

**PowerButte: Solar Overlay Zone
VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

VISION

Butte County is a place for clean, abundant, and renewable energy supported by technological innovation. Energy generated within the county contributes to economic development, environmental protection, reduced dependence on fossil fuels, and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Butte County's economy is sustained and promoted through the use of the Solar Energy Overlay. Locally-produced clean energy also supports an affordable and reliable power network for local residences, businesses and agricultural operations as well as throughout the state. Utility-scale solar facility development complements the County's scenic qualities, avoids impacts to agricultural resources, and is sited and designed in harmony with Butte County's communities, residential neighborhoods, and cities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide the preparation of the Solar Overlay Zone:

- ◆ **Open and Transparent Process.** Conduct a planning process that is open and transparent. Maximize opportunities for county residents and property owners to guide the preparation of rules and regulations that may impact them.
- ◆ **Agriculture.** Ensure that utility-scale solar facilities support and strengthen agriculture in Butte County. Do not locate facilities on prime farmland, unique farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or farmland of local importance. Explore methods to locate facilities in a manner that will compliment animal grazing.
- ◆ **Biological Resources.** Locate utility-scale facilities away from sensitive habitat for special-status plant and animal species. Work with property owners as appropriate on biological assessments for large properties in the county to determine locations for facilities with the least impact to biological resources.
- ◆ **Scenic Quality.** Design and locate new utility-scale solar facilities to protect the unique visual and scenic character of Butte County.

- ◆ **Water Resources.** Ensure that new utility-scale solar facilities do not have a negative impact on Butte County's invaluable water resources, through effects on water supply, water quality, or groundwater recharge.
- ◆ **Economic Development.** Generate new jobs and revenues by attracting new businesses that design, manufacture, install and decommission solar facilities and that desire access to an abundant supply of local renewable energy.
- ◆ **Property Owner Coordination.** Recognize that the Solar Overlay Zone will add a new, voluntary option that property owners may take advantage of. Coordinate with property owners to identify interested parties and incorporate their input into the provisions of the Solar Overlay Zone. Involve adjacent property owners to ensure that they are not negatively impacted by new solar facilities.
- ◆ **Local Preferences.** Engage local communities and neighborhoods in decision-making for siting new utility-scale solar facilities.
- ◆ **Broadly Shared Benefits.** Promote a clean energy future that benefits the citizens of Butte County by diversifying the County's energy sources and setting the County on a path towards future energy independence and cost savings. Proactively identify and resolve problems now that will be costly to resolve in the future, such as optimum locations for utility-scale solar energy.
- ◆ **Permit Streamlining.** Lower regulatory barriers and simplify the permitting process for utility-scale solar energy while minimizing negative impacts from new solar facilities.
- ◆ **Utilities Coordination.** Incorporate utility planning and facilities into the creation of the Solar Energy Overlay.
- ◆ **Impact Assessment.** Identify and appropriately address potential environmental impacts before approving new solar facilities. Consider slope stability and geotechnical hazards when considering impacts to adjacent properties. Consider impacts throughout the lifespan of the facility, including its decommissioning and removal.
- ◆ **Residential Neighborhoods.** Ensure that the location, design, and operation of new utility-scale solar facilities maintains property values and minimizes negative impacts to residential neighborhoods and properties
- ◆ **Technological Requirements.** Consider the technological and economic requirements of energy providers when identifying locations for utility-scale solar.

- ◆ **Stakeholder Cooperation.** Build partnerships between cities, utilities, businesses, and residents in both urban and rural areas to plan for a shared clean energy future.
- ◆ **Land Use Planning.** Provide consistency with the Butte County General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Climate Action Plan.