

Zoning & Land Development Code Fact Sheet:

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Installations

This fact sheet clarifies and summarizes how the City of Cincinnati’s zoning ordinance and land use regulations relate to solar energy. Review the referenced City of Cincinnati Zoning Code and Land Development Code sections to determine where and how solar PV systems are allowed.

The City of Cincinnati requires building and electrical permits for solar PV installations. Building Permits are reviewed concurrently by staff at the Buildings & Inspections Department and the Zoning Division of the Planning & Community Engagement Department. The [Inspections Bureau, Inc.](#) conducts all electrical permit review and inspection for the City. For questions on electrical permits, please contact them at (513) 381-6080. For questions regarding the process for obtaining permits for a Solar PV Installation, please refer to the [Solar PV Installations Checklist](#) or contact the Permit Center at (513) 352-3271. For questions specific to zoning requirements, please contact the Zoning Division at (513) 352-2430.

Zoning Code or Land Development Code? The vast majority of the City of Cincinnati is covered by the Cincinnati Zoning Code. Certain areas of Madisonville, College Hill, Walnut Hills, and Westwood are covered by the Land Development Code. For more information on the Land Development Code and the City’s transition to form-based coding, see [Title XVII – Land Development Code – Preamble](#).

CINCINNATI ZONING CODE

Roof Mounted Solar Equipment

- Must be on the roof of an existing or approved building (including additions).
- Setbacks (vary by zoning district):
 - Front, Rear and Side Yard Setbacks: Must meet the same setbacks of the building that the equipment is mounted on.
 - See the Development Regulations section for the relevant zoning district (e.g. [Section 1403-07](#) for Single-Family Districts).
 - Properties located in a Hillside Overlay must follow specific regulations for principal building setbacks. See [Section 1433-17](#), Determination of Maximum Building Envelope.
- Height: Height limits differ whether the equipment is mounted on a principal structure or accessory structure (e.g. a residential detached garage). Height limits do not apply to flush-mounted solar panels. See [Section 1421-19](#), Exceptions to Height Limits.

Ground Mounted Solar Equipment

- Residential
 - Setbacks: Ground mounted solar equipment is considered an accessory structure. Accessory structures must be located in the rear yard with a minimum set back of 3 feet from side and rear property lines; they are limited to 800 square feet. See [Section 1421-01](#), Residential Accessory Structures.
 - Height: Maximum height of 15 feet. See [Section 1421-01\(e\)](#).

- Non-Residential:
 - Setbacks: Ground-mounted solar equipment is considered an accessory structure. Accessory structures must be located in the rear yard. There are no limits to square footage for accessory structures of non-residential properties. See [Section 1421-03](#), Accessory Nonresidential Structures.
 - Height: Accessory structures are subject to the standards of the district within which the principal structure is located. See [Section 1421-03\(c\)](#).

Refer to [Section 1400-27-H](#) for how height is measured.

CINCINNATI LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

- Setbacks – Roof Mounted Solar Equipment:
 - Building placement and height vary according to the form-based code transect where the building is located. See Land Development Code [Section 1703-2](#) Specific to Transect Zones.
- Setbacks – Ground Mounted Solar Equipment:
 - Ground mounted solar equipment is considered an accessory structure. Accessory structure placement and height vary according to the form-based code transect in which the property is located. See Land Development Code [Section 1703-2](#) Specific to Transect Zones.
- Height: Solar panels (or solar water heating) shall not exceed the lesser of 20% of the height limit or 10 feet above the height limit of the transect or the specific building type. Refer to Table 1703-5-60.B: Allowed Encroachments beyond Height Limits (see [Section 1703-5.60 \(H\)](#)).

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

- Use and development regulations are created by the applicant for each specific Planned Development District (PD). Any new construction or alterations to a property located within a PD, including ground mounted or roof mounted solar PV installations, are reviewed for compliance with the Final Development Plan for the specific PD.
- You can assess if your property is within a PD by visiting [OpenCincy](#), [CAGIS](#), or contacting the Zoning Division at (513) 352-2430.

If your property is located within a PD please contact the Planning Division Manager at the Department of City Planning and Engagement at (513) 352-4845 for interpretation of the adopted land use and development standards for the specific PD.

Additional Considerations: HISTORICALLY DESIGNATED PROPERTIES & DISTRICTS

Any alterations to a Historic Landmark or property located in a Historic District, including ground mounted or roof mounted solar PV installations, require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). For solar PV installations, this COA review will occur through the City’s building permit process. The review is required to ensure the installation complies with the applicable historic conservation guidelines for the individual landmark or district. **The [historic conservation guidelines](#) may require specific placement or evaluation of the visibility of the solar PV installation, even if otherwise permitted**

according to the Cincinnati Zoning Code or the Cincinnati Land Development Code. You can assess if your property is designated historic by visiting [OpenCincy](#), [CAGIS](#), or contacting the Zoning Division at (513) 352-2430. **If the project is in a historic district or is designated as an individual historic landmark, please contact the Urban Conservator at (513) 352-4848 for interpretation of the applicable conservation guidelines.**

Additional Considerations: URBAN DESIGN OVERLAY PROPERTIES

Any alterations to a property located within an Urban Design Overlay District, including ground mounted or roof mounted solar PV Installations, require review according to Cincinnati Zoning Code [Section 1437-09](#), Development Standards in Urban Design Overlay Districts. You can assess if your property is in an Urban Design Overlay District by visiting [OpenCincy](#), [CAGIS](#), or contacting the Zoning Division at (513) 352-2430.