this contract and funding. This program is able to fund electrical panel upgrades that may be necessary to support the electrical capacity of the solar system, on a case-by-case basis.

## **GENERAL RULES AND TERMS OF ELIGIBILITY**

### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

The application process is as follows:

1. A survey of interest is released to the general public, which serves as a “pre-application”.
2. The first round of applications is accepted from June 16th to June 30th.
3. Completed applications are placed in a lottery.
4. Applicants are reviewed based on solar feasibility.
5. Where solar is deemed tentatively feasible by Windfree, City staff conducts income qualification verification.
6. The selected applicants have their roof and electrical capacity inspected to ensure compatibility with the program.
7. City of Evanston staff provide official confirmation that the Participant is selected for the Program.
8. Participant executes contract with Windfree.
9. The application process remains open for waitlist applications, which are selected by a lottery if funding is available.

## **APPROVED APPLICATIONS**

When a prospective applicant has been approved, they must then furnish a 2025 tax return, or evidence of non-payment of taxes from the IRS webpage, to verify income qualification for the program.

The Evanston Sun Power team assesses applicants depending on the results of the randomized lottery. The ESP team conducts the first review of applications to ensure all required documents are provided. Applicants submitting incomplete materials are given guidance to submit appropriate materials. Upon receipt of complete materials, the ESP team will review the materials and connect applicants with Windfree Solar for a site assessment.

## **SINGLE FAMILY OWNER-OCCUPIED SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION**

The following general guidelines apply to the Program.

1. Applicants must own and occupy the single-family property, two-unit property, three-unit property, or four-unit property as their principal residence.
2. The income of the entire household cannot exceed 120% of the median income of the Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). Income eligibility is determined by providing a 2025 tax return.

| Household size<br>(# of people) | Household income at<br>120% AMI |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1                               | \$102,120                       |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 2 | \$116,640 |
| 3 | \$131,280 |
| 4 | \$145,800 |
| 5 | \$157,560 |
| 6 | \$169,200 |
| 7 | \$180,840 |
| 8 | \$192,480 |

3. The property value (as assessed by the Cook County Assessor's Office) should not be above **100% of the median property value** by type in Evanston, as listed by the [Cook County Assessor's Office](#) latest data available. (\$675,000 for a single family home)
4. With two-, three-, and four-unit properties, eligibility will be determined based on the owner's unit and household information or on the tenant's income; if the owner is the household that is income-qualified, there are no restrictions on household income or rent amount for the rental unit. If the rental is the unit which income qualifies, the application will be reviewed following the rental guidelines (see below).
5. An applicant will be ineligible for any solar installation program if they owe any back taxes or if there are any adverse encumbrances, judgments or liens on the property to be rehabilitated.
6. Each project will receive a site-specific fixed price based on system size, structural and electrical conditions, roof type, and interconnection scope, which will be provided to the City for review.
7. Windfree and each Participant will enter into a contract so that the solar installation will be directly sold to the Participant with \$0 cost to the Participant. Participants will own the solar photovoltaic systems.
8. The Participant will bear no cost for solar panel installation. All financial transactions will be between Windfree and the City of Evanston.
9. The solar panels will be installed by Windfree and will meet all local building codes and manufacturer specifications. Windfree will furnish and install a mounted racking system to support the solar panels. Windfree will work closely with the Homeowner on interconnection, permitting as required, delivery of material, installation, and monitoring. Windfree will furnish and provide a full system design, electrical wiring diagram, and provide any documents needed in order to install this project and obtain permits, as required. Windfree will furnish and install all certified solar panels and equipment, and provide all labor to make the system operational, and connect the photovoltaic system

with the existing property's electrical system. All warranties will be provided to the Homeowner upon the project's completion. All equipment, components and conduit runs shall be installed on the exterior of the building unless otherwise agreed to in writing or upon the decision of Windfree at time of installation.

