

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Ann Arbor Planning Commission Meeting of December 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Amendments to Chapter 55 (Unified Development Code) to Amend Personal Scale Solar Energy System Location Restrictions

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS

An Ordinance to Amend Section 5.16.6 of Chapter 55 (Unified Development Code) of Title V Of Code of the City of Ann Arbor – (Personal Scale Solar Energy Systems);

RECOMMENDATION:

Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed ordinance.

SUMMARY/BACKGROUND:

The 2022/2023 Planning Commission Work Program includes Solar Energy Readiness. for proposed Unified Development Code (UDC) amendments. This is based in part upon:

The [2013 Sustainability Framework](#) (Climate and Energy Goals p. 6):

- Improve access to and increase use of renewable energy by all members of our community
- Reduce energy consumption and eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions in our community
- Reduce new and existing buildings' energy use, carbon impact, and construction waste, while respecting community context

The City has additionally adopted other policies and goals outside of the comprehensive planning process, which provides ideas, concepts, and prioritization of reaching the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan, such as:

- On [March 4, 2019](#), the City Council directed staff to develop a Solar Access Ordinance, to ensure that landowners are guaranteed current and/or future access.
- On [November 4, 2019](#), the City Council declared a climate emergency and commits to action as a result of the declaration.
- City Council Adopted (and amended) the [Living Carbon Neutrality Plan](#), including:
 - Power our Electrical Grid with 100% Renewable Energy

- Goal – 78MW of new, local, onsite renewable energy generation is installed in Ann Arbor by the year 2030. (p 21)
- Switch our Appliances and Vehicles from Gasoline, Diesel, Propane, Coal, and Natural Gas to Electric.
 - To support the electrification of appliances, the City will work to establish policies that promote electrification of heating and cooking systems by evaluating options in codes, incentive programs, and through other avenues.

Personal Scale Solar Energy Systems

Currently, personal scale solar energy systems are more restricted than other accessory buildings and structures in the City, as they are absolutely prohibited in front yards (other accessory structures are only prohibited in the required front yard setback, which can be smaller than the total front yard dimension.)

The proposed amendments to Section 5.16.6 would provide greater flexibility for solar installations, rather than less compared to other accessory structures, by explicitly permitting placement in front yard setbacks and removing the maximum rear setback lot coverage requirements (35%) that currently applies to all accessory structures.

The Ordinance Review Committee provided feedback on these proposed changes in September. Feedback included:

- Concern about broad application of electrification to all uses.
- Whether personal solar energy systems should only mimic other accessory use requirements vs. increased flexibility.
- Whether thresholds for electrification will be measurable

On November 15th, the Planning Commission postponed the amendment to provide additional time for comment.

Attachment: Proposed Ordinance

c: City Attorney's Office