



COUNTY SOLAR POLICIES DISCUSSION

**Board of County Commissioners Special Meeting
October 5, 2021**

Board Motion from August 10, 2021 Meeting

1. Direct staff to advertise a public hearing for the proposed ULDC revision for Solar Facilities.
2. Direct staff to review all Comp Plan Policies with respect to Solar and return to a policy meeting for future policy discussion.
3. Outline what would be ideal solar sites and suggest incentives for these locations.
4. Work with the future Economic Development Manager to suggest incentives for commercial solar (such as shopping centers, parking lots, and similar locations) installations and micro grids.
5. Direct staff to provide suggestions to the comprehensive plan and zoning process and community engagement process to include social justice, economic justice as well as environmental justice.

Presentation Outline

1. Review of Existing Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar
2. Review of Land Development Regulations on Solar, and Proposed Changes
3. Alachua County's Solar Programs and Strategies
4. Factors for Consideration in Siting Solar Facilities
5. Community Initiatives on Solar and Related Issues
6. Staff Recommendations for Follow-Up:
 1. Continue to participate in current community initiatives/discussions on solar and report back to Board with recommendations or ideas resulting from those processes.
 2. Re-evaluate existing Comprehensive Plan goals and policies on solar, and suggest any changes needed to better articulate the County Commission's current goals, priorities, and strategies on solar and other renewable energy issues.

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

- Solar power generation facilities are considered “public utilities”.

- Definition:

Public utility (electric, gas, telephone and cable):** Every person, corporation, partnership, association, or other legal entity and their lessees, trustees, or receivers, **whether or not owned, controlled, or operated by a public entity, supplying electricity, gas (natural, manufactured, or similar gaseous substance), telephone, or cable to or for the public.

- Public utilities may be permitted in all land use categories subject to appropriate locational criteria in the land development regulations.

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT

- Public Utilities are considered Institutional land uses.
- Criteria for determining appropriateness of institutional locations (Policy 5.2.1):
 - (a) Optimum service area.
 - (b) Optimum operating size.
 - (c) Access to clientele.
 - (d) Compatibility of the scale and intensity of the use in relationship to surrounding uses, taking into account impacts such as, noise, lighting, visual effect, traffic generation, odors.
 - (e) Nature of service provision.
 - (f) Needs of the clientele.
 - (g) Availability and adequacy of public infrastructure to serve the particular use.
 - (h) Preservation and strengthening of community and neighborhood character through design.
 - (i) Consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element.
- Institutional facilities shall be designed and located for integration into the surrounding community. Land use decisions concerning location of institutional uses shall take into consideration environmental justice. (Policy 5.2.2)

General Scales of Solar Facilities

- **Utility Scale**

- Large solar arrays as primary use of property
- Usually located on very large greenfield/agricultural sites
- Generally operated by a utility or sells energy to a utility



- **Commercial and Residential (Distributed)**

- Smaller scale installations generally within developed areas
- Usually rooftop or ground mounted adjacent to buildings
- Accessory to and primarily serving existing land uses on-site



Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

ENERGY ELEMENT (adopted in 2011)

OVERALL GOAL

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel consumption; mitigate the effects of rising energy costs; and promote the long-term economic security of Alachua County through energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy production.

GENERAL STRATEGY:

Priority 1: Practice energy conservation.

Priority 2: Maximize energy efficiency.

Priority 3: Promote and invest in renewable energy production.

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

ENERGY ELEMENT FOCUS AREAS

- GHG Reduction Goals
- The Built Environment
- Energy Efficient Land Use Patterns
- Energy Efficient Transportation System
- County Government Initiatives
- Encourage Renewable Energy Production
- Solid Waste
- Education & Public Information

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

ENERGY ELEMENT

- Land development regulations shall encourage use of, energy efficient design techniques such as passive solar design for streets and houses, sustainable landscaping (Policy 2.1.1)
- Collaborate with other local governments to investigate the use of alternative fuel sources such as biofuel, methane, electric and/or solar in government fleets. (Policy 4.1.2)

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Increase the use of renewable energy in County government.

- The County's goal by 2030 is that 100% of energy purchased or produced for County facilities be from solar photovoltaic sources, with an interim target of 50% by 2025. (Policy 5.2.1)
- Pursue funding to develop alternative energy facilities that would be capable of producing energy from anaerobic digestion, solar energy, biodiesel or other forms of sustainable energy resources.(Policy 5.2.3)

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

ENERGY ELEMENT

- Encourage renewable energy production and a countywide system of distributed residential and commercial power generation. (Objective 6.1)
- Encourage all utilities within Alachua County to retrofit existing systems to incorporate net metering and establish net metering agreements. (Policy 6.1.1)
- Alachua County shall pursue implementation of an efficiency and renewable energy financing program, such as a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program. (Policy 6.1.2)

