

## ZTA 20-01 – Solar Collection System AR Zone Standards

When ZTA 20-01 was first introduced on January 21, 2020, the agricultural community was greatly concerned. This ZTA proposes to open the Agricultural Reserve for solar collection system that could generate up to 2MW of energy. The agricultural groups and committees have remitted their concerns to the Council on this ZTA, all are opposed to it for the following reasons:

1. The Agricultural Reserve was created to protect farmland and open space, the preferred land use is agriculture. The groups view rooftops and commercial solar collection systems as the same – both uses promote the fragmentation **and loss** of farmland.
2. The ZTA as written does not offer protections for the most productive types of soils, land capability classifications I, II, and III. These are the most productive types of agricultural soils in the County. **Please note the PDED/T&E voted to exclude Class I soils.**
3. Commodity farming is the largest type of farming in the County on an acreage basis. The majority of the cropland managed by commodity farmers is rented land. A farmers rent payment cannot compete with the per acre payment for a commercial solar installation. **The economic reality of farming will result in the loss of farmland as property owners choose to earn higher income from solar fields rather than farming fields.**
4. The agricultural community supports alternative sources of energy including solar. Farmers in the County have embraced their ability to install accessory solar collection systems on their farms. However, the majority of the energy demand in the County **comes** from office buildings and single family homes. The County should focus its resources on implementing renewable sources of energy, including solar, outside of the Agricultural Reserve, where the demand and infrastructure exist.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the food insecurity issues nationally and within the County. The County farmers are stepping up and producing more food for local residents and to meet the growing demand, **all of our existing** crop land is needed. While the ZTA as written has a cap of 1,800 acres of **2MW** solar collection systems in the AR Zone, the agricultural community feels **a future** Council will increase the acres allowed.