

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS
Resident/Contractor “Easy Reference” Checklist for Zoning Permit

Residential Requirements: If the solar panels are the principal use on the lot, or are being used for commercial production of off-premises consumption, then a “Use Variance” is necessary from the Twp’s Joint Land Use Board.

The following questions need to be answered for a zoning permit to be considered and thereby issued for the installation of a solar energy collection panel system in Woolwich Township pursuant to the recently amended (12/2011) Alternate Energy Ordinance, which is codified in the Woolwich Twp Code at section 203-32.1.

Roof Mounted Systems:

- 1.) List the height of the highest mounted solar panel. (From ground level to highest mounted panel).
- 2.) Show location of panel box and any other associated structure.
- 3.) Are panels mounted within 10 degrees flush with roof line? Yes or No? Explain if no.
- 4.) Do panels exceed the front or side roof lines? Yes or No? Explain if yes.
- 5.) All visible parts of the solar collection system including panels, frames, hardware, pipes and support structures shall be non-reflective surfaces. Yes or No? Explain if no.
- 6.) Panels should be architecturally compatible with the color scheme of the roof to the extent possible.

Ground Mounted Systems:

- 1.) Minimum one acre lots, 1acre.
- 2.) 25 feet set back from all property lines.
- 3.) No front yard locations.
- 4.) Need buffer plan: all solar energy collection panels shall be completely screened from view at ground level from adjacent properties and streets with year-round vegetative screen, buildings, and/or solid fencing.
- 5.) Any glare is to be directed away from an adjoining property.
- 6.) Total surface area of all ground-mounted solar panels shall not exceed 800 square feet.
- 7.) Ground arrays shall not exceed 10 feet in height.
- 8.) All visible parts of the solar collection system including panels, frames, hardware, pipes and support structures shall be non-reflective surfaces.

Any deviation from these 8 important pre-conditions requires a bulk variance and site plan review at the Twp’s Joint Land Use Board, as relief from these 8 requirements cannot be given by the Zoning Officer. A **bulk variance**, otherwise known as a “C2” variance pursuant to Municipal Land Use Law N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c, can be granted when an applicant demonstrates that the purpose of the Solar Ordinance would be advanced by allowing a deviation from the explicit zoning ordinance requirements, and that the benefits of any deviation would substantially outweigh any detriment.

The Zoning Officer requires, in each permit application, the following information: **a plan of survey that illustrates the specific location of the arrays (including exactly how many feet from property lines and setbacks), the specific size of the arrays, and the specific details of the landscaped buffer.**

The Twp Code requires that the ground arrays be completely screened from view from the adjacent streets and homes. The complete screening can be accomplished by utilizing a combination of evergreen (or similar year round conifers) trees, structures (like house or shed), and six foot tall vinyl fencing (any fence taller than 6 feet requires a bulk variance from the Twp’s Joint Land Use Board). Reasonableness under the totality of the circumstances is the standard of review that will be applied by the Twp for buffer.