Comprehensive Plan Policies on Solar

ENERGY ELEMENT

- Increase the use of solar and other forms of renewable energy by County residents, businesses and agricultural operations. (Objective 6.2)
- Encourage and provide incentives for installing solar arrays on rooftops and other impervious spaces, and remove any barriers to their installation in such areas. (Policy 6.2.1)
- Partner with local utility providers, municipalities and the University of Florida to make information available to the public on their personal energy usage and possible conservation techniques, the benefits of using renewable energy, and the local, state and federal incentives and programs available to assist with the installation of solar and other forms of renewable energy. (Policy 8.1.3)

Land Development Regulations on Solar

- Sec. 406.11 – Exemption from 30% Tree Canopy Coverage Requirement
- Sec 407.09.5 – Description of Rooftop Photovoltaics as a accessory use on any conforming and legally non-conforming buildings.

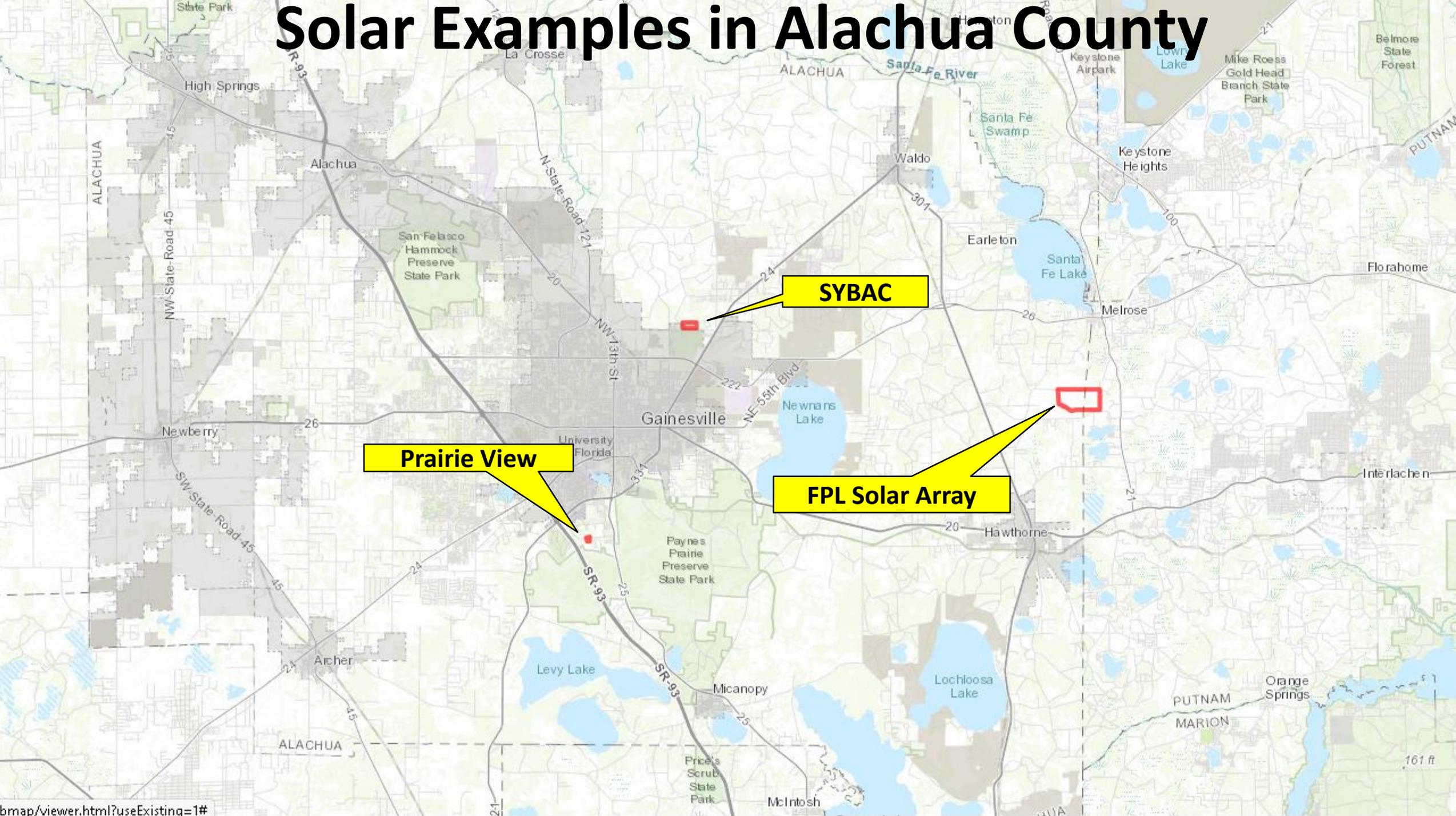
Land Development Regulations on Solar

- *Proposed Sec. 404.50.5* – To conform with new state preemption, allows Solar Facility as a Limited Use in Agriculture zoning district and a Special Exception in all other districts except Conservation. Includes a 75' high density buffer.
- Also new definition of “Solar Facility” which describes a utility scale solar system consistent with Florida Statutes. Specifically exempts rooftop and accessory systems.

