

City of Mountain Brook

Guidelines for Planning Commission Review of Solar Energy Systems

Whereas Section 129-292 of the Municipal Code allows the installation in or upon a parcel located within any zoning district, such equipment and minor structures and improvements incidental to the provision and distribution of gas, electricity, water and similar services as may be approved by the planning commission; which approval shall be subject to such conditions, if any, which the planning commission may require to promote the purposes of Chapter 129 of the Municipal Code; and

Whereas the planning commission has determined that it is desirable for the City to permit and regulate the use of solar energy in the City of Mountain Brook; and

Whereas the planning commission has determined that the use and regulation of solar energy systems in the City will reduce the need for additional electrical generation and distribution and tend to reduce atmospheric pollution that are considered harmful to the environment; and

Whereas the planning commission recognizes that the purpose of regulating solar energy systems is to provide for appropriate locations for solar energy systems, to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses, and to promote safe and effective use of solar energy to increase opportunities for generation of renewable energy.

Therefore the following are guidelines to be used by the Planning Commission when approval of an application for a solar energy system has been requested:

Definitions:

Solar Energy System (SES). An energy system which converts solar energy to usable thermal, mechanical, chemical or electrical energy to meet all or a portion of the energy requirements of a principal building or an associated accessory structure.

Solar Energy Equipment (SEE). Items including but not limited to solar panels, lines, pumps, batteries, mounting brackets, framing and/or foundation used for or intended to be used for the collection of solar energy in connection with a building on residential, municipal or commercial properties. Solar energy equipment and its use are accessory to the principal use of the property.

Solar Energy Systems, generally.

- 1) SES shall not be commercial operations and are prohibited as a principal use. The main purpose of the SES may not be to generate energy for sale back to the energy grid rather than being consumed on site.
- 2) Abandoned or inactive SES, within twelve (12) months of the cessation of operations, shall be removed by the property owner.

Roof Mounted Solar Energy Systems

- 1) The placement of SES on roofs of principal buildings is preferred and encouraged.
- 2) For pitched, hipped or gambrel roofs, roof mounted SES shall not be more than twelve (12) inches from the surface of the roof at any point, and may not extend above the ridgeline of the roof. The twelve (12) is measured from the upper side of the solar panel.
- 3) For flat roofs or the horizontal portion of mansard roofs, roof mounted SES may extend up to five (5) feet above the highest point of the roof.
- 4) In no instance shall any part of a roof mounted SES extend beyond the edge of the roof.
- 5) Roof mounted SES shall be designed to blend into the architecture of the building.
- 6) No portion of the SES shall be visible from any public street.
- 7) All exterior plumbing and electrical lines must be painted and/or coated to match the color of adjacent roofing material and walls.
- 8) Roof Mounted SES shall be located so as not to increase the total height of the structure above the maximum allowable height of the structure on which it is located, in accordance with the applicable zoning regulations, and may not exceed the height of the ridge of the roof on which it is located.

Ground Mounted Solar Energy Systems

- 1) Ground mounted SES and SEE shall be considered accessory structures and shall be governed in accordance with Section 129-314 of the Municipal Code of the City of Mountain Brook.
- 2) Ground mounted SES shall be of permanent installation and shall not be portable in nature.
- 3) To the extent possible, without compromising the solar SES's access to sunlight, ground mounted SES shall be screened from view at-grade from all adjacent properties.
- 4) No portion of the SES shall be visible from any public street.