



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 13, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
Acting County Administrator

Re: **Pima County Solar Permitting Application**

Pima County Development Services in partnership with the City of Tucson worked with local solar companies, the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) and other national solar partners to pilot the Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP+) application for photovoltaic systems. Pima County and the City of Tucson were among the first and largest jurisdictions to test the application in January 2021. SolarAPP+ was launched for public use following conclusion of the pilot project in May 2021.

The Department of Energy released the results of the pilot project this month in a technical report entitled [SolarAPP+ Pilot Analysis: Performance and Impact of Instant, Online Solar Permitting](#).

Key findings of the report include:

- Pilot jurisdictions collectively spent 383 hours on SolarAPP+ implementation and saved 236 hours on permit and revision review during the course of the pilot.
- By providing instantaneous review, the SolarAPP+ reduced the average permit review time to less than one day across all five jurisdictions.
- Participating contractors required training on how to use the application efficiently.
- Inspection passage rates for SolarAPP+ projects were comparable to traditionally permitted projects, with nominal impacts on inspection duration.
- Projects submitted through SolarAPP+ were installed and inspected on average 12 days faster than projects using the traditional process.

SolarApp+ generates a precise list of inspection items simplifying remote inspections for our inspectors and the installers. Pima County's use of SolarAPP+ prompted Accela, our permitting software vendor, to build an interface thereby further automating permit processing.

The implementation of SolarAPP+ has saved Pima County and the City of Tucson 2,465 hours of staff time to date, which has allowed staff to focus on larger more complex building plan reviews. In addition to alleviating Development Services workload, SolarAPP+

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incentivizes deployment of solar installations. Pima County is continuing to work with NREL on the expansion of SolarAPP+ for battery storage units and electric vehicle chargers.

The White House released a [fact sheet](#) noting the pilot's success in reducing solar permitting to the same day and eliminating costly processing by local governments.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

JL/anc

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Yves Khawam, PhD, Assistant County Administrator for Public Works
Carla Blackwell, Director, Development Services
Joseph Godoy, Deputy Director, Development Services
Daniel Ice, Chief Building Official, Development Services