

# **BOX CANYON SOLAR PROJECT**

## **PINAL COUNTY REZONING/PLANNED AREA DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION “PAD BOOK”**

Submitted to:  
**Pinal County Community Development, Planning Division**

**Applicant**

BOCA bn, LLC  
Attn: Erik Ellis, Vice President, Project Development  
BrightNight, LLC  
Email: erik@brightnightenergy.com  
602-549-4243

**Legal Counsel**

Rose Law Group  
Attn: Court Rich  
7144 E Stetson Dr, Ste 300  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
Email: crich@roselawgroup.com  
Email: jhall@roselawgroup.com  
480-505-3938

**Planning/Civil Engineering**

Environmental Planning Group, A Terracon Company  
Attn: Mickey Siegel  
4685 S. Ash Ave., Suite H-4  
Tempe, AZ 85282  
Email: msiegel@epgllc.co  
(623) 244-3622

Dibble Engineering  
Attn: Kent E. Norcross, PE  
1640 South Stapley Drive, Suite 120  
Mesa, Arizona 85204  
Email: Kent.Norcross@dibblecorp.com  
480-757-7876

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## **D. PLANNED AREA DEVELOPMENT (PAD) BOOK**

### **D.2 Purpose of Request**

The Applicant, BOCA, bn LLC (BOCA) is requesting this rezoning/Planned Area Development (PAD) overlay in order to construct and operate a photovoltaic (PV) power generation and storage facility on the Box Canyon Solar Project (Project) site. BOCA is requesting to change the existing zoning district from General Rural (GR) to Industrial (I-3) with a PAD on 2,087.15 acres of land owned by Arizona State Land Department. The PAD overlay will restrict the use on the site by only allowing the proposed operation as a solar generation facility with battery storage.

This rezoning request will bring the property into compliance with the recently amended Comprehensive Plan land use designation. Pinal County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved to change the Comprehensive Plan to “Green Energy Production” to allow for this large-scale PV solar power generation and storage facility.

It is extremely important to note that this project has significant support from all of the local Electrical Districts as this project will allow for Pinal County to take advantage of economic opportunities and benefits while keeping local electric rates low for County residents and businesses.

Local and reputable real estate economist, Elliott Pollack & Company, prepared an Economic and Fiscal Impact Report dated October 2021 specific to Box Canyon Solar Project that concluded with the following economic benefits:

\$181.7 Million	Total Economic Activity in Pinal County
\$98.2 Million	Fiscal Contribution (State, County, & Local Schools)
\$10.6 Million	Florence Unified School District
\$11.4 Million	Pinal County and Special Districts
\$16.1 Million	Wages

*(all benefits listed above cover the entire life of the Project; approximately 35 years)*

### **D.3 Description of Proposal**

The proposed use will allow development of up to a 300-megawatt PV solar energy facility with battery energy storage to be located on approximately 1,961 acres of the overall 2,087 acre site owned by Arizona State Trust Land adjacent to State Route (SR) 79. This Project is planned to connect into the nearby Salt River Project (SRP) Abel Substation in order to provide much desired green energy to the local power grid.

Subject parcels included as part of the proposed rezoning/PAD are represented in Figure 1.

