

Montgomery County's Free Rein Horse Farm Shares Land With Community Solar Farm Managed by Neighborhood Sun

Neighborhood Sun Invites Montgomery County Residents to Claim Community Solar Savings

GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND, USA, April 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Neighborhood Sun Benefit Corp](#), a Maryland-based Certified B Corp, announced the construction of [Free Rein Solar Farm](#), LLC this month, the latest community solar farm under its management in the Silver Spring-based company's nearby community of Gaithersburg, Maryland. Free Rein Solar Farm will generate enough locally generated renewable energy to support hundreds of households while also preventing 1,421 Metric Tons of CO2-equivalent each year.



Horse grazing pasture near the construction site of Free Rein Solar Farm. Photo provided by Free Rein Horse Farm.

"We are leveraging the power of community-driven solutions to address the pressing challenges of climate change," said Gary Skulnik, Founder and C.E.O. of Neighborhood Sun. "We manage community solar farms on everything from schools to former landfills, and we're thrilled to add horse farms to the list this year."

Horses grazing in green pastures will soon share their farm with 2,660 solar panels and 1.5 acres of new plantings of native tree and shrub species. The 1.5 MW solar array will sit on a small portion of Free Rein Farm—an 84-acre farm used for horse boarding, grazing, and riding—leaving plenty of space for the horses to continue enjoying the open air. Lease payments for the land that the solar facility will occupy is poised to help the horse farm meet its financial needs. The solar array will also provide 100% of the farm's electricity. The land beneath the solar arrays will be covered in pollinator-friendly plants, ensuring it meets Montgomery County's agrivoltaics standard for solar development.

Construction is expected to be complete in mid-August. Because the number of available shares is very limited, dozens of local households have already reserved their share of the community solar farm's energy as a way to support local renewables and guarantee their access to a discount between 10%-20% compared to PEPCO-Maryland's standard rate. Higher savings are available for households that qualify as low- or moderate-income to help address energy equity, and at least 30% of the farm's output is reserved for these income-qualified residents.

"Free Rein Solar Farm is proud to be creating this solar generating facility that will deliver clean renewable electricity to the Maryland region and also help the farm economically, while preserving the surrounding environment and character of the land," said Mike Chapman, President of Free Rein Solar Farm.

The project has incorporated many measures to minimize any negative environmental impacts. Representatives of Free Rein Solar Farm met with neighbors and the local community to understand concerns and offer information. As a result the solar project committed to adding voluntary vegetative screenings and buffers. Additional measures are being taken to mitigate environmental impacts, such as limiting impervious surfaces, including bioretention basins to capture and filter stormwater and planting hundreds of trees and shrubs to protect a nearby stream and wetland area. At the conclusion of the 25-year project period, the solar panels will be recycled and the land will be returned to its natural state.

Neighborhood Sun and Free Rein Solar Farm are inviting the community to join them in celebrating this milestone achievement. Together, we can create a brighter, more sustainable future for generations to come.

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