

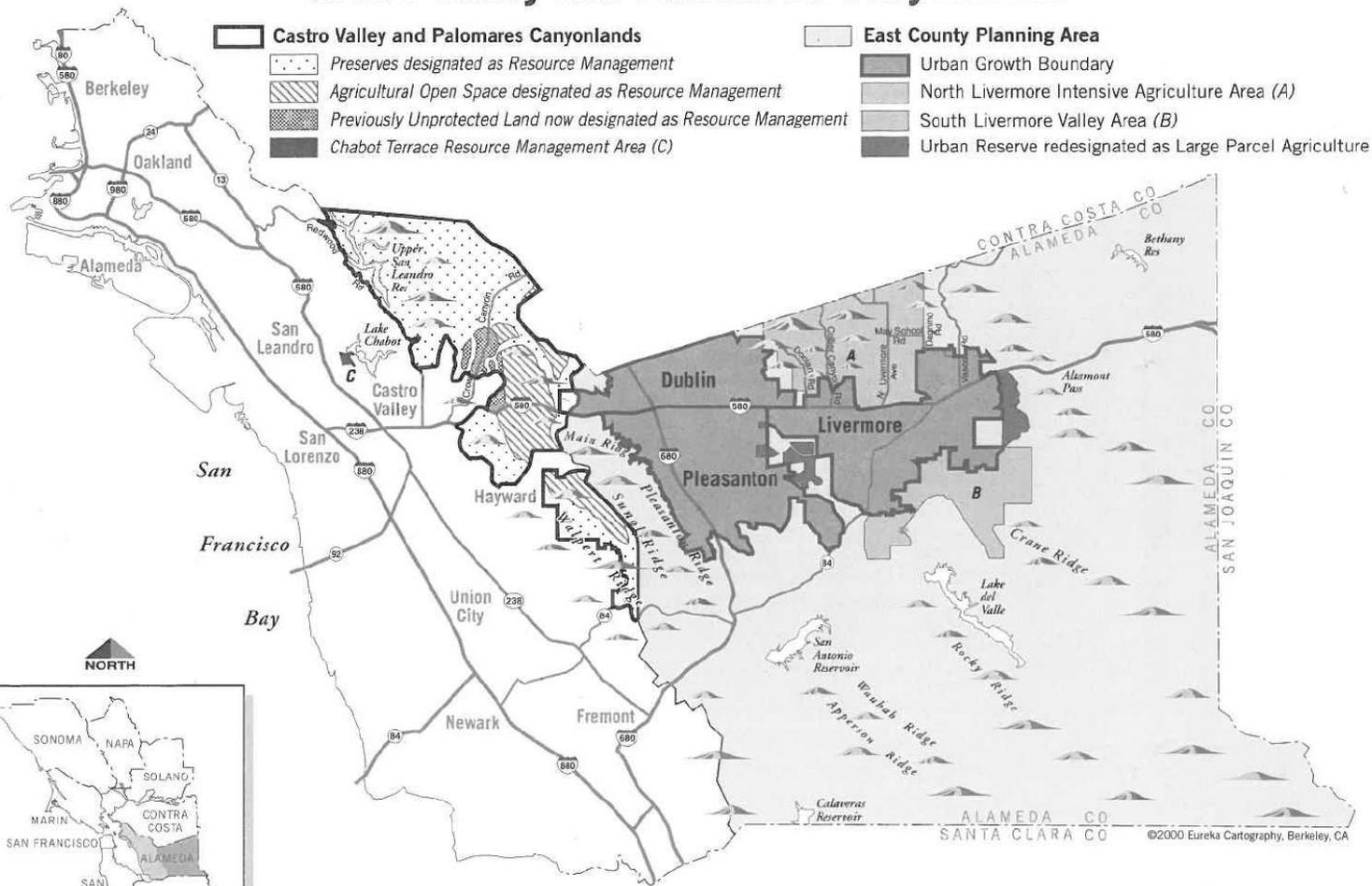
Recommendations for Utility-scale Solar Facilities on Agricultural Land

ALAMEDA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SOLAR SUBCOMMITTEE, AUGUST 20, 2020

Introduction

- County Planning staff developed draft solar policies in 2012 & 2018. Policies were not adopted by Board of Supervisors.
- Applications are under review for two solar projects in the North Livermore area.
- Subcommittee was tasked with making recommendations regarding large solar installations on rural lands in response to two current projects in North Livermore.
 - Recommendations for an **Alameda County Solar Energy Element to the General Plan**; and
 - Recommendations for the **Board of Zoning Adjustments** in response to the North Livermore projects.

