Bacon Triangle Solar Array Planting Plan Overview

Tax Parcel ID#: 57.00-1-21.113, Town of Washington, NY

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CONCEPT

The key planting design idea on this site is to use a vocabulary that is emblematic of our rural landscapes—fields and woodlots, allées and hedgerows—to visually connect this new project to its surroundings.

Primary landscape elements (fields, woodlots, allées, hedgerows), Thorndale, Cary Institute, and Bacon Triangle site, Millbrook, NY

Fields
Using proven techniques, the solar array itself will be underplanted with a seed mix of native, pollinator-friendly plants to create a healthy meadow.

Woodlots
While solar panels require full sun, the array was set into a woodlot and as many of the existing trees as possible were preserved. This continues the local landscape patterns of field and woodlot, open and closed, and also provides screening for the array.

Allées
Allées are regular rows of trees or shrubs planted along roads or pathways conveying a classic, architectural feel. These are familiar landscape elements in the area, with excellent examples of venerable allées on this site and both north and south of it along Route 82.

Maple allée along Route 82, Millbrook, NY, looking toward the Reading Barn

On the Bacon Triangle site, the rhythmic allée of sugar maples along the Sharon Turnpike and its backdrop of younger trees, predominantly maples, have been preserved but for a small cut needed for the service drive. Even when not dense enough to screen much of the solar array itself, these trees are the key contributing feature to the sense of continuity one experiences along this stretch of road. That sense of visual and spatial continuity lessens the perceived impact of the solar array. This effect will only increase once the disturbed areas of the site are once again green.

Sugar maple allée on the Bacon Triangle site, Sharon Turnpike looking south toward Route 82, Millbrook, NY

The opening in the allée along the driveway is the most visually permeable section of the Bacon Triangle site. On the south side of the new service drive, existing trees will be reinforced with a few additional sugar maples. Because of power lines on the north side, shorter trees are needed there. To narrow this driveway opening and help screen the solar array and its enclosing fence, a new allée along both sides of the drive will be created using a cultivar of native shadblow or serviceberry, *Amelanchier* x 'Autumn Brilliance.' These are reliably low enough not to interfere with the power lines but are densely branched from low to the ground up so this new allée will create an effective visual screen that is perfectly in keeping with the local landscape.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are dense lines composed of mixed species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that develop or are created around fields and along waterways and country roads.

Hedgerows bounding Dutchess County fields, Milan, NY

Although typically comprised of all or mostly deciduous trees and shrubs, the dense thicket of branches forms an effective screen year round.

Hedgerows offer myriad environmental benefits, but will perform two key functions on the Bacon Triangle site: visual screening and supporting biodiversity.

A hedgerow of small native trees and large native shrubs will be used to soften the look of the fence around the solar array. The species selected for this hedgerow, most of which naturally form colonies by suckering, will grow together over time forming a dense mass with an average mature height of about 15'. Unlike rows of deciduous or evergreen trees, this hedgerow is perfectly scaled and suited as a screen on this site. It will effectively create a wall from the ground to just above the fence and solar panels. A hedgerow, however, has a natural and locally appropriate look so it merges into the larger landscape in an attractive yet visually unobtrusive manner. All but one species called out is deciduous and this mix favoring deciduous trees and shrubs is consistent with local vegetation.

These native plants were selected for appropriate scale, durability, habitat value, and seasonal display from flowers, fruit, and fall color. This hedgerow contains enough of a range of native species to afford resilience in the face of disease and pests. Flowers blooming over most of the year—from March into December—support a wide range of pollinators. Most plants in this hedgerow produce fruit, supporting birds and other fauna. In addition to food, the thicket created provides essential cover and corridors for movement for pollinators, beneficial insects, and other fauna. This hedgerow works synergistically with the meadow around the solar panels, increasing populations of pollinators and beneficial insects, and by extension, birds and bats.

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