

Augusta County Comprehensive Plan update (Solar Energy)

Under Utilities, Amended Aug. 26, 2020

Objective C: Encourage distributed solar and carefully sited utility scale solar as a means of achieving renewable energy goals.

Policy 1: Economy. Recognize the employment opportunities, especially for distributed solar, and economic diversification opportunities that utility scale solar provide.

Policy 2: Rural viewsheds. Desire to maintain rural viewsheds and agriculture as a predominant component of our economy, but sees synergy among agricultural and rural land development and utility scale solar development so long as the clustering, size, or fragmentation of such facilities does not have undue adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy 3: Agricultural landscape and economy. Siting of projects should evaluate the agricultural landscape of the project area and surrounding area to assess the effects of a project on the agricultural economy.

Policy 4: Prime farmland and Agricultural and Forestal Districts. Siting of projects in Agricultural and Rural Planning Policy Areas should consider the presence of prime farmland producing soils and/or adjacent Agricultural and Forestal Districts.

Policy 5: Visual impact. Siting of projects should take into consideration surrounding neighborhood developments and how visual impacts to those neighborhoods can be mitigated through appropriate buffers. Siting and design of projects should strive to utilize existing vegetation and buffers that exist naturally when adjacent to public rights of way or other adjacent property.

Policy 6: Balanced land uses. Desire to balance the utility scale solar land use with other important and valuable land uses for our citizens. The size/extent of projects should be considered in proximity to other developed land uses so as not to have undue adverse impacts on the existence of nearby developed residential, commercial or mixed use communities. Consideration of existing Augusta County Service Authority infrastructure be made.

Policy 7: Compact, interconnected development. Projects within Urban Service and Community Development Areas should not detract from the compact, interconnected, pedestrian-oriented development pattern.

Policy 8: Open space. Support projects that seek to actively create opportunities and partnerships that provide for natural open spaces and outdoor recreational activities such as pedestrian corridors, wildlife watching areas, and fishing areas, especially in publically accessible land and rights-of-ways.

Policy 9: Interconnectivity. For projects that are adjacent to public spaces or other planned developments, encourage projects that provide for trails and linkages to adjacent land planned for or already developed.

Policy 10: Resource considerations. Projects should be designed, sited, and constructed in a way that protects and preserves the County's natural, scenic, and cultural resources including:

- a. Streams, rivers, wetlands
- b. Fertile soils
- c. Habitats
- d. Native vegetation
- e. Forests
- f. Historic and archaeological resources

Policy 11: Natural resource benefits. The County sees value in projects that create additional natural resource benefits through the use of native vegetation, the creation of wildlife corridors, and the use of pollinator species in buffer areas and underneath panels.