

## **Solar Energy System Land Use Plan Recommendations**

Due to the recent advent of solar energy systems as a significant presence in its landscape, Rowan County has taken steps to update its zoning ordinance with standards designed to encourage the use of solar for supplementing residential and commercial power generation along with minimum criteria to ensure utility scale systems are not a dominant land use featured in rural areas.

The County recognizes the site characteristics of a utility scale system will differ based on a variety of factors and has established the following policies for guidance when selecting a location and for consideration by the Planning Board or Board of Commissioners when evaluating an application.

No single “not preferred” policy herein should be viewed as the *de facto* criteria for denying an application, rather the policy standard may be mitigated thru conditional district negotiations, e.g. increased setbacks, buffering or screening, etc. However, multiple “not preferred” or “discouraged” policies strongly suggest the “orderly planned use of land resources” principle found in Section 21-2 of the Rowan County Zoning Ordinance has not been satisfied.

### General Recommendations

- Areas currently served or having the potential to be served by water or sewer infrastructure are not preferred locations
- Existing Industrial (IND) and Economic Development (ED) zoning districts, or sites / properties listed with the Rowan County Economic Development Commission, are not preferred locations
- Encouraged in areas with low to moderate residential population densities in combination with buffers and screening
- Locations or areas of a site with topography such that screening / visual separation cannot be achieved from adjoining properties or roadways within a three (3) year time frame should be avoided
- Sites that will occupy prime soils or displace active farming operations are not preferred, but if approved should incorporate native plants or grasses as groundcover and include pollinator friendly vegetation
- Panel locations within the Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) or placement of fill within these areas of a site is discouraged
- Subject to potential utility extensions, sites having identified poor soils or building / septic constraints are generally encouraged for selection
- Sites within the viewshed of a public park, National Register listed historic property or Rowan County landmark are not preferred
- Utility scale solar energy systems locating within one (1) mile of another utility scale solar energy system is discouraged
- A maximum system acreage of 50 acres is preferred, but may be increased based on the site’s ability to meet all other recommendations contained herein

### Areas West of I-85

- Due to residential densities and proximity to municipalities, Area 2 is not a preferred location
- Based on existing infrastructure, e.g. transportation, water, and rail access, location within the US 29 and Hwy 70 corridor overlay are discouraged
- Locations that minimize visual impacts to the NC Scenic Byway Corridor are preferred

### Areas East of I-85

- Site locations along the US 29 and I-85 highway corridors are discouraged
- Site locations along the East NC 152 and US 52 highway corridors are not preferred
- Sites in proximity to High Rock Lake located in Area 2 are not preferred

### I-85 South Corridor

- Sites within the identified and targeted growth nodes depicted in Figure 23 are discouraged