

ATTACHMENT C: AUDIT SUMMARY AND DRAFT AMENDMENTS

HEIGHT

A best practice highlighted by the audit is to permit building-mounted solar energy systems to exceed the maximum building height for efficiency reasons and to make an allowance for buildings constructed at the maximum height. The permissive options range from allowing a solar panel height at 5 feet above the roof all the way up to 15 feet. Similarly, the audit also found that the ground mounted panel height could be increased from 6 feet up to 15 feet to account for racking structures and double-rowed panels.

In response, Staff is proposing to amend Section 6-15-5:2 as follows (deleted language is ~~stricken~~; proposed language is underlined):

2. Height:

- 2.1. ~~Building-Mounted Solar Energy System: A building-mounted solar energy system may not extend above the peak roof height of the building which the solar energy systems is affixed to.~~ A building mounted solar energy system installed on a flat or mansard style roof may extend up to 3 feet above the applicable maximum building height limit for the subject building type or more than 5 feet above the highest point of the roof line, whichever is less. This additional height allowance shall not apply to installations on pitched roof structures.
- 2.2. ~~Ground-Mounted Solar Energy System: The maximum height of a ground mounted solar energy system shall be six (6) feet~~ eight (8) feet as measured from the average grade at the base of the pole to the highest edge of the system when oriented at maximum tilt.

This language provides some additional height allowance as recommended, but in a moderate fashion designed to respect the underlying integrity of the zoning districts and neighborhood aesthetics.

GROUND-MOUNTED INSTALLATIONS

The audit also recommends allowing solar energy systems as a by-right accessory use in all major zoning districts. Example language from the Massachusetts Model Solar Ordinance included in the audit differentiated amongst small-scale, medium-scale and large-scale ground-mounted solar energy systems with the large-scale systems requiring a special (conditional) use permit in a specific residentially-zoned district. Currently, these distinctions are not made and ground-mounted solar energy systems in Residential Districts require a Conditional Use.

In response, Staff is proposing to amend Section 6-15-2 (definitions) and 6-15-5:1 as follows (deleted language is ~~stricken~~; proposed language is underlined):

<u>GROUND-MOUNTED, SMALL:</u>	<u>A Ground-Mounted solar energy system that is under 1,750 square-feet in area.</u>
<u>GROUND-MOUNTED, MEDIUM:</u>	<u>A Ground-Mounted solar energy system that is greater than 1,750 square-feet in area but under 40,000 square-feet in area.</u>
<u>GROUND-MOUNTED, LARGE:</u>	<u>A Ground-Mounted solar energy system that is greater than 40,000 square-feet in area.</u>

1. Authorization of Use:

1.1. Permitted Use:

1.1.3. Building-mounted solar energy systems and small-scale ground-mounted solar energy systems may be authorized administratively in all Residential Districts in Chapter 6 in accordance with the requirements of this Chapter and subject to approval by the Director of Public Utilities and the Director of Transportation, Engineering and Development, or their designees.

1.2. Conditional Use:

1.2.1. Large-scale and medium-scale a ground-mounted solar energy systems ~~that is accessory to a residential use or any principal institutional, utilities or non-residential use~~ may be authorized as a conditional use in any Residence District in accordance with the procedures established in Section 6-3-8 (Conditional Use) of this Title and the provisions of Section 6-15-6 of this Chapter.

The Solar Foundation places the highest priority on allowing building mounted accessory solar as a by-right use. While all solar installations are encouraged, ground mounted accessory is a lessor priority.

SETBACKS

The audit made further recommendations on reducing the setback requirements for ground mounted systems. The current setback requirements are as follows:

3. Location:

3.1. Ground-Mounted Solar Energy Systems:

3.1.1. Ground-mounted solar energy systems shall not be located within the required front yard or corner side yard or in any utility, water, sewer, or other type of public easement.

3.2. All parts of any ground-mounted solar energy system shall be set back at least five (5) feet from the interior side and rear property lines.

Staff feels that because most side interior easements are 5 feet on residential lots, a revision to allow for the placement in public easements would then be required.

Therefore, staff has not drafted revised language. Also, the audit generally supports maintaining the provision prohibiting the placement of grounded-mounted systems in the required front yard or corner side yard.