# Box Canyon Solar Zoning Plan Amendment

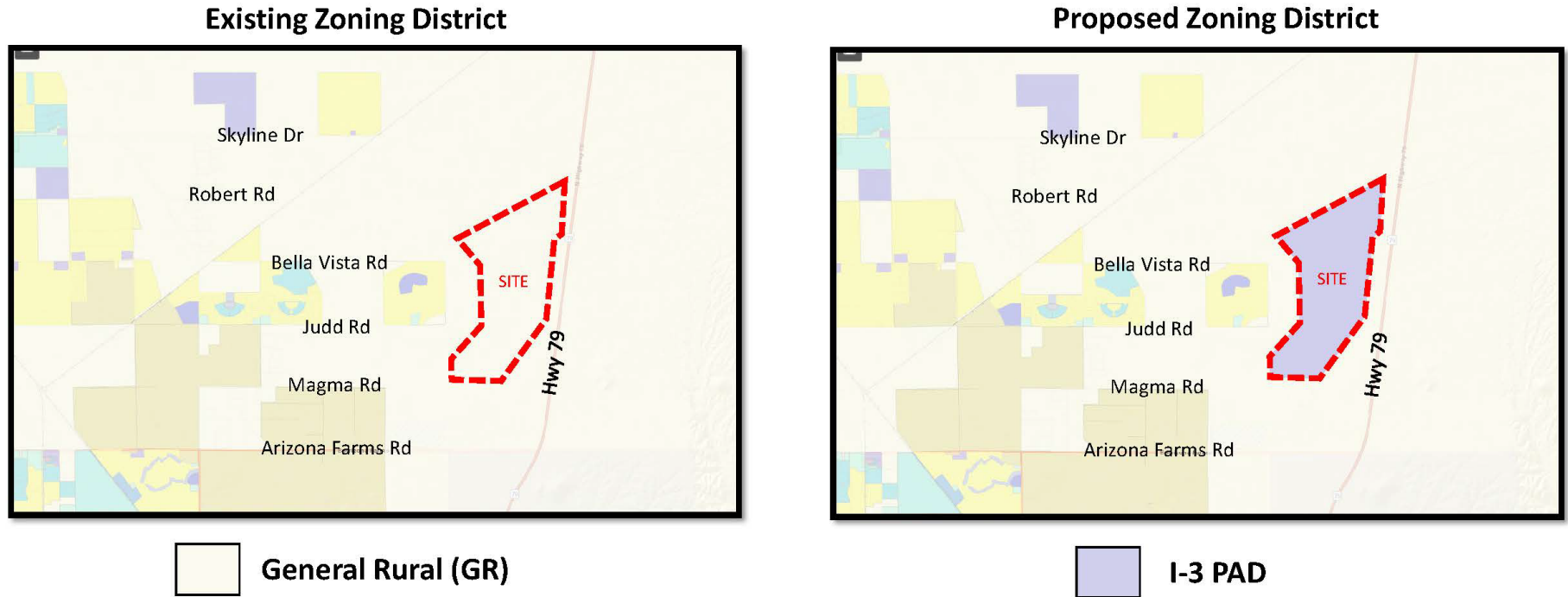


Figure 1. Proposed Rezoning/PAD Parcels

#### **D.4 Relationship to Surrounding Properties within One Mile**

The site is currently undeveloped vacant state land and is surrounded by the following uses:

- **North:** vacant state land
- **East:** SR 79
- **South:** vacant state land
- **West:** vacant state land

#### **D.5 Schools**

There are no schools within one mile of the Project site nor schools proposed as part of the Project.

#### **D.6 Public Services**

No direct public services are proposed as part of the Project.

#### **D.7 Community Services and How the Need for these Services will be Addressed**

Other than fire and emergency medical services, no community services are proposed or needed as part of the Project. Box Canyon representatives have already met with Rural Metro and other nearby Fire Districts to discuss the Project in great detail to ensure all necessary fire protection and preventative measures are installed. The Applicant is also working with local Fire Districts to establish an Emergency Response Plan to ensure proper knowledge and education is provided to First Responders.

#### **D.8 Location and Accessibility**

The Project site is located within unincorporated Pinal County and is currently undeveloped vacant land characterized by typical Sonoran Desert vegetation; however, this area of State Land has little to no cacti as it has been previously disturbed by miners many years ago. The site is approximately 4.6 miles east of the SRP Abel Substation, 9 miles north of Florence, 5.6 miles south of SR 60, and directly adjacent to and west of SR 79. The parcels are directly accessible via SR 79. The southern boundary of the site is approximately one mile north of Arizona Farms Road and one mile east of North Herseth Road. Access to Interstate 10 is about 35 miles west of the Project site via SR 287/87. It is important to note that the Project site is within close proximity to the Arizona National Guard's Florence Military Reservation training site that is located just south and east of the Project. Military ranges include machine gun, mortar, and small arms ranges and land navigation courses. The proposed solar project is an ideal neighbor to the Florence Military Reservation's noisy and dusty operation.

The subject parcels are owned by Arizona State Trust Land, and the Applicant will be leasing the lands from Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). The Pinal County Assessor identifies the property as follows:

- Parcel No. 1: Portions of Section 13 and 24, T3SR9E, and a portion of Sections 7, 8, 18 and 19, T3S10E
- Parcel No. 2: A portion of Section 24, T3SR9E, and portions of Section 18 and 19, T3S10E

- Parcel No. 3: A portion of Sections 24 and 25, T3SR9E, and a portion of Section 19 and 30, T3S10E

A Commercial Lease Application for the subject parcels has been filed with ASLD.

#### **D.9 Compliance with Regionally Significant Routes for Safety and Mobility, Access Management Manual (October 2008)**

No public streets or roadways are planned as part of the Project. However according to the Pinal County *Regionally Significant Routes Plan for Safety and Mobility, Access Management Manual*, Bella Vista Road is designated as a Regionally Significant Route for future connection from Hunt Highway to SR 79. The proposed site plan has preserved the Bella Vista alignment that traverses the Project for future improvements. A 150-foot right-of-way plus an additional 100-foot setback on either side is being preserved for Bella Vista Road. Furthermore, the Applicant intends to provide a 150-foot right-of-way alignment for Judd Road with additional 100-foot setbacks along the north and south for future access to the west from Hwy 79.

#### **D.10 Utilities and Services**

This Project will not require any utilities or services from Pinal County or any other utility or service provider. Access roads will be designed and constructed to provide for emergency vehicle access throughout the site.

The Project will include an operations and maintenance (O&M) building and control house adjacent to the Project substation. This building will not be an “occupied” structure. A small parking lot will be needed for the O&M facility. The O&M building will likely be a temporary building or trailer.

During operations, the O&M building would have potable water provided in jugs or dispensers. This site will not have running water or irrigation lines as it completely relies on the power of the sun and any type of water or wastewater improvements is not needed. The facility does not require an operations water source. Drinking water will be provided in 5-gallon bottles and water for periodic panel washing (if required) will be trucked to the site as needed.

Portable toilets will be provided for employees when at the site.

#### **D.11 Ownership and Control**

BOCA intends to own, control, and maintain all aspects of the Project. Power generated at this site will then be routed to the SRP Abel Substation. All of the energy is expected to be utilized in the state of Arizona.

#### **D.12 Timing of Development (Phasing Schedule)**

All required permits are expected to be received by fourth quarter of 2022 and enter construction as soon as December 2022. Once started, construction will be done continuously without phasing over an 18-month period with commercial operation commencing in May 2024.

