



CITY OF OBERLIN

HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS

SEPTEMBER 2019

Overview

These guidelines aim to assist property owners submitting applications to the City of Oberlin for the installation of solar energy systems on buildings designated as City historic landmarks or buildings located in a City-designated historic district. The City's overall objective is to preserve character-defining features and the historic fabric of City neighborhoods, while accommodating the need for solar access to the greatest extent possible.

Applicability

These guidelines apply to properties designated as City historic landmarks and to buildings within City-designated historic districts. Please see the attached list of City historic landmarks and districts to see if your property is on the list.



Sections

- Types of Solar
- General Guidance
- Specific Guidance—Building-Mounted Solar
- Specific Guidance—Freestanding Solar
- Specific Guidance—Solar Parking Lot Canopies



Types of Solar

The City of Oberlin recognizes that there are three (3) types of solar installations:

- A. **Solar—Building Mounted.** A solar energy system that is affixed to or an integral part of a principal or accessory building, including but not limited to photovoltaic or hot water solar energy systems which are contained within roofing materials, windows, skylights, and awnings.
- B. **Solar—Freestanding or Ground Mounted .** 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 other than parking lot canopy solar energy systems.
- C. **Solar—Parking Lot Canopy.** 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, which is used in a parking lot or the top story of a parking structure to shade vehicles parking in such lot or structure.





General Guidance

- A. **Overall Goal.** When planning the installation of solar panels on historic properties, the overall goal is to reduce the visual impacts of solar panels as seen from the public right-of-way (usually the street) and to preserve character-defining features and historic fabric.
- B. **Case-by-Case Basis.** All solar panel installations must be considered on a case-by-case basis, recognizing the best option will depend on the characteristics of the property under consideration.
- C. **Recommended:** The Secretary of the Interior Standards. All solar panel installations should conform to the applicable Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. In particular, the following standards apply:
1. "The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided (Standard Two)."
 2. "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment (Standard Nine)."
- D. **Not Recommended.** Property owners should not submit applications that propose any of the following things:
1. Remove historic roofing materials in order to install, or during the installation of, solar systems.
 2. Remove or otherwise alter the historic roof configuration—dormers, chimneys, or other features—to add solar systems.
 3. Use an installation procedure that will cause irreversible changes to historic features or materials.
 4. Locate a solar panel on a primary or street-facing roof plane.
 5. Use solar systems in historic windows or on walls, siding, and shutters, unless consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 6. Place or design solar panels that detract from the historic character of the site or destroy historic landscape materials.

Specific Guidance: Building-Mounted Solar

A. On the Roof—Photovoltaic Systems or Solar Shingles on Flat Roofs.

1. Position the system or shingles behind existing architectural features—such as parapets, chimneys, or dormers—and set them back from the roof edge to limit visibility from the public right-of-way.
2. Adjust the pitch and elevation to reduce visibility from the public right-of-way..

B. On the Roof—Photovoltaic Systems on Pitched Roofs.

1. Place the system on a roof face such as the rear roof, which cannot be seen from the public right-of-way, as long as doing so does not materially impair the performance of the solar system.
2. Position the system behind existing architectural features—such as parapets, dormers, or chimneys—to limit its visibility from the street.
3. Use equipment that is compatible in color to established roof materials so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.
4. Mount panels flush to the roof face.

C. On the Roof—Solar Shingles on Pitched Roofs.

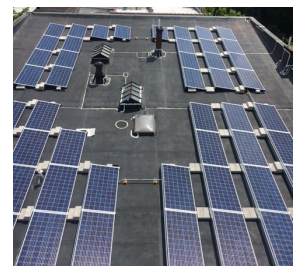
1. Place the shingles on a roof face, such as the rear roof, which cannot be seen from the public right-of-way, as long as doing so does not materially impair the performance of the solar system.
2. Position the solar shingles behind existing architectural features—such as parapets, dormers or chimneys—to limit their visibility from the street.
3. Use solar shingles that are compatible in material and color to established roof materials so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.
4. Choose solar shingles that are specifically designed for historic properties, including solar shingles that mimic slate or terra cotta tiles, where appropriate.

D. On Walls—Solar Windows.

1. Use transparent solar windows, rather than tinted or patterned solar windows, wherever possible.
2. Place solar windows which would affect the profiles of historic window frames or which are not transparent on building facades not visible from the public right-of-way.

E. On Walls—Solar Awnings.

1. Place solar awnings on building facades not visible from the public right-of-way.
2. Adjust pitch to conform to and complement historic rooflines.





Specific Guidance:

Freestanding or Ground-Mounted Solar

- A. Install a freestanding or ground-mounted solar system in locations that minimize visibility from the public right-of-way, such as side or rear yards.
- B. Use a matte finish and a color scheme consistent with the primary structure for exposed hardware, frames, and piping.
- C. Screen a freestanding or ground-mounted solar system from the public right-of-way with fencing, landscaping, or vegetation.
- D. Consider the visibility of a freestanding or ground-mounted solar system from neighboring properties..

Specific Guidance:

Solar Parking Lot Canopies

A. Historic Preservation Guidance

- 1. Recognizing that solar parking lot canopies have the potential to be a highly impactful installation when located within an historic district, follow to the extent applicable the guidance set forth in guidelines for freestanding or ground-mounted solar structures.

B. Solar—Parking Lot Canopy. 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, which is used in a parking lot or the top story of a parking structure to shade vehicles parked in such lot or structure.





Contact Us

Give us a call if you have any questions about exterior changes to your historic property:

**City of Oberlin Historic
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sion**

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Visit us on the web at
[www.cityofoberlin.com/
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