

Shawnee County, KS Solar Talking Points

Background

The Shawnee County Planning Commission is holding a public town meeting on January 12, 2026 to review the updated community and utility scale solar energy regulations for the county. As written, the [proposed regulation text](#) will effectively impose a permanent moratorium on solar in the county.

On June 13th, 2024, the county implemented a one-year moratorium on utility scale solar in unincorporated areas. The moratorium was a temporary measure to allow the planning department to conduct more research and develop specific regulations. It came about in response to two solar developments and a utility scale wind energy project applying for conditional use permits in 2022. Many residents from the county organized in opposition to these projects. The County Board of Commissioners dispersed a survey, held public hearings, and eventually released two Home Rule resolutions that effectively put a moratorium on utility scale solar and wind projects.

Starting on February 10th, 2025, the Planning Commission has been holding conversations about creating new laws for governing solar in the county. A public hearing is planned for January 12, 2026 as a final opportunity for residents to review and comment on the updated regulations, which would effectively impose a permanent moratorium on solar.

Messaging strategy

While opposition in Shawnee County in the past was organized and vocal, we know from Heatmap that the majority of the county actually supports clean energy. If they show up, supporters have an opportunity to push back with consistent, positive messaging that highlights economic and grid benefits of large-scale solar, support for farmers and agriculture, and solar as a safe and sustainable neighbor, while addressing concerns about land use and environmental impacts. Our messaging strategy will focus on three key themes:

1. Benefits of solar to Shawnee County's economy and grid
2. Support for farmers and their families
3. Safety and sustainability of solar projects as neighbors



Shawnee County includes the capital of Kansas, Topeka, and believes in climate change and the clean energy transition much more than surrounding counties. That being said, it still trends slightly below national averages in terms of climate change acceptance and support for renewables, so we recommend emphasizing community benefits of solar (and wind) rather than specific climate messaging.

What to say to support solar for Shawnee County:

Solar could be a lifeline for Shawnee County's economy and grid:

- **Solar projects mean new jobs and economic vitality for our communities.**
 - Solar projects will generate millions of dollars to fund community needs including schools, emergency services, roads, and bridges.
 - Solar creates good-paying jobs, including construction jobs and some long-term maintenance and tech positions.
 - Solar companies often invest in community development - supporting local schools, enhancing public safety, and funding programs that improve the lives of children, families, and the community as a whole.
- **Solar would strengthen our power grid and lower our bills with homegrown, affordable clean energy.**
 - Solar is the fastest and lowest-cost form of new energy we can build today without federal subsidies. Long-term fixed price contracts can keep energy bills stable, even as demand for electricity rises.
 - Adding more solar to our region's fuel mix will help keep the lights on if other power sources fail and could bring other improvements to our grid infrastructure paid for by developers.
 - Kansas [depends heavily](#) on importing coal from out of state to power our homes and businesses. Building homegrown energy will strengthen our economy by protecting us from price swings and keeping more dollars here at home.

Solar would support farmers in Shawnee County:

- **Our local farmers deserve solar regulations that maintain their private property rights and avoid government overreach.**

- Shawnee County landowners should have the freedom to decide how they use their property, including the choice to lease their land for utility-scale solar, which the current proposed changes would not allow.
- Effectively banning large-scale solar development is government overreach that hurts hardworking farmers who are struggling to maintain their way of life.
- **More solar in our county would help ensure the economic survival of family farms.**
 - Having the option to lease dormant or low-yielding land for a solar project gives farmers long-term financial stability through low energy costs and a steady predictable revenue.
 - Many local farmers are struggling to keep their land in production and in the family while making a stable, livable income. Having the option to add power generation to their businesses will help keep our family farms afloat and prevent more of our farmland from being sold off for permanent development.

Solar is a safe and sustainable neighbor:

- **Solar is water-smart and coexists with nature.**
 - Solar arrays are quiet, low-impact, low-traffic neighbors.
 - Solar projects use little to no water to operate, produce no air or water pollution, and safeguard our precious natural resources.
 - Solar projects often come with features like agricultural fencing and wildlife corridors that minimize disruptions, and maximize benefits for local habitats, wildlife, and neighboring properties.
- **Solar is safe, healthy, and highly regulated.**
 - Solar projects are durable and designed with strict safety standards, using non-flammable materials like glass, silicon, and metal to withstand extreme conditions.
 - They're combustion-free, have low fire risk, and produce clean energy without harmful pollutants like sulfur dioxide or nitrogen oxides. They help us move away from forms of energy that cause harmful air and water pollution, and improve public health to keep our families safe.
 - At the end of a large-scale solar project's life, the panels will be decommissioned and the land will be revitalized and usable for farming.