East County Planning Area Castro Valley and Palomares Canyonlands



Measure D Appendix 1

Timeline

May 19th & July 28th – Ag Advisory Committee Meetings

Discussed issues related to solar development and received public testimony.

September 8th – Board Transportation & Planning Subcommittee

Present recommendation for adoption of countywide solar policies.

September 24th – East County Board of Zoning Adjustments

Present recommendation to delay decision on solar projects.

October 27th – Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

Continue discussion of solar policies.

Issues Raised in the 2018 Policy Matrix

- Adoption of siting standards
- Compatibility with Measure D
- Compatibility with Williamson Act contracts
- Mitigation for loss of agricultural/natural resources & open space
- Adequate environmental review for proposed projects
- Decommissioning and restoration plans/financial assurance
- Protection of sensitive viewsheds & visual character

Issues Raised at July AAC Meeting

(While specific to North Livermore proposals, topics apply generally.)

- Incentives to build on developed land first (tax credit, low interest loan, net meter gain)
- Rural utility district could be beneficial
- Ground water - quantity and quality jeopardy to the neighborhood, basin --using local or imported water for landscaping and panel washing
- Imported soil to build berms
- Road degradation and traffic on rural roads for construction, importing maintenance water
- Mitigation of environmental impacts
- Preservation of grasslands for carbon sequestration, air quality value
- Enforcement and monitoring decommissioning agreement for the project's life
- Can one project open the door to changing local zoning?
- Preservation of County's valuable Mediterranean Climate for agriculture and natural resources
- Agricultural sustainability

Technical Terms to be Defined

- Loading order – what to do first when filling the state's demand for electric power
- Behind the Meter solar energy installations (for on-site use)
- Distribution grid-connected solar energy installations (to serve local loads)
- Transmission grid-connected solar energy installations (to serve utility districts/statewide loads)
- Agrivoltaics – co-developing the same area of land for both photovoltaic power and conventional agriculture

Findings for T/P Subcommittee

- County of Alameda is supportive of renewable energy.
- There are many technologies and configurations to consider as options. (Utility Scale Solar, Agrivoltaics, Grid Connected Distributed Solar)
- It is appropriate for Alameda County to adopt a Solar Energy Element to the General Plan.
- Compatibility of solar energy generation with agriculture land, Williamson Act and agriculture business needs further study and development.

Resources for Consideration

- **East Bay Community Energy Local Development Business Plan – Solar Siting Survey, November 2017** identified over **650 MW of technical solar siting potential in the built environment** in the projected EBCE service territory (12 cities & urban unincorporated area) that can support at least 1 MW sized projects (30% of the total comes from parking lots and parking garages).
- **Solar Energy Policy Matrix, 2018** draft outlines issues and implementation strategies on which to build the Element.
- **Solar technology** is changing rapidly, especially with regard to energy storage & delivery.

Proposed County-wide Recommendations to T/P Subcommittee

- AAC should request that the County of Alameda adopt a Solar Energy Element to the General Plan.
- County of Alameda should defer consideration of utility-scale solar projects until the Solar Energy Element is adopted.
- The Element should put priority on distributed solar energy generation in the built environment in urban and rural areas before undeveloped land.
- The Element should include policies for agrivoltaics consistent with the Williamson Act and Right to Farm Ordinance.
- The Element should consider distributed generation of solar power and agrivoltaics separately from utility-scale solar development.
- AAC is available to contribute its expertise to the planning process as it pertains to agriculture, natural resources, open space land, agriculture enhancement.

Proposed Motion for Discussion

The AAC Solar Subcommittee proposes that the AAC adopt a motion to make the recommendations listed on the previous slide to the Board of Supervisors' Transportation & Planning Subcommittee prior to the East County Board of Zoning Adjustment's consideration of any pending utility-scale solar projects.

Findings for East County Board of Zoning Adjustments

- Utility-scale solar projects are in conflict with East County Area Plan policies for North Livermore, preservation and enhancement of agriculture, and preservation of natural resource and open space.
- There are no county-wide solar energy policies on which to base approval of solar projects.
- The neighbors have considerable concerns regarding impacts to their quality of life, natural resources, public safety and other issues.
- Solar projects should be consistent with the Williamson Act and Right to Farm Ordinance.
- Findings may change depending on direction received from T/P Subcommittee and ongoing work of solar subcommittee.

Proposed Recommendations to EBZA

- AAC should request that the EBZA defer consideration of the pending solar projects until such time as an Alameda County Solar Energy Element is adopted.
- If the EBZA chooses to not defer consideration of the solar projects, the AAC should recommend that the EBZA consider potential impacts on the feasibility of developing intensive agriculture, as defined in ECAP policies for North Livermore.

Proposed Motion for Discussion

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