


Located 70 miles southwest of Phoenix, Gila Bend has experienced a growing interest in solar development. To promote development within the city limits while protecting residents and adjacent landowners, Gila Bend established a Solar Field Overlay Zone (SFOZ), which shortens the zoning and permitting process, and negates the potential for undesirable development should the development not come to fruition. The zoning overlay allows for solar fields, with current underlying zoning designations, which would remain unchanged.

The goal of the SFOZ is to bring underutilized lands into production while allowing the property owners to retain entitlements. The SFOZ permits property owners remove the zone from portions of the property when they are ready for development as Master Planned Communities, commercial lands, and so forth. SFOZ represents a holding zone for future development. SFOZ designation is available to property owners who are looking to lease their property for up to 10 years; the lessee must submit an authorization from the landowner to be eligible for the designation. This zoning designation dramatically reduces the two-to-four-year land entitlement process, allowing a developer to navigate through the entitlement process in just two to four months. Additionally, since there are no duration requirements, a SFOZ can be in existence for the life of the Solar Project. Provisions include:

- Option agreements
- Minimum of 10 years property lease
- Minimum property size of 100 acres; possible to designate an area as small as 40 acres if it is adjacent to an existing SFOZ zoned property
- The applicant has one year to begin construction on the project or the Gila Bend has the option to revert the approved SFOZ and site plan

The 300 days of sunlight each year, favorable land use entitlement process, and a dedicated professional staff and Town Council help Gila Bend position itself to become a virtual incubator of solar power technologies.

Additional information on this case study:

 [Gila Bend Solar Field Overlay Zone Ordinance \(155.2 kB \)](#)

Category: Energy
Issue: Renewable Utility Siting
Community Type: Rural
Location: Gila Bend, AZ

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