

AGENDA ITEM #: 2.  
DATE: August 19, 2026  
CAR #:  
CASE #: P25-00259



## **Planning & Zoning Commission ACTION REPORT**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR DESERT RAINBOW SOLAR ENERGY GENERATION FACILITY**

**STAFF PRESENTER(S):** Ann Dolmage, Principal Planner

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### **OTHER PRESENTER(S):**

Andrew Yancey; Bergin, Frakes, Smalley & Oberholtzer

### **SUMMARY:**

Request for a Special Use Permit for Desert Rainbow, a utility-scale solar energy generation facility, including accessory Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), on approximately 5,050 acres zoned Preliminary Planned Area Development (PAD), located south of Queen Creek Road and east of Waterman Wash.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Conduct a public hearing to consider a Special Use Permit for Desert Rainbow, a utility-scale solar energy generation facility on approximately 5,050 acres generally extending north to south from the Queen Creek Road alignment to the Patterson Road alignment, and west to east from Waterman Wash to the 139th Avenue alignment.
2. Recommend approval of a Special Use Permit for Desert Rainbow, a utility-scale solar energy generation facility on approximately 5,050 acres generally extending north to south from the Queen Creek Road alignment to the Patterson Road alignment, and west to east from Waterman Wash to the 139th Avenue alignment, subject to conditions as set forth in Resolution 2026-XXXX (Ann Dolmage, Principal Planner).

### **STIPULATIONS:**

See Attachment A (Draft Resolution).

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

A fiscal impact analysis has been conducted for Desert Rainbow, the utility-scale solar energy generation facility on approximately 5,050 acres ("the Project"), by the applicant. The applicant's analysis estimates that the solar component of the Project will generate \$27.4 million in direct tax revenues and \$8,492 in indirect tax revenues to the city of Goodyear over a thirty (30)-year period. In addition, the BESS component will generate an estimated \$16.19 million in direct tax revenues and \$4,145 in indirect tax revenues to the city of Goodyear over a fifteen (15)-year period. The development is responsible for construction of all infrastructure necessary to serve the site and will generate one-time revenue for the city through payment of permits, construction sales tax, and development impact fees. Any areas that will be maintained by the city are constructed by the developer and then conveyed to the city two years after construction.

## **BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS ACTIONS:**

The subject property of approximately 5,050 acres generally extending north to south from the Queen Creek Road alignment to the Patterson Road alignment, and west to east from Waterman Wash to the 139th Avenue alignment (the "Property"), is zoned Estrella Region III Preliminary Planned Area Development (PAD). This Preliminary PAD was approved on November 16, 2009, and covers approximately 7,800 acres south of Queen Creek Road. The Preliminary PAD includes a land use plan that permits a variety of uses, including residential, commercial, light industrial, public and quasi-public, mixed use, and open space.

A Final PAD has not been submitted or approved for Estrella Region III. Per the updated zoning ordinance adopted by City Council on July 6, 2026 (the "Zoning Ordinance") no new applications for Preliminary Planned Area Development (Preliminary PAD) zoning shall be accepted; however, any Preliminary PAD approved prior to the effective date of this Ordinance shall remain valid subject to the terms and conditions of its approval.

Sections 1.6 and 6.6 of the Zoning Ordinance intend for pending land use applications that were initiated under the prior ordinance to continue through the established review process unless the application expires. Section 1.6 of the Zoning Ordinance provides for transition procedures for the orderly adoption of the Zoning Ordinance. Section 6.6 (A.) of the Zoning Ordinance expressly provides that a Special Use Permit is processed in the same manner as a rezoning. Further, the Zoning Administrator has also determined that the Special Use Permit process is the same as a rezone. Therefore, because the processing of a Special Use Permit application is the same as a rezoning application, a pending Special Use Permit application that has not expired receives the same treatment as a pending rezoning application during the transition period and is subject to the previous zoning ordinance. This request was initiated prior to the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance and will therefore continue through the Special Use Permit process pursuant to the previous zoning ordinance.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### *Current Policy*

Pursuant to Section 4-1-2 of the previous Zoning Ordinance (Special Uses Considered in Any District), an energy generation facility may be considered as a Special Use in any zoning district. Pursuant to Section 1-3-4 of the previous Zoning Ordinance (Special Use Permits), a Special Use Permit (SUP) requires review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and approval from the City Council through the public hearing process.

### *Summary of Special Use Permit Request*

The request is for a Special Use Permit (SUP) for a utility-scale solar energy generation facility in South Goodyear. The Property occupies approximately 5,050 acres and is irregularly shaped, with the north boundary at the alignment of Queen Creek Road, and the south boundary at the alignment of Patterson Road. The west boundary primarily follows Waterman Wash, and the east boundary extends to the alignment of 139th Avenue. The north boundary of the Project is approximately two (2) miles south of CantaMia in Estrella, while the south boundary of the Project is approximately eleven (11) miles northwest of the Mobile community within Goodyear. The Property is under single ownership (Estrella South LLC). There are two (2) enclave parcels within the overall project boundary that are owned by other parties and are not part of the request at this time: a 2.03-acre property owned by Liberty Elementary School District, and a 0.25-acre parcel owned by Land Holdings LLC.

See Attachment B (Project Narrative), Attachment C (Aerial Photo), Attachment D (Details of Request), and Attachment E (Conceptual Site Plan) for more information about the request.

### *Summary of Compliance with Special Use Permit Evaluation Criteria*

See Attachment F – Evaluation Criteria.

### *Public Participation*

A community meeting was held for the project on April 14, 2026, per Article 1-3-8 of the Zoning Ordinance. Notifications were mailed on March 30, 2026, to 193 unique mailing addresses within one (1) mile of the Project site and to additional stakeholders. Additionally, four (4) signs were posted on the Property on March 27, 2026, and postings were added to the city website.

Approximately ten (10) members of the public attended the meeting, as well as one (1) city staff member and nine (9) members of the applicant team. Topics discussed at the meeting included the destination of any energy generated by the Project (local versus regional end users); decommissioning processes at the end of the Project life cycle; phasing and timelines for development; land ownership; and transmission line routes. Attendees were also interested in potential impacts to traffic circulation, scenic views, heat, groundwater, and wildlife.

Notifications for the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing included an additional mailed notification on July 24, 2026; a legal ad published in the Arizona Business Gazette- Republic Edition on July 31, 2026; and an update to the sign postings and website postings on August 3, 2026.

Nine (9) emails and one (1) phone call have been received about this project. Four (4) emails expressed support for the Project, one (1) email expressed support but also asked questions about the road network, two (2) emails expressed opposition to the Project (citing impacts on future residential development as a concern), and two (2) emails did not state a position but asked whether the city intended to extend municipal water services to the Project, and if so, whether additional properties in the area could also benefit from water service extension. The phone caller identified himself as a property owner in the vicinity of the Project and expressed concern about access to his property being affected by the Project. All requests for further information have been answered by staff or the applicant team.

#### *Staff Findings*

Staff find that the proposed SUP for a solar energy generation facility meets Zoning Ordinance requirements, will not be materially detrimental to adjacent properties and will be compatible with the surrounding area, subject to the stipulations set forth in Attachment A. Staff is recommending approval of the SUP subject to the stipulations set forth in Attachment A.

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### **Attachments**

Attachment A - Resolution 2026-XXXX

Attachment B - Project Narrative

Attachment C - Aerial Photo

Attachment D - Details of the Request

Attachment E - Conceptual Site Plan

Attachment F - Evaluation Criteria