#### **D.13 Conformance with the Comprehensive Plan**

Pursuant to Arizona’s Growing Smarter Act and Smart Growth Plus legislation, all Arizona cities and counties are required to adopt a Comprehensive Plan to serve as a guiding document

regarding future land use applications. All zoning cases after the adoption of such plan must conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

As previously mentioned, Pinal County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously on November 17, 2021 to change the Comprehensive Plan land use designation on this Project site to "Green Energy Production."

"Green Energy Production" indicates areas throughout Pinal County that are designated specifically for the location of large-scale PV solar panel power generation facilities just like the proposed Box Canyon solar facility. According to County staff, the appropriate zoning district to allow the solar facility is I-3. Thus, this application is requesting to change the existing GR zoning to I-3 with a PAD overlay, which is compatible zoning with the recently approved Comprehensive Plan designation. The PAD overlay is being requested in order to restrict the I-3 uses on the property by only allowing the proposed solar project with battery storage. No other uses will be allowed unless an amendment is approved to the PAD which would require another public hearing process.

#### **D.14 Recreational Amenities**

No recreational amenities are proposed as part of the Project.

#### **D.15 Fences, Walls, and Screening**

Section 2.340.040 of the Pinal County Development Services Code (PCDSC) states that industrial zoning that abuts rural or residential property shall provide a setback of 50 feet to create an appropriate buffer between land uses. Such setback shall be improved with one or more of the following:

- Landscaping
- Parking lot with landscaping and a decorative fence or wall
- Recreational space for employees with landscaping

The proposed solar project will significantly exceed the 50-foot setback requirement along each perimeter. A large setback will be provided along the west side of SR 79 that ranges from 300 feet to 1,000 feet. Additionally, the Applicant has significantly changed their western project boundary to create a half-mile separation (2,600 feet) between the solar project facilities and vacant residential property to the west. Furthermore, there is significant existing desert vegetation that will provide natural screening of the solar panels.

In addition to the significant setbacks and natural vegetative screening, chain link fencing will surround the solar project facilities to protect the panels and restrict public access to the site. Chain link fencing is typical and routinely utilized in existing solar facilities within Pinal County. Any screening with walls or vegetation exceeds County requirements and expectations.

Importantly, the Applicant has agreed to provide 6-foot concrete subdivision walls along the north and south sides of the Judd Road alignment. These walls will be constructed 100 feet back from the centerline of Judd Road and will provide additional screening. The walls will be constructed in the future, at the time that Judd Road itself is constructed

#### **D.16 Total Number of Dwelling Units**

No dwelling units are proposed as part of the Project.



## **D.17 Maximum Residential Density of Each Planning Unit**

No residential developments are proposed as part of the Project.

## **D.18 Total Number of Parking Spaces for Recreation Facilities**

No recreational facilities are proposed as part of the Project, so no recreational parking spaces would be required.

## **D.19 Type of Landscaping**

Pinal County is currently experiencing a severe water shortage and securing water rights for development is challenging. The proposed use is a solar farm that does not require water or wastewater services. Furthermore, the proposed site is currently surrounded by undisturbed desert land, primarily Arizona State Trust Lands managed by ASLD. Because of this unique use of the property, the Applicant is requesting relief from planting new trees or shrubs that require a constant water source. The landscaping plan within the setback will be to preserve a substantial amount of existing desert vegetation that has prospered and will continue to grow without artificial and wasteful irrigation, as well as provide natural screening of the solar panels. The goal is to develop a solar farm that blends into the natural desert that surrounds the site.

## **D.20 Preliminary Hydrologic Data and a Statement on Drainage**

The Project will avoid the adjacent floodplains and be located with the Zone X portions of the property, thus eliminating any impacts to the floodplain. The Project will retain the difference of the pre stormwater runoff versus post stormwater runoff and maintain the existing flow patterns across the site so as to not impact the current downstream stormwater conditions. See the preliminary drainage report for additional information (Appendix A).

## **D.21 Additional Information for Commercial and Industrial Uses *(if applicable)***

### **D.21.1 Total Area in Acres Proposed (Commercial and Industrial Separated)**

The entire site is proposed as an industrial use for the solar project. No portion of the site is proposed for a commercial/retail use.

### **D.21.2 Approximate Retail Sales Floor Area (Commercial)**

No retail sales floor area is needed as part of the Project.

### **D.21.3 Proposed Uses Based on Permitted Uses in the Base Zone**

Pinal County considers the proposed solar farm as an industrial use in the I-3 zoning category and includes PV solar generation and electrical storage (battery). This application is requesting a zone change to the I-3 zoning district along with a PAD overlay. The PAD overlay will restrict the permitted uses on the property to only allow solar generation with electrical storage. No other uses will be allowed by right.

## D.21.4 Standards of Height, Open Space, Buffering, Landscaping, Pedestrian and Vehicle Circulation, Off-Street Parking and Loading, Signs, Outdoor Lighting, and Nuisance Controls Intended for the Development

Much of the site would be covered by anti-reflective PV modules mounted on single-axis tracking systems. These systems move the panels to track the sun across the sky without glare

During the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process, the Applicant has agreed to decrease the size of the panels proposed for this site. The panels that will be utilized for this operation will be 6 to 9 feet in height and will be rotating with throughout the day. The proposed gen-tie transmission line structure (tower or pole) design has also been lowered to a height that may range between 70 and 90 feet. It is noted in PCDSC Chapter 2.150.050 that height limits shall not apply to “electric power transmission towers.” Additionally, the Applicant has agreed to move the gen-tie transmission route one mile to the north of the Bella Vista Road alignment to further protect any future residential communities to the west of the Project site from potential views of the gen-tie facilities.

