

BRISTOL HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

RULES OF PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMISSION REVIEW OF ROOF-MOUNTED ACCESSORY SOLAR PANELS IN THE BRISTOL HISTORIC DISTRICT

PURPOSE: The Bristol Historic District Commission (“Commission”) recognizes that the Bristol Historic District and its individual buildings may be preserved while also accommodating solar energy installations. Such installations may even encourage preservation of historic fabric such as original windows by helping to offset energy costs. Such installations, however, are subject to the buildings’ continued preservation. The Commission normally considers applications for solar panel installation on a case-by-case basis because it recognizes that a property’s suitability is dependent upon its particular characteristics. However, due to the time constraints of various government funding and tax benefits for solar panel installation, the Commission realizes that an expedited process is necessary for such applications. Therefore, the Commission adopts these Rules of Procedure and Guidelines as of June 7, 2016, as an interim and experimental measure and they shall expire (sunset) on December 31, 2016, unless otherwise extended or amended by the Commission.

A GENERAL GUIDELINES APPLYING TO ALL INSTALLATIONS:

- 1. General Rule.** The greatest potential for using solar panels to generate electricity will be on buildings with roof configurations that allow panels to be installed with limited or no visibility. “Primary elevation” means a side of a building that contributes to the historical architectural character of the streetscape and neighborhood. The primary elevation is usually the elevation (or elevations in the case of a corner sites) that fronts to the street or public open space, including navigable waters. The primary elevation is usually the dwelling’s most prominent and detailed elevation. “Secondary elevation” means a side of a building that is NOT a primary elevation, and generally one that does not face and is not readily visible from a street or public open space, and that does not possess significant architectural composition or features. For example, sometimes a side elevation will contain a significant architectural feature such as a tower or turret, which will cause the side elevation to be a primary elevation.
- 2. Retrofitting.** Historic building owners must limit retrofitting measures to those with the least intrusive impact while also maximizing energy savings at a reasonable cost.

3. **Flat Roof.** On buildings with a flat roof solar panels should be installed just under the roof edge and at a low angle, so that the panel is flush and out of view from the public right-of-way adjacent to the building.
4. **Panel Arrangement and Color.** Solar panels should be placed so that their edges are parallel to the edges of the roof. Panels should generally be black in color, unless otherwise specifically designed to blend into an existing roof surface. The frame and hardware color should match the panel color.
5. **Low Profiles.** Solar panels should be set at angles consistent with the slope or pitch of the supporting roof.
6. **No permanent physical impact.** Panel installations must be fully reversible. Removal must not have a permanent physical impact on any of the character defining features of the building. Homeowners should avoid any use that could have such an impact. A homeowner should consider, among other things: the type and condition of the existing building fabric for which solar panel installation is proposed, the method of attachment and future removal, the use of solar roof tiles, laminates, glazing, and other technologies that require the removal of intact historic fabric or that permanently alter such fabric.
7. **Removal.** The homeowner shall be required to remove the solar panels within six (6) months of the time when they are no longer functional. This restriction, along with the notation that failure to do so will constitute an ordinance violation, shall be prominently noted on the Certificate of Appropriateness, which shall be recorded in the Land Evidence Records, even if administratively approved.
8. **Effect on Historic District.** Panel installations should not significantly distract from the historic district. A homeowner should avoid installations that obstruct views of significant architectural features.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL- SECONDARY ELEVATIONS

Roof-mounted flush-mounted solar panels meeting the standards and guidelines set forth herein, and that are complimentary to the historic and natural fabric of the site and the Historic District, and that are NOT on the primary-street facing side of building may be approved administratively. On buildings with a sloped roof, the solar panels shall be installed on the back or side slopes, to reduce their visibility from the street. More specifically, with respect to buildings located close to the street, installation that places the panels as far to the rear as possible is required. As is the case with all Administrative Approvals, a denial of such approval may be taken to the full Commission as a new application.

C COMMISSION APPROVAL – PRIMARY ELEVATIONS AND CONSOLIDATED HEARINGS

1. **Primary Elevations:** On buildings with a sloped roof visible from the public right-of-way, a homeowner must thoroughly consider all options before the Commission is to evaluate its application. Locating solar panels on the primary elevation is not encouraged because doing so tends to have the greatest adverse effect on the properties' defining features. Solar panels should be installed in the least intrusive way. Factors to consider when assessing whether a proposal is intrusive and interacts negatively with the historic building and district itself may include: the subject property's scale, placement of the building on its lot, the roof slope, color and material compatibility with existing roofing materials, and the grade of the existing right-of-way. A homeowner must prove that all other elevations or locations on the property are not viable or feasible for installation of solar panels before the Commission may even consider the installation on the primary elevation.
2. **Consolidated Hearings:** Where a single contractor is installing solar panels on multiple structures in the District, the Commission will hold a consolidated hearing for such multiple structures, in order to minimize the expense and time of the applicants and contractor, and so as to consider all such applications with an equal degree of scrutiny.

S:\Bristol\Historic District Commission\Guidelines for Accessory Rooftop Installation, amended 06-02-16 d3 FINAL CLEAN.docx

Adopted June 2, 2016