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Solar land auction nets two sales, more slated

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Patrick O'Grady](#)

The first private land auctions designed to lure companies to purchase land in western Maricopa County netted two sales for roughly \$2.6 million, with a third deal potentially in the works.

Buyers of the small parcels were not identified, but Kuldip Verma, president and CEO of **Vermaland Inc.**, which sold the land, said the buyers had interest in developing the land's solar potential.

Vermaland also is looking at selling a 3,600-acre parcel at auction within the next six months in the county's western reaches. While the first auction focused on five smaller parcels, a larger, contiguous site such as Vermaland's could draw a higher premium, if companies believe it has access to water and power lines.

"Several large-scale utility companies have expressed interest in the property once the site is developed," said Verma, who added the site has water rights, on-site wells and a low slope.

While the company was able to sell the two parcels, prices were below what neighboring land has been selling for. The goal was to spur solar companies to purchase land rather than simply tie it up, Verma said.

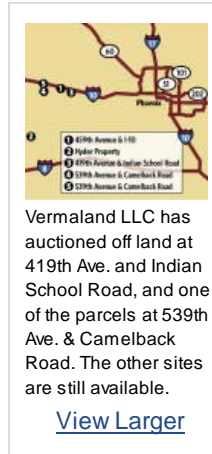
The properties sold at Saturday's auction included an 80-acre site in the Tonopah area for \$340,000 and a 320-acre site in Tonopah for \$2.24 million. The company did not identify which of the remaining three properties might be involved in another deal.

"The auction brought the properties to the attention of some parties that we had never been in contact with, as well as reminded others we had spoken with in the past of the property, which is highly suitable for solar development," said Anita Verma-Lallian, the company's marketing director.

Vermaland already had sold land to several California-based utilities looking to develop renewable resources to meet that state's standards for clean energy.

Solar energy developers have been placing applications on state and federal lands in western Arizona for the past three years, and private land owners have been negotiating as developers look for the best parcels.

As companies scout for land, they also face financing issues and none of the proposed projects in Arizona has broken ground. Arizona's main solar corridor includes Vermaland's parcels, an area that stretches from Yuma to Phoenix and Tucson seen as a huge growth area for developing utility-scale solar power plants.



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