The Project will include an O&M building and control house adjacent to the Project substation. The purpose of an O&M building is to house maintenance staff workspace, equipment, and documents, and the control house would store protective relay and communications equipment. The O&M building and control house would each be approximately 800 square feet, and a maximum of 30 feet in height.

During operations, the O&M building would have potable water provided in jugs or dispensers. Portable toilets will be provided for employees when onsite. Proper permitting for construction of such buildings will be addressed with Pinal County at such time. All design and construction of the solar arrays and future buildings will be consistent with Pinal County building codes.

No public open space, pedestrian and vehicle circulation, off-street parking and loading, signs, or nuisance control standards are proposed for this site. Parking will be required for the O&M building.

## D.22 Tables

Quantitative development data for land use, amended development standards, amended use, and utilities and services are presented in Table 1 through Table 4.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Total gross acreage of site	2,087
Total area of arterial and collector streets	0
Total acres preserved in washes as open space	65
Total number of each type of dwelling unit	0
Total number of all dwelling units proposed including the range and mixture of lot sizes within each base zone	0
Overall proposed density	Not applicable

<b>Area</b>	<b>I-3 Zoning</b>	<b>Proposed (I-3/ Solar PAD)</b>
Minimum lot area	None	Not applicable
Minimum lot width	None	Not applicable

Table 2. Amended Development Standards		
Area	I-3 Zoning	Proposed (I-3/ Solar PAD)
Minimum building setbacks	<p><b>Front:</b> 20 feet except as provided in PCDSC 2.340.040</p> <p><b>Side:</b> (1) 25 feet where development abuts a rural or residential district and (2) zero feet where development abuts any other district</p> <p><b>Rear:</b> 10 feet, except when abutting property zoned rural or residential, then 25 feet and subject to PCDSC 2.340.040</p>	50 feet
Maximum building height	50 feet	30 feet
Minimum distance between main and detached accessory buildings		NA
Buildable area		

Table 3. Amended Use		
Use	Permitted	Non-Permitted
Photovoltaic solar generation	✓	
Electrical storage (battery)	✓	
Adult-oriented businesses and adult service providers		✓
Airport or landing strip		✓
Gasoline or flammables bulk station		✓
Government structures, fire district stations, sheriff's facilities and their accessory uses		✓
Heliport		✓
Impounded or towed vehicle storage yard		✓
Junk, salvage or auto wrecking yards		✓
Landfill and transfer stations		✓
Manufacture, maintenance, assembling, painting, upholstery, compounding, processing, packaging or treatment operations		✓
Prisons, detention facilities and their accessory uses		✓
Private schools		✓
Restaurant		✓
Sports arena		✓
Vocational schools		✓
Wireless communication facilities		✓
Heavy truck storage, repair, service, staging and point of operation for trucking operations and their accessory equipment		✓

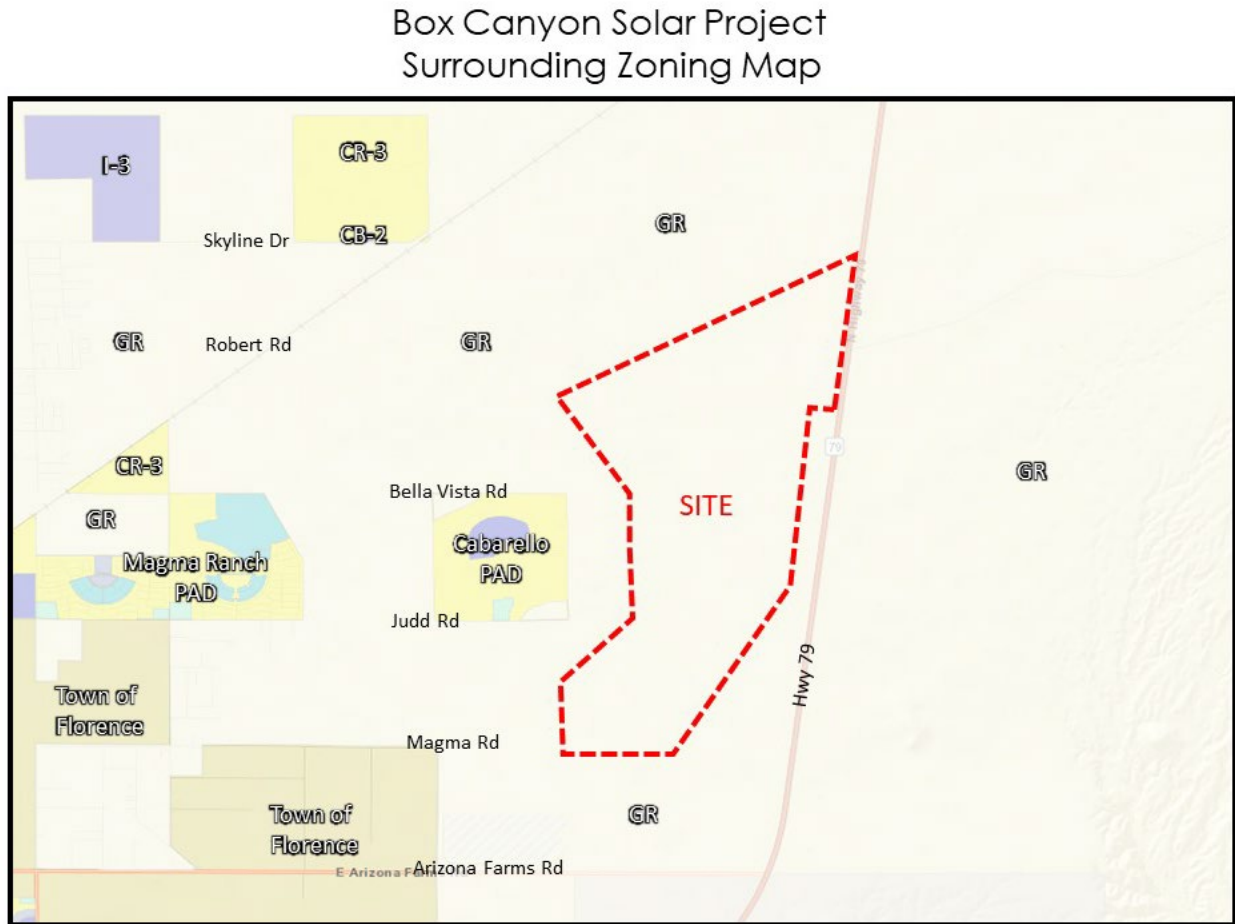
Table 4. Utility and Services	
Type	Source
Sewer	Not applicable
Water	Private water provider
Electric	Local electric utility
Telephone	Local telephone company
Police	Pinal County Sheriff's Office
Fire	Rural Metro
Schools	Not applicable
Solid Waste Disposal	Local waste disposal/recycling facilities

