



Planning and Development

Lisa Plowman, Director

Jeff Wilson, Assistant Director

Elise Dale, Assistant Director

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE: November 7, 2024

TO: State Clearinghouse
Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: County of Santa Barbara
Planning and Development Department
Long Range Planning Division
123 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2058
(805) 568-2000

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation and Scoping of a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)

PROJECT NAME: Utility-Scale Solar Amendments

PROJECT CASE NOS.: 24ORD-00028 – Utility-Scale Solar Amendments (Inland)
24ORD-00029 – Utility-Scale Solar Amendments (Coastal)
24ORD-00030 – Utility-Scale Solar Amendments (Inland Montecito)

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project would affect lands within the Inland and Coastal Zone areas of unincorporated Santa Barbara County as related to future development of Tier 1 and Tier 2 solar energy systems. Tier 3 and Tier 4 development would affect lands that are zoned PI, AG-I, AG-II, PU, M-1, M-2, M-RP, M-CR, and M-CD. The Project would not include lands under the jurisdiction of the federal government (Los Padres National Forest and Vandenberg Space Force Base), and the University of California.

LEAD AGENCY: The County of Santa Barbara is the lead agency preparing the PEIR with the purpose of informing decision-makers and the public regarding the potential environmental effects related to the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Currently, utility-scale solar is only allowed with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) within the 600-acre Utility-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Overlay on lands zoned Agriculture II (AG-II) in the unincorporated Cuyama Valley Rural Region. To facilitate utility-scale solar development throughout the unincorporated county, the Project would remove the overlay boundary restrictions and allow utility-scale solar as a conditionally permitted use on lands zoned Professional and Institutional (PI), Agricultural I (AG-I), Agricultural II (AG-II), Public Utility (PU), Light Industry (M-1), General Industry (M-2), Industrial Research Park (M-RP),

123 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 • (805) 568-2000 • Fax (805) 568-2030

624 W. Foster Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455 • (805) 934-6250 • Fax (805) 934-6258

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Coastal Related Industry (M-CR), and Coastal Dependent Industry (M-CD) within the Inland Area and Coastal Zone portions of the unincorporated county. As part of the amendments, a new category of solar energy facility, termed “community-scale,” would be defined and conditionally allowed within the same zoning designations. Community-scale solar energy facilities are typically smaller than utility-scale facilities, fit into an established development pattern, and connect to the electricity distribution network. In tandem with the utility-scale solar ordinance revisions, existing development standards and other related components of the zoning ordinances will be revised to meet new State requirements for streamlining the permitting of solar energy systems. In part, the solar energy system amendments will allow for streamlined permitting of solar carports and other solar shade structures in accordance with California Government Code Section 65850.5 and pertinent definitions in California Civil Code Section 801.5.

The Project would update the following County of Santa Barbara land use plans and regulations:

- County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan, including the Land Use Element
- Coastal Land Use Plan
- County Land Use and Development Code (LUDC)
- Montecito LUDC
- Article II Coastal Zoning Ordinance
- Gaviota Coast Plan and other community plans to be identified if needed
- Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Uniform Rules)

The project description, location, and potential environmental effects are included in the *Environmental Scoping Document for Utility-Scale Solar Amendments* that may be downloaded from the project webpage at:

<https://www.countyofsb.org/792/Utility-Scale-Solar-Comprehensive-Plan>

PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS: We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency may need to use the PEIR prepared by the County of Santa Barbara when considering your permit or other approval for the project. Members of the public are also encouraged to provide comments on the scope of the proposed PEIR.

Agency and public **comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 9, 2024.** Please send your comments and the name of a contact person in your agency to the address provided below.

Contact: Zoe Carlson
Long Range Planning Division
Planning and Development Department
123 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Telephone: (805) 568-2023

Email: carlsonz@countyofsb.org

PEIR Scoping Meeting: A hybrid PEIR Scoping Meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.** In accordance with CEQA, the purpose of the Scoping Meeting is for the County to solicit input and comments from agencies and the public on environmental issue or alternatives they believe should be addressed in the PEIR.

The meeting will be held in person at the ***Planning Commission Hearing Room at 105 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.*** For people attending virtually, you may join and participate in the meeting by using the following Zoom link: <https://santabarbaracounty.zoomgov.com/j/1604939010>

Copies of the documentation and information regarding the project are available on the project's webpage at: <https://www.countyofsb.org/792/Utility-Scale-Solar-Comprehensive-Plan>

cc: County of Santa Barbara Clerk of the Board