

Solar Energy Systems (Residential & Non-Residential)

If you are looking to create a more energy-efficient space, than you may be considering installing solar panels.

Solar panels generate electricity and are usually installed on the roof. Only in rare cases, solar panels are installed on the ground. The City of Southlake requires permits from both planning and building inspections before any solar panels are installed.

There are many reasons homeowners and business owners have solar panels installed, the most common reason is to improve the environment and reduce the electric bill. However, getting solar panels installed is not a turnkey process.

Getting Started – Administrative Approval

The City of Southlake adopted an amendment to its Zoning Ordinance No. 480 relating to Solar Energy Systems (Solar Panels) to expedite the permitting process time by allowing administrative or staff approval for some solar panel applications. The following requirements for administratively approved solar energy systems are included below.

Residential Requirements

Solar energy systems for residentially zoned properties meeting the criteria/requirements below are permitted as an accessory use with a building permit.

Types:



Flat roof mounted on accessory buildings



Flat roof structures as extension or attached (patio extension) to main residence



Residential roof structures including domestic employee or family quarters

Requirements for all the above:

- Line of sight analysis – must be provided; shows the system is not visible from a public or private roadway/right of way
- Total solar array is less than 600 sq. ft. (cumulative)

Non-Residential Requirements

Solar energy systems for commercially zoned properties meeting the criteria/requirements below are permitted as an accessory use with a building permit.



Requirement:

- Line of sight analysis – must be provided; shows the system is not visible from a public or private roadway/right of way or a residential zoned or residentially land use plan property within 300 ft of the structure

Solar Shingle or Roof Material for Residential & Non-Residential Structures

The solar energy system material cannot be differentiated from typical roofing shingle or material. Examples are shown below of acceptable and non-acceptable materials:

Acceptable:



Non-Acceptable:



All other solar energy systems will require a Specific Use Permit (SUP)

Getting Started – Specific Use Permit

1. The applicant can select a contractor to install solar panels. Just be sure they are registered with the city before the permit is issued.
2. The applicant must apply for a Specific Use Permit through Planning and Development Services. The applicant will have to go through the development process by attending a SPIN Town Hall Forum (which is optional), a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, and two City Council meetings. It is required through Southlake's zoning ordinance that an applicant receives approval from City Council. The development process allows an opportunity for surrounding neighbors to understand what is being constructed or installed near their property.
3. If the Specific Use Permit is approved by City Council, the applicant (or contractor for the project) will need to apply for and obtain a Solar Panel permit from our Building Inspections division. Once the permit is obtained, solar panel installation can commence. After installation is completed, a Southlake building inspector will inspect that the solar panels were properly installed for building safety purposes. Undergoing the development process and obtaining the necessary permits ensures that the solar panel is designed for building safety and will be properly installed.

All construction must begin within six months of obtaining these permits. All work must be done under the 2020 National Electrical Code and the 2018 International Codes. If you have any questions about solar panels, please the Planning and Development **website**. For information on applications, fees, and submittal schedules, please visit

<https://www.cityofsouthlake.com/302/Applications-Fees-Submittal-Schedules>.