**D.24 Appendix, as applicable**

See attached appendices.

**E. PROPERTY MAP SHOWING RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING PROPERTIES WITHIN ONE MILE OF THE PROJECT BOUNDARIES**

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship to surrounding properties zoning within one mile of the Project boundaries.



**Figure 2. Area Zoning Map**

**F. PRELIMINARY TITLE REPORT**

A Preliminary Title report is included in Appendix B.

**G. DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**G.1 Site Plan**

The Project Site Plan is Appendix C of this application.

## **G.2 Open Space and Recreation Plan**

There is no public open space or recreation planned as part of the Project; however, there are two large washes and several large vegetation areas that will be preserved and protected. The combined area of the two washes that bisect the site is approximately 65 acres. In addition, the gas pipeline easement that bisects the site is approximately 50 acres, which will remain untouched. This is over 100 acres of the site that will remain untouched and essentially open space.

## **G.3 Landscape Plan**

Landscaping will include the existing and significant vegetation in the area. Since the proposed solar project does not require water, there will be no additional vegetation planted as it is neither desirable nor feasible to water and maintain desert trees and shrubs.

## **G.4 Arizona Game and Fish Environmental Online Review Tool Report**

An Arizona Game and Fish Environmental Online Review Tool report is included in Appendix D. Importantly, the report shows NO threatened or endangered species documented within five miles of the site. Additionally, the Pinal County Desktop Study prepared in April 2021 found that NO species listed under the Endangered Species Act were documented to occur on the Project site. Finally, the Biological Field Survey conducted in October 2021 concluded that NO listed species were found on the site.

Major wash corridors traversing the site will be protected to preserve native vegetation and allow typical wildlife movement and use to continue. Wildlife-friendly permeable fencing will be utilized around the perimeter of the panels and other project facilities to protect the solar operation but still allow passage by smaller desert creatures.

## **G.5 Additional Information**

### **G.5.1 Preliminary Drainage Report**

A Preliminary Drainage Report is included in Appendix A.

### **G.5.2 Preliminary Traffic Statement**

Primary access to the Project site will be provided directly from SR 79. However, due to the use, this site will generate very low volume traffic once constructed. During operations, the facility will be remotely monitored and only maintenance staff will visit the site if necessary during operation. It is estimated that two to three maintenance employees will be onsite periodically to carry out inspection and maintenance activities. Again, there will be minimal to no daily traffic created by this use.

A paved, all-weather public access road is required and will be installed to connect the Box Canyon Solar site to SR 79. The access road will be designed to accommodate two-way traffic and emergency vehicles

A Traffic Impact Assessment was conducted per the current Arizona Department of Transportation Impact Assessment Guidelines and Procedures and concludes there are no issues with minimal traffic created by the proposed use. Traffic Study is included in Appendix E

### G.5.3 Certified A.L.T.A. Survey of the Project

A Project A.L.T.A. survey, including a legal description of the rezoning/PAD boundary, is included in Appendix F

### G.5.4 Property Owners within 1,200 Feet

The Applicant has significantly reduced the Project site boundary from the approved Comprehensive Plan Amendment application, so that the western boundary is at least 2,600 feet or more than half a mile from the undeveloped Cabarello PAD to the west. This site is almost entirely surrounded by vacant land owned by ASLD with only two private property owners in the nearby area. As a result of greatly reducing the size of the Project, there is only one private property owner within 1,200 feet of the Project boundary as listed in Table 5, and the 1,200-foot boundary and parcels within are illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 5. Property Owners within 1,200 feet of the Project Parcels		
Parcel Number	Name	Mailing Address 1
210420010	Magma Flood Control District	3850 E. Baseline Road, #114 Mesa, AZ 85206

