



**VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
*Staff Report - MEETING DATE: December 3, 2019*

**VAR-2019-15**  
**TBD Solar Project**

The applicant is requesting a Variance to Section 4.07.00 of the ULDC (Lowndes County Unified Land Development Code) as it pertains to general requirements for landscaping, buffers and tree protection. The subject property consists of ~274 acres and is located on Wetherington Lane, Valdosta, Georgia, in an E-A (Estate Agricultural) and CON (Conservation) zoning districts.

**B. Requirements for landscaping**

1. The landscaping plan shall demonstrate compliance with the standards of this section. The plan shall show the location, size, description, and specifications of all proposed plant materials.
2. Existing plant materials, other than invasive species, may be counted toward meeting the landscaping requirements set forth in this section.
3. At least ten (10) percent of the total gross land area of a development site shall be landscaped. The landscaped areas shall be located on the site in such manner as to maximize preservation of existing trees.
4. At least four (4) shade trees per acre shall be provided, which may include existing trees, trees required for buffers, or trees required for parking lot landscaping.

**C. Buffer Area Standards**

**Table 4.07.06(C). Buffer Area Standards.**

Proposed Land Use	Adjacent Zoning district	Minimum Buffer Area*
Intensive Service or Industrial	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	40 feet*
Multi-family, Commercial or Mixed-use areas	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	30 feet*
Office or Institutional	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	20 feet*

\* The installation of a 6' to 8' opaque fence enables the buffer area to be decreased by 50% and the buffer landscaping requirement to be decreased by 25%. For example, with the installation of an 8' fence a 30' buffer area with 4 shade trees and 25 shrubs per 100 linear feet can be reduced to 15 feet with 3 shade trees and 19 shrubs per 100 linear feet.

Ryan Sanders, partner of Beltline Energy Company has entered into a land lease agreement with property owner, Mr. Robert C. Wetherington, to establish a solar farm. Beltline Energy will lease ~10 to 30~ acres. During the initial phase of obtaining the ULDC's regulations to establish this use, Mr. Sanders was advised of the required landscaping and buffer area requirements. Mr. Sanders stated the ULDC regulations would be a hardship to adhere to, as this project requires the energy of the sun as its main source to operate. Beltline Energy is not requesting to forego the requirements in their entirety; they are proposing a vegetative buffer to consist of a single row of 1-gallon evergreen shrubs along the perimeter fence of the solar energy project.