



The Honorable Lina Hidalgo
The Honorable Jack Cagle
The Honorable Rodney Ellis
The Honorable Adrian Garcia
The Honorable Steve Radack
1001 Preston St., 9th floor
Houston, Texas 77002

January 7, 2020

Dear Judge Hidalgo and Commissioners,

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, thank you for your recent vote on purchasing renewable energy credits to cover 100% of Harris County's electricity supply for the next year: it's a great first step. But there is so much more we can do to become a greener county, and we urge you to demonstrate further leadership on climate change action by:

1. Making your next power contract 100% renewable, including power purchase agreements (PPAs) with solar and wind developers;
2. Installing solar and battery storage at county buildings so they can act as emergency centers;
3. Publicizing the Harris County Commercial PACE program;
4. Creating a residential solar financing program; and
5. Setting county-wide solar development goals.

Harris County is home to some of America's most important energy infrastructure. As our world transitions away from the oil and gas and petrochemical industries, however, we must invest in the next energy technologies. Solar and wind power are growing quickly in Texas, increasing the total amount of power produced here, and stabilizing our electric grid. Renewable energy is part of what keeps our electricity cost in Texas so low in comparison to the rest of the nation. Harris County can maintain its status as a world energy leader by purchasing, encouraging, and investing in renewable power generation.

Purchasing renewable power is an obvious and financially sound choice: the City of Houston, Washington D.C., and many other local governments have found that solar and wind PPAs not only guarantee them predictable, low, long-term electricity rates without risk, but also lead directly to the development of new clean energy projects. This will ensure our population's long-term health and resilience: unlike fossil fuels, solar and wind production do not add any pollution to our environment. Greenhouse gases emitted by fossil fuel power plants also contribute to climate change, which will lead to more severe storms, rain events like Harvey and Imelda, and a myriad of other issues. The more renewable power we add to our grid, the healthier and safer we will be in the future, and by entering into PPAs with renewable energy developers, Harris County can help build that future.

Building more rooftop solar is equally important: it will increase local control over our power, improve grid resilience, and even (when paired with storage) keep operations running during emergencies. Harris County should install solar panels and battery storage at all government buildings that can accommodate them, and include on-site renewable generation at any new county property or building. This would both

create the aforementioned emergency centers and set a positive example by increasing the visibility of solar in our community. In addition, the County should make rooftop solar more attractive by publicizing its new commercial PACE program (for commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings) as well as creating a financing program for single-family dwellings. Increases in demand for rooftop solar will boost our economy and create safe jobs: the city of Houston, for example, doubled its installed solar capacity from 2017-2018, and today almost 1000 people in Harris County work in the solar industry.¹ Soon, the County should set county-wide goals for rooftop solar saturation in the coming years and make us a more resilient, healthy society.

Most people believe we need to be moving toward renewable power generation, and quickly: over 70% of people surveyed by the Edison Electric Institute in 2018 think we should aim for 100% renewable electricity.² The goals outlined here will help us move toward that future. They are achievable goals, and ones we can all be proud of.

Thank you,

Jen Schmerling, Environment Texas

Stephanie Thomas, Public Citizen Texas

Rajiv Pandya, Shine Development Partners

Keith Downey, Kashmere Gardens Super Neighborhood

Zoe Middleton, Texas Housers

Brittani Flowers, Texas Campaign for the Environment

Steve Brown | President, Capital Assets, LLC, Sustainable Energy Development & Public Affairs

Dan Cohan, Ph.D. | Associate Professor of Environmental Engineering, Rice University

Bob Randall, Ph.D. | Founder, Urban Harvest

Arch "Chip" Carson, MD, Ph.D. | Industrial and Environmental Medicine Physician

Sylvia Dee, Ph.D. | Assistant Professor in Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences, Rice University

¹ <https://www.solarstates.org/#state/texas/counties/solar-jobs/2018>

² <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/9/14/17853884/utilities-renewable-energy-100-percent-public-opinion>