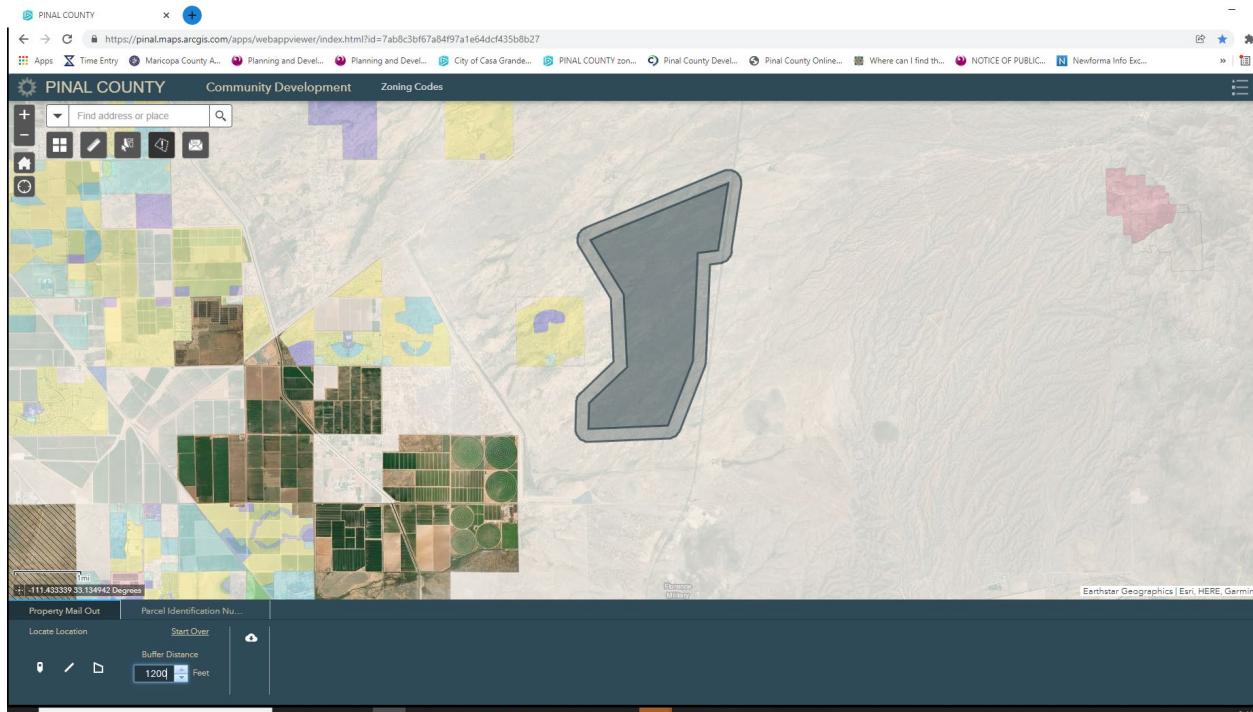


Figure 3. Property Owners within 1,200 feet of Project Parcels

## **G.5.5 Additional Materials for Specific Types of Commercial and Industrial Uses (if applicable):**

### **G.5.5.1 Commercial Uses**

No retail sales floor area is needed as part of the Project.

### **G.5.5.2 Industrial Uses**

#### **Total Area in Acres Proposed (Commercial and Industrial Separated)**

The entire site is proposed as an industrial use for the solar project. No portion of the site is proposed for a commercial/retail use.

#### **Types of Uses Proposed**

The proposed use is industrial and includes PV solar generation and electrical storage (battery). All other uses are prohibited under this PAD and can only be added through a formal amendment to this PAD document which triggers a public hearing process.

#### **Anticipated Employment for Development per Major Phases**

The Project will bring approximately 250 direct construction jobs plus 53 indirect and induced jobs) to Pinal County by generating employment opportunities during construction and through the operation of the Project. The number of workers on the site will vary but will average up to approximately 200 each month with a peak of up to 250 over the construction period. During operations, the facility will be remotely operated and require two to three employees onsite to carry out periodic inspection and maintenance activities. Remote and on-site employees will be working at the site on an as-needed basis.

The Applicant has been working closely with local businesses and intends to promote economic revenue to their businesses as a result of the proposed solar operation. Box Canyon Solar Project has significant support from many local small business owners included on the attached support petitions included with this application.

Box Canyon representatives have also agreed to host job fairs to recruit locally for construction jobs and encourage local contractors to bid on construction work.

### **G.5.5.3 Standards**

#### **Height**

The maximum height standard for the Project PV solar field, energy storage facility, and affiliated infrastructure is proposed to be less than 30 feet, which is less than the 50-foot maximum height allowed under PCDSC Chapter 2.150.050. The Project gen-tie transmission line structures are expected to be approximately 70 feet tall; however, PCDSC Chapter 2.150.050 notes that height limits shall not apply to electric power transmission towers.

## **Buffering**

The minimum industrial buffer required by PCDS around the perimeter of the Project site is 50 feet; however, this project significantly exceeds the required industrial setback and has been redesigned to address concerns expressed during the public hearing process for the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Furthermore, there is existing vegetation on this property that will be utilized as a natural screening buffer to the solar panels. The Project site is currently surrounded by vacant land owned by ASLD with no plans for improvement.

