

# Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation

## Illinois Solar For All

### Fact Sheet

**Funding for renewable energy and workforce opportunities is being directed to Illinois's Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. If your community or neighborhood has a history of environmental harm but is not identified as an EJ community, you can submit a proposal to designate your community through the [Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation process](#). Learn more below:**

### **Background**

**What is an Environmental Justice Community?** An Environmental Justice (EJ) Community has a demonstrated higher risk of exposure to pollution based on environmental and socioeconomic factors. The Illinois Power Agency has identified EJ communities in Illinois as part of their [Illinois Solar for All Program](#), in an effort to bring solar opportunities to EJ communities.

**What benefits are directed toward EJ Communities in Illinois?** Environmental Justice Communities and the people that live in them are prioritized during project selection, project siting, contractor selection, and funding allocation for Solar for All and other energy grants and workforce training opportunities in Illinois.

**Where are EJ Communities in Illinois?** The IPA has established a framework to identify EJ communities in Illinois. Find out if your community is an EJ community on [this map](#).

### **Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation Process**

**What if my community isn't on the map but has experienced environmental harm?** If your community does not show up on this map, but you believe your community or a portion of your community has been disproportionately impacted by environmental harms, you can submit a proposal to designate your community through the [Environmental Justice Community Self-Designation process](#).

**How does the EJ Community Self-Designation Process work?** The Designator responsible for facilitating their community's self-designation proposal will complete a [two-part form](#) to request that a community be designated as an EJ Community. The Designators will be asked to define their community based on relevant, localized geographic boundaries (e.g. streets, rural highways, county lines).



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A committee of representatives from Elevate Energy, the Illinois Power Agency, and Environmental Justice experts will then use a rubric to assess the quantitative and qualitative data submitted. This rubric mirrors the types of data that entered the original calculation for the EJ Score and covers the following “**Scoring Criteria**”:

- **Exposure indicators (20 points)** such as exposure to water pollution, can be backed up by data from websites like [How’s My Waterway](#).
- **Environmental effects (10 points)** refers to the community's proximity to environmental hazards such as [superfund sites](#), [brownfield sites](#), and [leaking underground storage tanks](#).
- **Sensitive populations (15 points)** This will include children, aging populations, and community health. Data on the percentage of sensitive populations can be found on the [United States Census Bureau](#) website.
- **Socioeconomic factors (15 points)** refers to the number of at-risk community members impacted by environmental pollution. Communities with high health disparities, high aging populations, high minority populations, or high poverty rates are more likely to be negatively impacted by pollution. Data on socioeconomic factors can be found on the [CDC](#) and [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) websites.
- **Additional points (10 points)** are given to communities that are located directly adjacent to an EJ census block group.

To be designated as an Environmental Justice Community, applications must receive a minimum score of **45 out of 60**. Approved applications must receive points from both the Exposure & Environmental and Sensitive & Socioeconomic sections.

**What type of information should I look at to determine if I should consider EJ Community Self-Designation?** “You might live in an environmental justice community if you’re impacted by... [Environmental injustice](#), [drinking water pollution](#), [air pollution](#), [agricultural pollution](#), a [superfund site](#), a [brownfield site](#), [leaking underground storage tank](#), a [polluted waterway](#), [health disparities](#), or high [poverty rates](#).”



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