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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF CHICAGO SOLAR EXPRESS TO DRIVE SOLAR DEVELOPMENT AND CREATE GREEN JOBS

Reforms Will Reduce Costs and Reduce Permit Wait Time to Encourage Solar Development Among Residents and Developers

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Environmental Law and Policy Center and West Monroe Partners announced today the launch of Chicago Solar Express, a streamlined and progressive permitting, zoning and interconnection process established for residents and developers seeking to place solar installations on residential and commercial projects. This project will help transform Chicago into a national leader in rooftop solar panels. These improvements will slash wait times for solar permits for small installations from 30 days to one day, cut fees by 25 percent and simplify and streamline key processes. The City of Chicago and its partners developed these reforms with the assistance of a \$750,000 "SunShot" grant received from the Department of Energy (DOE).

"The City of Chicago continues to take action and lead the way in solar innovation," said Mayor Emanuel. "The Chicago Solar Express will make it easier for residents and developers to make long term investments that will improve the performance of their buildings while creating a more sustainable environment for the residents of Chicago. Driving solar development and creating green job opportunities will establish a bright future for Chicagoans."

The City and its partners received the SunShot grant as part of the DOE SunShot Rooftop Solar Challenge. This is a national initiative to make solar energy cost competitive with other forms of energy by the end of the decade. This grant provided additional funding for Mayor Emanuel's environmental action agenda, *Sustainable Chicago 2015*. The deployment of such initiatives is a critical part of economic development in Chicago and integral to the City's goal of becoming the greenest and most sustainable city in America.

The Chicago Solar Express reforms support a vibrant solar sector while helping to mitigate the City's carbon footprint. The City will launch an expedited permitting process where qualifying projects can receive same-day permit approval at reduced fees. The permitting process was cut from 30 days to one day and the fee schedule decreased from \$375 to \$275, a 25 percent reduction.

Along with the expedited permitting process, Chicago's Department of Buildings has published new guidelines, outlining clear steps for general contractors to follow for designing both small and large systems to City standards, making requirements clearer and making doing business with the City easier. Significantly lowering the cost to install a large rooftop solar arrays, the new guidelines

update structural design requirements to recognize improvements in the design of ballasted systems over recent years.

Other reforms include simplifying the zoning process by providing policy interpretation and design guidance for all solar types in all sectors and streamlining the process for connecting solar panels to the electric grid. This partnership will introduce the Online Interconnection and Net Metering Enrollment, a tool to be launched by ComEd by year-end that will allow applicants to submit, track, and pay for applications through an online platform. This will enable applicants to connect their solar generator to the grid and receive credit on their bills for producing their own electricity.

The new policy introduces flexibility for projects covered by the Sustainable Development Policy, a set of requirements for large developments going through the planned development process or receiving City financial assistance. Launched in 2004, the Sustainable Development Policy requires large developments to install vegetated green roofs and pursue LEED certification, and has been instrumental in helping make Chicago the North American leader in green roofs with 359 vegetated roofs covering 5.5 million square feet and LEED certified buildings numbering 405 totaling 114 million square feet. Under the updated policy, these projects can swap a portion of their green roof requirement for solar panels, giving property owners additional flexibility while maintaining high standards for project sustainability in Chicago.

To spread the word of the reforms to accelerate solar, the Chicago Department of Buildings held training sessions to educate contractors and architects on the new processes. The events were well received with nearly 100 design and construction professionals in attendance.

To make access to solar for Chicagoans as easy as possible, the City has launched a new website for solar, a one-stop shop with a step-by-step process for getting rooftop solar approved, installed, and connected, as quickly and efficiently as possible: solar.cityofchicago.org.

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