## **Landscaping**

As mentioned, the existing desert vegetation that has prospered without irrigation will be preserved and utilized to keep the rural desert feel of the area. The intent is to develop a solar farm that blends into the natural desert that surrounds the site.

## **Lighting**

Because the Project generates power during daylight hours, some routine maintenance could be performed during the night. The Project's lighting system will provide O&M personnel with the minimal amount of illumination necessary for both normal and emergency conditions. Lighting and security could include motion-activated or infrared security lighting and cameras at the Project's perimeter, at O&M buildings, at substations, and at each power conversion station and PV-combing switchgear. Lighting will be designed to provide the minimum illumination needed to achieve safety and security objectives and will be downward facing and shielded to focus illumination on the desired areas only. There will be no lighting in the solar field, so there will be no light spillage onto surrounding properties. If lighting at individual solar panels or other equipment is needed for night maintenance, portable lighting will be used. The Project is surrounded by additional vacant land and SR 79 so there is no illumination impact anticipated.

## **Other**

No public open space, pedestrian and vehicle circulation, off-street parking and loading, signs, or nuisance control standards are proposed.

### **G.5.6 Comprehensive Plan Compliance Checklist and Consistency with Pinal County's Vision Components**

The proposed Project is consistent with many of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Most significantly, the Board of Supervisors recently unanimously approved changing the Comprehensive Plan land use designation on this property to "Green Energy Production" to support the development of renewable sources to meet local energy provider needs. This application to change the zoning of the property is in full compliance with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

#### **G.5.6.1 Consistency with Pinal County's Vision Components**

The proposed PAD/rezoning is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the current Comprehensive Plan.

The chapters of the Comprehensive Plan include Sense of Community; Mobility and Connectivity; Economic Sustainability; Open Spaces and Places; Environmental Stewardship; Healthy, Happy Residents; and Quality Educational Opportunities vision components and are discussed in the



following sections with specific responses to the applicable questions included in the Comprehensive Plan compliance checklist.

### **Sense of Community**

The proposal is consistent with the Sense of Community vision. While the Project will be built in a rural part of Pinal County, it is surrounded by vacant state land as well as by the Florence Military Reservation. Future residential which is currently vacant land is located west of Box Canyon's site. As evidenced by other existing solar operation near or adjacent to residential communities, this solar facility is a compatible use with this community. In fact, Box Canyon will serve as an appropriate buffer between the existing Florence Military Reservation and training operations and any future residential uses to the west. The county's vision of Sense of Community is accomplished through smart planning and compatible uses.

### **Mobility and Connectivity**

This proposal is consistent with Mobility and Connectivity vision. Ensuring Pinal County has adequate transportation corridors and multimodal transportation options is essential. There will be a temporary, minimal increase in traffic volumes on SR 79 due to the work force and materials and equipment delivery during construction, but there will be no significant increase in traffic during the operational life of the Project. The Project will, therefore, have no material impact on mobility and connectivity for the transportation corridors within Pinal County or the State. Box Canyon will be preserving two significant future roadway alignments for Bella Vista Road and Judd Road connecting SR 79 to the west.

### **Economic Sustainability**

This proposal is consistent with Economic Sustainability vision. The Project will expand opportunities for residents to work in Pinal County. We estimate the Project will provide approximately 250 direct jobs (303 including indirect and induced employment opportunities) during construction and employ two to three permanent O&M employees over the roughly 30-year estimated life of the Project. The Project will create quality jobs that provide residents career opportunities. Box Canyon Representatives have been working closely with local Pinal County and Florence businesses to ensure positive economic impacts on local businesses as well as attempt to hire local contractors during the construction of the Project.

Pinal County has seen high demands for clean energy growth from local electric providers as well as from large corporations and manufacturers interested in relocating to the region, exasperating the need and demand for more clean energy. All of the power generated at Box Canyon is already contracted to stay in Arizona; not out of state. The positive economic impacts to the County are quite significant.

Local and reputable real estate economist, Elliott Pollack & Company, prepared an Economic and Fiscal Impact Report dated and submitted to Pinal County in October 2021 specific to Box Canyon Solar Project which concluded with the following economic benefits:

\$181.7 Million	Total Economic Activity in Pinal County
\$98.2 Million	Fiscal Contribution (State, County, & Local Schools)
\$10.6 Million	Florence Unified School District
\$11.4 Million	Pinal County and Special Districts
\$16.1 Million	Wages

*(all benefits listed above cover the entire life of the Project; approximately 35 years)*

## **Open Spaces and Places**

This proposal is consistent with Open Spaces and Places. The Comprehensive Plan states: “Residents value the large connected open spaces and unique places of Pinal County, not only as part of their quality of life, but as an important resource to sustain the region’s immense wildlife habitat and their corridors.” The proposed Project will be constructed to minimize the loss of open space, avoid natural desert washes and wildlife corridors, and avoid protected cultural resources on the Project site. Over 100 acres will be preserved within the natural washes and along the gas pipeline that traverses the site.

## **Environmental Stewardship**

This proposal is consistent with Environmental Stewardship vision. The development of clean renewable energy projects is a benefit to all residents in Pinal County as they replace polluting forms of generation with cleaner options that do not pollute. Adding renewable energy to meet Pinal County’s growing energy needs is the perfect way to ensure a clean environment for the future. This site is expected to generate enough local clean energy to power approximately 70,000 homes and businesses each year, and to provide low-cost clean energy to local electricity users in the county.