Florida Senate Bill 896 (2021)

- Requires Counties to consider a Solar Facility as a permitted use in the Agriculture zoning district.
 - Much of unincorporated area outside Urban Cluster has Agricultural zoning
 - Some Agricultural zoning within Urban Cluster
- Exception for sites under review before July 1, 2021.
- Allows local government to regulate landscaping and buffers of Solar Facilities.

Solar Examples in Alachua County



SYBAC

Prairie View

FPL Solar Array

Solar Examples in Alachua County

Previous facilities include:

- SYBAC facility on NE 53rd Avenue – 6 megawatts
- FPL Array in eastern Alachua County – 74.9 megawatts
- Prairie View Solar Park off of SW 63rd Avenue – 1.5 megawatts

Alachua County Solar Programs

- 2018 Solar Co-op Procurement Programs
- SolSmart Silver Award 2019
- 2015-2021 Support for PACE Programs that allow Solar Energy Installation

Alachua County Solar Programs

- County Bldg Installation of 240 kW under Feed In Tariff and Net Metering Agreements
- 442 kW are in development for the Civil Courthouse and Health Department
- In FY22 we will have an estimated 682kW of Solar PV installed

Factors for Consideration in Identifying Solar Sites

- Solar Resource Access
- Proximity to existing transmission/distribution lines
- Property Size
- Protection of natural and historic resources
- Preservation of scenic vistas and corridors
- Avoid loss of most valuable agriculture lands and designated future urban development areas
- Compatibility with surrounding land uses

Factors for Consideration in Siting Solar Facilities

- Energy Justice - Equity and Inclusion of the Marginalized
 - Meaningful Process Involvement, Remedy Present or Prior Harm, Decision Making, Benefits, Accessibility
- Compatible - Complimentary Uses
 - Agriculture Uses (Apiary, Wildflowers, Animal Grazing)
 - Parking Lots, Landfills, Large-scale commercial roofs

Factors for Consideration in Siting Solar Facilities

- Limiting Regulatory Factors – FLPSC
- Friendly net metering policies
- Simplified interconnection rules
- Requirements for utilities to procure distributed solar
- Allows shared (community) solar
- Allows choice of energy supplier
- Offers PACE
- Can go above state building efficiency codes
- Standard contracts for distributed solar
- Allows third party solar ownership – or leasing PPAs

2021 COMMUNITY POWER SCORECARD ✦ 50 STATE SCORES



	2021 Community Power Grade	2021 Community Power Score (out of 42)	Customer-friendly net energy metering	Ensures simplified interconnection rules to encourage distributed renewables	Requires utility energy procurement to include distributed resources or solar	Allows shared/community renewable energy suppliers (community choice aggregation)	Offers property assessed clean energy financing for residential buildings	Offers property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing for commercial buildings	Allows communities to go further than state building energy efficiency codes	Has a standard contract or feed-in tariff for distributed renewable resources	Allows third party solar ownership through leasing or PPAs
Massachusetts	A	39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
California	A	38	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York	A	36	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Illinois	B	31	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
New Hampshire	B	29	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
New Jersey	B	29	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Rhode Island	B	28	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida	D	9	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Maryland	B	28	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
District of Columbia	B	27	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Connecticut	C	25	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Virginia	C	25	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Colorado	C	24	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Delaware	C	24	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
New Mexico	C	24	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Oregon	C	24	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Nevada	C	23	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Minnesota	C	22	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

Community Initiatives/Conversations on Solar

- Joint Water and Climate Policy Board – October 25th presentation by Leon County, Duke Energy, and other utilities on solar programs and plans.
- Citizen Climate Advisory Committee (advises Joint Water & Climate Policy Board).
- Alachua County NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice Initiative.
- City of Gainesville Utility Advisory Board (GRU Utility & Energy Policy)

Staff Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Continue to monitor and participate in current/ongoing community initiatives and discussions regarding solar facilities, solar energy storage, and other renewable energy issues, and report back to the BoCC with recommendations or ideas resulting from those processes.

Staff Recommendations and Next Steps

2. Re-evaluate County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use and Energy Element policies on solar, and suggest any changes needed to better articulate and implement the County Commission's priorities on solar and other renewable energy. Potential areas of focus could include:
 - Any changes needed as a result of SB 896 (2021)
 - Define “preservation and strengthening of community and neighborhood character” with regard to the criteria for appropriate locations for institutional land uses (such as utility scale solar) per Policy 5.2.1, FLUE
 - Re-evaluate existing solar energy purchase/production goals for County facilities
 - Focus on encouraging a distributed system of residential and commercial solar throughout the community