

DCRA Moves to Streamline Solar System Permitting

Increasing the use of solar energy is a priority of the District government. The District has established goals from the Mayor's Sustainable DC Program, increasing renewable energy utilization and facilitating net-zero energy construction (in alignment with AIA's 2030 Challenge) to initiatives like the DOEE/DCSEU Affordable Solar and Small Business Solar programs and DGS' solar deployment across dozens of municipal properties. To reach our goals the District must encourage more solar installations citywide, in every ward, including both residential and commercial systems.

As part of DCRA's ongoing efforts to make permitting in the District quicker, easier, and safer, DCRA is piloting two process changes to streamline the permitting process for solar systems. DCRA anticipates that these changes will reduce solar permitting times by avoiding unnecessary reviews for many solar system installations and make solar more accessible to District residents and businesses.

The pilot program will run from July 1 to 22, 2016 – DCRA will implement these proposed changes, while also inviting and encouraging comments and suggestions. All feedback received by close of business on July 15, 2016 will be reviewed and DCRA will consider any adjustments that can further serve our customers. Upon completion of this review, DCRA will issue a final guidance statement.

Pilot Program for Solar System Permitting Process Changes

- 1) For solar systems that do not exceed four feet (4') in height above the roof or parapet wall, and that are set back a distance at least equal to their height (excluding structural supports up to ten inches (10") in height) from the roof or parapet edge of the front, back, and certain side walls as required by the DCMR 11 §411.18, DCRA will allow a licensed engineer or contractor to attest that an application complies by submitting a Solar System Zoning Self-Certification. The Code Official may exempt, at her or his discretion, the self-certified project from zoning review.
- 2) DCRA will not require neighbor notifications for solar projects that do not involve either 1) the installation of structural support of an adjacent building, structure or premises or 2) the underpinning of a party wall. If the Code Official or designee determines a project does involve such work and is therefore subject to Sections 3307.2 or 3307.3, the applicant will be required to provide neighbor notification pursuant to those sections of the DC Building Code.

A solar system attached to a party wall ("that could affect the structural integrity of a party wall") does not require neighbor notification, but pursuant to 3307.4:

"[T]he person causing the work shall preserve the party wall from injury and ensure the structural stability of the party wall at said person's own expense. The party wall shall be maintained weatherproof and structurally stable."

We welcome your feedback on ways to improve our processes. Comments or questions may be submitted here: <https://goo.gl/lcO83M>