10. Windfree will provide a comprehensive workmanship warranty for 10 years at no cost, which covers the integrity of the workmanship performed by Windfree and its employees. There is a 25-year manufacturer warranty on modules, 10–12-year inverter manufacturer warranties, and an extended Operations & Maintenance plan is available post-year 10 at published rates.
11. After warranty expiration, participants can request service via Windfree's support line with typical response within 5 business days.
12. The recipient property will be free from roof leaks directly resulting from Windfree's workmanship for 5 years.
13. Any AC electric work performed by Windfree that was not a direct part of the main solar installation work is warrantied for a period of 1 year.
14. If eligible, Windfree will facilitate the brokerage of Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SRECs) in partnership with Carbon Solutions Group (CSG), who will manage the retirement of SRECs in the IL Shines program on behalf of the property owner.
15. Windfree will provide panel removal and recycling guidance, per the IL Environmental Protection Agency and manufacturer programs, and can quote this service at the time of need.
16. Windfree will acknowledge any complaints within one business day, with a resolution target within 10 business days.
17. Windfree will offer bilingual support in Spanish with prior notice or at scheduled meeting times.
18. Adders may be necessary to safely and properly install the solar PV system. The City will consider covering the cost of these adders on a case-by-case basis. These vary on complexity, and include but are not limited to:

*Electrical upgrades:*

- A. Electrical service upgrade - \$4,000-8,000
- B. Combined meter for owner-occupied 1–4 unit homes - \$4,000
- C. Grounding/cold water grounding per code requirement - \$2,000

*Structural additions:*

- A. Reinforcing roof/sistering rafters - \$3,000
  - B. Additional equipment and labor for steep roof - \$0.10/W
  - C. Additional labor and equipment for landscape layout of modules - \$0.05/W
  - D. Trenching - \$35/ft
  - E. Critter Guard \$20/ft
19. The Homeowner is required to provide internet service to the photovoltaic system for online monitoring and to allow the local utility provider to access

the production data via utility meter. Windfree does not enter meter data.

20. The Homeowner will be responsible for providing access to the property and its utilities to Windfree in order to facilitate the proper execution of the project and the related work.
21. The Homeowner is responsible and shall be held liable for reporting any site conditions that are known or should be known that may impact the integrity of the work to be performed, the safety of workers, and the ongoing integrity of the solar energy system and its components. Windfree is not responsible and holds no liability for any unknown and unreported property conditions that could not be identified through the reasonable efforts of Windfree.
22. The Homeowner grants access to Windfree and its employees, contractors, and agents access to the Homeowner's Property, Power/Electric, Water, and Internet for the purposes of surveying, installing, constructing, repairing, and servicing the solar energy system and its related components. Windfree agrees to install the system and perform specified work in a professional manner, remove all debris created by the installation, and leave the premises in clean condition.
23. All significant equipment and materials (solar panels, inverters, and racking) shall be provided with original manufacturers' warranties where and as applicable, upon project completion.
24. Windfree and the Homeowner will be able to monitor the system digitally by means of web-based monitoring and Windfree will provide access to the Homeowner for monitoring the system data. Windfree does not actively monitor the activity on the Homeowner's system. The Homeowner is responsible for notifying Windfree of any anomalies with the System so Windfree can investigate the concern.

#### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MULTI-FAMILY PROPERTY SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION (2-4 UNITS)**

1. Applicants must own a building containing no more than three rental units. Condominiums and cooperatives are not eligible for this program.
2. Applicants cannot owe any back taxes on the property nor have any outstanding adverse encumbrances, judgments or liens.
3. At least 1 unit for 2 unit buildings and at least 2 units for 3-4 unit buildings must be occupied by households with an income at or below 120% of the median income of the Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). Income eligibility is calculated using the Adjusted Gross Income under Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Form 1040 Adjusted Gross Income definition of income.

Inquiries regarding the program may be directed to the Sustainability and Resilience Division. Any issues that arise with Windfree Solar should be directed to the Sustainability and Resilience Team for resolution.

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