



Land Use Considerations for Photovoltaic Installations

The purpose of this document is to summarize land use considerations for siting photovoltaic (PV) arrays in Carrboro. Before summarizing these considerations, it is important to clarify what this overview does not address:

- 1) Building permits for PV systems. Please refer to [this checklist](#).
- 2) Interconnection with electric utility providers.
- 3) Homeowner Association covenant requirements.
- 4) Financial and legal considerations, including [available incentives](#) for PV systems.

The Town of Carrboro's Land Use Ordinance (LUO) does not currently include detailed provisions for PV arrays. Specifically, there are:

- no definitions for PV arrays;
- no specific provisions for PV under permissible or accessory uses; and
- no PV supplementary use regulations.

There are no restrictions or special provisions currently in the ordinance or other Town requirements for the types and sizes of solar PV permitted, the processes required, or design standards.

As of early 2017, there about [80 PV installations](#) in Carrboro. Almost all of these are relatively small rooftop systems, with a vast majority being residential. To date, these installations have generally not required zoning approval.

The following LUO sections have provisions that may apply for future photovoltaic installations.

[Section 15-83.3: Covenants May Not Prohibit Devices that Generate or Conserve Energy.....](#)

This section reflects legislative authority granted to Carrboro. It limits the ability of residential homeowner's associations to prohibit solar installations. It specifically allows the Town to hold final plat approval for a subdivision if the "the covenants or restrictions prohibit..... the orderly installation of solar collectors.....or any further technology or device designed specifically to generate or conserve energy through the use of renewable resources....." It was passed in 2011, and applies to all subsequent (but not to previously approved) subdivisions.

[Sections 15-141.3 and 15-141.4: Conditional Use and Conditional Zoning Districts](#)

Specific solar performance measures are included and can be considered in the establishment of new conditional use and conditional zoning districts.

[Section 15-185: Building Height Limitations](#)

This section does include language that may be relevant to rooftop installation for buildings approaching height limitations, and that may limit the total roof area that can be covered by a solar array (15-185(d)).

[Section 15-319\(b\): Modifications to Canopy Coverage Standards](#)

This section allows for relaxation of tree canopy requirements to encourage solar installations.

Other Information

The policy document [Vision 2020](#) does include policy guidance that encourages solar PV. Specific recommendations include:

2.44 *Solar power..... should be incorporated into the Town infrastructure.*

2.45 *The Town should be known as a practitioner of climate change mitigation and adaptation practices.*

5.51 *.... The Town’s own alternative and renewable energy targets should include passive and active solar.....*

5.55 *The Town should encourage and promote efficient generation of renewable energy..... whether through public private partnerships.... or by supporting residential initiatives.....*

A [Community Climate Action Plan](#) that provides recommendations in support of PV was completed in early 2017.

Developers/parties interested in pursuing PV installations that go beyond simple rooftop installations in Carrboro are encouraged to contact Zoning or Planning staff (see below for contact information) with questions about current and potential future Zoning considerations.

This document will be updated as needed based on changes to the Land Use Ordinance and related Zoning review protocols and procedures.

More information on office hours, office location, and related information for Zoning and Planning staff is available at: <http://www.townofcarrboro.org/Faq.aspx?QID=63>