



Habitat for Humanity ReStore



Photos courtesy of Balance Solar

Project Summary

Habitat for Humanity ReStore, a nonprofit home improvement store and donation center, has been serving Bloomington, Illinois, since 2009. Community members shop at the ReStore for new and gently used furniture, appliances, cabinets, home accessories, and building materials at discounted prices.

A significant revenue source for **Habitat for Humanity of McLean County**, the ReStore has brought in over \$5 million to fund the organization's community work. Habitat for Humanity of McLean County is an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International and works to eliminate substandard housing in the Bloomington community.

To better serve the community and reduce their energy costs, Habitat for

Humanity ReStore completed energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades in June 2018. Habitat leaders had considered adopting solar power at the ReStore, but the cost was too high: \$160,000, or 5% to 7% of their annual operating income.

A connection with Ecology Action Center, a local environmental education organization, introduced Habitat leaders to affordable solar energy through Illinois Solar for All.

The Process

Ecology Action Center, one of ILSFA's Grassroots Education organizations based in Normal, Illinois, provides education to community members about the benefits and opportunities of the ILSFA program. "We reached out to ReStore and a few other nonprofits in

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Project Details

- Solar Companies: **Central Road Energy, StraightUp Solar, and Balance Solar**
- Estimated savings on electricity costs:*
 - o First year: **\$5,696 or 65.4%**
 - o Total savings: **\$234,077 or 92.9%**
- Eligibility: **Environmental Justice and Income-Eligible Communities**

**These savings are based on estimated electricity costs. Since electricity rates are expected to rise over time, Habitat Restore's estimated savings also increase over the course of their contract.*



Illinois Solar for All

Habitat for Humanity ReStore



our community that serve residents that meet the income qualifications for ILSFA," said Larissa Armstrong, Assistant Director of Ecology Action Center. "Part of our initial conversation with these organizations was to see if we could use their connections and space to give presentations to the community."

At one of these community events, Habitat leaders found out that the ReStore was eligible to participate in Illinois Solar for All. Armstrong explained the process, outlined eligibility, and provided resources to connect the ReStore to solar companies approved by ILSFA in the Bloomington area.

A representative from StraightUp Solar attended an Ecology Action Center workshop at the ReStore and connected with Habitat leaders, who requested a proposal for Illinois Solar for All. StraightUp Solar walked ReStore through the process and put together an

easy-to-understand proposal. Central Road Energy, a solar company approved by ILSFA, submitted a project application in the competitive Illinois Solar for All: Non-Profit and Public Facilities sub-program and the project was selected and approved in October 2020. The project was installed and started generating electricity in November 2021.

Overall, ILSFA's enrollment process for eligible nonprofit and public facility organizations is straightforward. Eligible nonprofit organizations and public facilities located in either an **environmental justice community** or an **income-eligible community** can participate in the program. Interested nonprofit organizations and public facilities can reach out to **a solar company** approved by ILSFA who ensures the projects meet all program requirements and **consumer protection guidelines**. The solar companies will ensure that eligibility, site assessment, and savings potential

are cleared for the project. There are low or no upfront costs, and savings are guaranteed for ILSFA participants.

The Results

The ReStore quickly began to see benefits from the completed solar array project. By generating 85% of the electricity it needs to operate, the ReStore can redirect money from utility bills to the Habitat mission.

Balance Solar was the solar array designee that worked with Central Road Energy on the project. "We'd like to highlight the array's financial savings to ReStore as well as the environmental benefits to our planet," said Balance Solar President Daniel Dowd.

With solar energy savings, Habitat for Humanity of McClean County has more resources to construct and rehabilitate homes, advocate for fair and just housing policies, and provide training and resources to families.