



City of Minneapolis
Community Planning & Economic Development
Development Services Division
250 South 4th Street, Room 300
Minneapolis MN 55415-1316
612-673-3000

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS APPLICATION

535.820. Purpose. Regulations governing solar energy systems are established 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.

535.830. Definitions. As used in this article, the following words shall mean:

Building-integrated solar energy system. A solar energy system that is an integral part of a principal or accessory building, rather than a separate mechanical device, replacing or substituting for an architectural or structural component of the building. Building-integrated systems include but are not limited to active photovoltaic or hot water systems that are contained within roofing materials, windows, walls, skylights, and awnings, or passive systems that are designed to capture direct solar heat.

Building-mounted solar energy system. A solar energy system affixed to a principal or accessory building.

Freestanding solar energy system. A solar energy system with a supporting framework that is placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that is independent of any building or other structure. Garages, carports or similar structures that incorporate building-integrated or building-mounted solar energy systems shall not be classified as freestanding solar energy systems and shall instead be subject to regulations governing accessory structures.

Solar collector surface. Any part of a solar energy system that absorbs solar energy for use in the system's transformation process. The collector surface does not include frames, supports, and mounting hardware.

Solar energy. Radiant energy received from the sun that can be collected in the form of heat or light by a solar collector.

Solar energy system. A device or structural design feature intended to provide for collection, storage, and distribution of solar energy for heating or cooling, electricity generating, or water heating.

535.840. Permitted uses and specific standards, subject to administrative review and approval. (a) *In general.* Solar energy systems shall be permitted in all zoning districts, subject to the standards of this article. Solar collector surfaces and all mounting devices shall comply with the minimum yard requirements of the district in which they are located. Screening of solar collector surfaces shall not be required.

(b) *Building-mounted solar energy systems.*

- (1) Notwithstanding the height limitations of the zoning district, building mounted solar energy systems shall not extend higher than three (3) feet above the ridge level of a roof on a structure with a gable, hip, or gambrel roof and shall not extend higher than ten (10) feet above the surface of the roof when installed on flat or shed roof.
- (2) The solar collector surface and mounting devices for building-mounted solar energy systems shall be set back not less than one (1) foot from the exterior perimeter of a roof for every one (1) foot that the system extends above the parapet wall or roof surface, if no parapet wall exists, on which the system

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is mounted. Solar energy systems that extend less than three (3) feet above the roof surface shall be exempt from this provision.

(c) *Freestanding solar energy systems.*

- (1) Freestanding solar energy systems, measured to the highest point of the system, shall not exceed the height of the principal structure or twenty (20) feet, whichever is less. The height of the principal structure shall be measured as provided in Chapter 520, Introductory Provisions. Freestanding solar energy systems up to sixteen (16) feet in height shall be subject to the minimum yard requirements of an accessory structure. Freestanding solar energy systems greater than sixteen (16) feet in height shall be subject to the minimum yard requirements of a principal structure. The required yard shall be measured from the property line to the closest part of the structure at minimum design tilt.
- (2) In the residence and office residence districts, the area of the solar collector surface of freestanding solar energy systems shall not exceed five (5) percent of the lot area. Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, the maximum area of solar energy systems shall be calculated independently of the floor area of all other accessory structures on the zoning lot.
- (3) The supporting framework for freestanding solar energy systems shall not include unfinished lumber.
- (4) All abandoned or unused freestanding solar energy systems shall be removed within twelve (12) months of the cessation of operations.

535.850. Administrative review process. (a) *In general.* The zoning administrator, in consultation with the planning director, shall have up to fifteen (15) working days following the submittal of a complete application to approve or deny such application. The zoning administrator may impose such conditions and require such guarantees deemed reasonable and necessary to protect the public interest and to ensure compliance with the standards and purposes of this zoning ordinance and policies of the comprehensive plan.

(b) *Submittal requirements.* An application for a solar energy system shall be filed on a form approved by the zoning administrator, as specified in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement. In addition, the applicant shall submit the following:

- (1) Written evidence that the electric utility service provider that serves the proposed site has been informed of the applicant's intent to install a solar energy system, unless the applicant does not plan, and so states so in the application, to connect the system to the electricity grid.

535.860. Conditional uses. Solar energy systems that do not comply with the standards of section 535.840 above may be allowed by conditional use permit, subject to the provisions of Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement, provided that requests to reduce minimum yard requirements shall be by variance.

535.870. Solar access. Solar access easements may be filed consistent with Minn. Statute Section 500.30. Any property owner may purchase an easement across nearby properties to protect access to sunlight. The easement is purchased or granted by owners of nearby properties and can apply to buildings, trees, or other structures that would diminish solar access.