Pinal County is a leader in environmental stewardship and rewards and encourages sustainable practices, including water conservation and renewable energy sources. During operation, the Project will use very little water while producing sustainable renewable clean energy for decades.

## **Happy, Healthy Residents**

The proposed Project is consistent with the Healthy, Happy Residents vision. Clean energy helps remove pollution that helps all residents remain healthy, while the jobs and economic development opportunities provided will help increase resources in Pinal County and bring opportunities for greater happiness. During construction the Project is estimated to bring approximately 250 new direct jobs plus 53 indirect and induced jobs to Pinal County. Development will provide an immediate \$39.2 million in direct construction spending, generating a direct, indirect and induced total of \$47.1 million in economic impact from construction activity. This investment will create 303 total construction and related jobs and \$16.1 million in wages. Furthermore, the Applicant has committed to hosting local job fairs to engage and hopefully hire local workers.

## **Quality Educational Opportunities.**

This proposal is consistent with Quality Educational Opportunities. Box Canyon’s team is partnering with Central Arizona College and Florence Unified School District (FUSD) to bring educational programs about solar and green energy production to their students. Over the life of the Project, state land lease collections will total an estimated \$53.3 million while the capacity fee will total \$28.1 million. Pinal County and its special districts will collect an estimated \$11.4 million. The FUSD will receive an estimated \$10.6 million, and the state school equalization tax will collect an estimated \$800,000. In addition to the significant economic impact on schools, BOCA will work with the local schools (FUSD and Central Arizona College) to facilitate site visits and provide information that supports the development of curriculum to help expose students to the field of renewable energy, as well as provide information on careers in the field.

## **G.5.6.2 The Proposed Amendment is Consistent with PART TWO of the Comprehensive Plan's Key Concepts**

### **Consistency with Land Use Designations**

This Project is consistent with the recently approved Comprehensive Plan land use designation of Green Energy Production. The Green Energy designation indicates areas specifically designated for the “location of large scale PV solar panel power generation facilities” according to the Comprehensive Plan. Approving this rezoning request will bring the property into compliance with the existing land use designation.

### **Consistency with Mixed Use Activity Center**

While the Project would occur in a rural part of Pinal County, the Comprehensive Plan indicates it will be proximate to a future Mixed Use, High Intensity Activity Center. As such, there is an opportunity to balance and merge emerging urban centers, rural character, and locally produced clean energy. High Intensity Activity Centers are in concept a mix of professional office, business parks, and industrial use often in a campus-like setting, with high and medium density residential areas to be developed according to future plans. It is highly unlikely that high intensity activity uses will develop in this area for many years; however, the Applicant is thoughtfully considering the balance of proposed and future land uses during the design of this Project. The solar facility is being designed around the future activity center to allow for future development should it occur.

### **Consistency with the Planning Guidelines Described in the Land Use Element**

Green Energy Production land use category was established specifically to allow the development of large solar facilities such as the proposed Project. This rezoning application will ensure that the Project is consistent with the planning goals for the site.

### **Consistency with Quality Employment Opportunities County-wide**

The Project is expected to provide 250 direct jobs during construction along with additional jobs for management and maintenance of the completed project. The Project intends to be operational by June 2024 and is estimated to generate \$181.7 million in economic activity within Pinal County including \$10.6 million for FUSD over the life of the Project through Arizona State Trust Land lease payments that will be utilized in Arizona's K-12 public schools. Furthermore, BOCA is committed to hire locally by hosting job fairs so local contractors and businesses can bid on construction jobs.

### **Consistency with Viable Agriculture, Equestrian and Rural Lifestyle**

The Project will have no negative impact on viable Agriculture, Equestrian, and Rural lifestyles in this area of Pinal County. Solar farms are extremely desolate and quiet uses with no emission of noise, odor, nor traffic. Furthermore, this property is vacant state land (not open to the public) and is not farmland.

### **Consistency with System of Connected Trails and Preservation of Open Space**

This Project will protect the natural washes that currently flow through the land, as well as the vegetation within the gas pipeline easement, and does not conflict with the Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan.

## **Consistency with Natural and Cultural Resource Conservation**

This Project strives to protect natural/cultural resources, wildlife corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas. Likewise, the Applicant has carefully designed the Project to protect critical wildlife habitat and significant cultural resources in and around the area.

A Class III cultural resource survey was conducted within the Project area in mid-2021. The results of the survey have been reported to the appropriate agencies. If any important archaeological or historic sites are identified that could be potentially impacted by Project construction, mitigation measures will be implemented as directed by the State Historic Preservation Officer, ASLD, Tribal consultation, and other responsible authorities.

## **Water Resources, Public Facilities/Services, and Infrastructure Support**

The Project will not require new public facilities or infrastructure. Water for dust control during construction would be supplied by one or more on-site well and/or tank trucks.

Ingress and egress to the Project site for construction and operations will be accessed directly from SR 79. The access road will be designed and constructed with cooperation from Arizona Department of Transportation and Pinal County engineers to comply with county and state standards, based on vehicle requirements and the results of the traffic study included with this application (Appendix E). Construction mitigation plans will be designed and approved after entitlement