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Staff will accept only complete applications that include all of the items listed below and any specific application requirements. If any of the items are missing at the time of submittal, the application will be deemed incomplete and staff will not accept the application.¹

	Completed Application Worksheet.
	A letter from the property owner, if other than the applicant, authorizing the application.
	Photos of the property and existing structures.
	Written evidence that the electric utility service provider that serves the proposed site has been informed of the applicant's intent to install a solar energy system, unless the applicant does not plan, and so states so in the application, to connect the system to the electricity grid. Interconnection guidelines for Xcel Energy can be found at www.xcelenergy.com (Energy Partners > Electric Generation Owners > MN Interconnection Guidelines for Customer-Owned Generation).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the property is a locally-designated historic landmark and the development project requires a certificate of appropriateness, the General Land Use Application may be deemed incomplete until a complete Certificate of Appropriateness application has been submitted to CPED. ▪ If the property is not already locally-designated and the proposed development project requires demolition of an existing structure, you are strongly encouraged to obtain a Historic Review Letter from CPED in order to determine whether the structure is a historic resource and may be eligible for local historic designation.
	Complete application for a conditional use permit, if applicable
	Correct fees paid (checks payable to Minneapolis Finance Department), if applicable.

Requirements Specific to Building Mounted Solar Energy Systems

	Three copies of a scaled and dimensioned building elevation plans where the solar energy system is visible. The following items must be included:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roof pitch. ▪ Eave overhangs or parapets, if applicable. ▪ Solar collector surface and mounting devices including height above roof surface and distance to roof perimeter.

Requirements Specific to Freestanding Solar Energy Systems

	Two copies of a scaled and dimensioned site plan. ² The following items must be included:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All property lines. ▪ Streets and alleys. ▪ Adjacent uses (show location and identify if they are residential or nonresidential). ▪ Location of the proposed solar energy system(s) at minimum design tilt. ▪ On-site building footprints (including garages and other accessory structures). ▪ Indicate north arrow and date the plan was drawn.
	Two copies of scaled schematic drawings showing the structure of the solar energy system. The following items must be included:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Height. ▪ Size of solar collection surface. ▪ Minimum design tilt. ▪ Materials and colors of all components, including supporting framework.

¹ City staff will review the initial application submission to determine completeness and will notify the applicant of what, if any, additional information must be submitted. Please be aware that supplemental information may also be requested during the evaluation and hearing process.

² The site plan must be prepared by a certified architect, landscape architect, engineer, or land surveyor that is licensed in the State of Minnesota. A license stamp, or registration number, whichever is applicable, together with the signature, shall be provided on the face of the site plan. Site plan information may be combined with the survey of the property. *The requirement that one of the above professionals prepare the site plan may be waived by the Zoning Administrator, Planning Director or their authorized*

representative where the application does not involve a new principal structure, provided the plan is accurately dimensioned and is drawn to an architectural or engineering scale. Applications will not be accepted and permits will not be issued for a new principal structure if a survey is not provided. If the project is subject to Chapter 530, Site Plan Review, it is recommended that the applicant provide a copy of the site plan review ordinance to the registered professional prior to preparation of a site plan.

FEES

Application type	Fee (dollars)
Conditional use permits for solar energy systems:	
0 – 9,999 square feet of lot area	600
10,000 – 43,559 square feet of lot area	825
43,560 square feet of lot area or more	1,035

For applications requiring notice of a public hearing to affected property owners, the applicant shall pay the cost of first class postage based on the number of property owners to be notified. In addition, for applications requiring publication in a newspaper of general circulation, the applicant shall pay a fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00).

After notification of a public hearing has taken place, a request by the applicant to continue an application to a subsequent public hearing of the city planning commission or board of adjustment shall be charged a fee totaling one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) when such request is granted. The fee shall be applied on a project-by-project basis and only when the continuance was requested by the applicant for the sole benefit of the applicant and when the Zoning Administrator determines that substantial additional staff time is required to review the project.

APPLICATION WORKSHEET

Property Owner/Applicant	Name		
	Mailing Address Including City, State and Zip Code		
	Phone Number		
	Fax		
	Email		
Applicant's Representative (This person will be the primary contact for staff, and is the authorized agent in place of the property owner)	Name		
	Mailing Address Including City, State and Zip Code		
	Phone Number		
	Fax		
	Email		
Property Information	Address(es)		
	Identification Number		
	Legal Description		
	Lot Area (square feet)		
Solar Energy System Data	Type of solar energy system (circle one)	Building Mounted	Freestanding
	Area of the solar collector surface of freestanding solar energy systems	Square feet:	
Building Data	Roof type where system will be installed (circle one)	Gable, hip, or gambrel	Flat or shed
	Principal building height	Feet:	

ACCURACY DECLARATION

My signature attests to the fact that the attached application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the staff review of this application is dependent upon the accuracy of the information provided and that any inaccurate or inadequate information provided may delay review of my application or may result in denial of my request.

Property owner's signature (if different from applicant): _____

Applicant's name (please print): _____

Applicant's signature: _____