

Rooftop Photovoltaic System Application Process

Update 4-3-23

To install rooftop solar arrays on residential or commercial buildings an applicant must submit engineer or architect stamped drawings that demonstrate the structure's roof can sustain the added weight of the solar array. In addition, the Ohio Building Code requires Building and Zoning Services Department (BZS) to review the drawings to ensure safe installation and connection to the electric grid.

Special Notes:

Roof top solar panels are allowed in all zoning districts by right which means no special variances are needed for the Zoning review. One exception to this is if the project is located within a historic or design review commission area. (Downtown District, German Village, Italian village, etc.) In those areas the applicant will need to present the project details to the commission and acquire a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) prior to submitting documents to BZS. For more information regarding the historic or review commission areas call 614-645-4437 or email your questions to PlanningInfo@columbus.gov.

Solar panels are not considered when determining the height of a roof in any zoning district. In addition, required screening in commercial zoning district will not apply to solar arrays.

How to Apply For a Permit

Below are the steps necessary to acquire a plan approval for your solar array.

Step 1:

The applicant and their design profession (architect or engineer) should review the Construction Industry Communication (CIC) #40 which is attached below to ensure all information and documentation is ready for review prior to submission to BZS offices.

Step 2:

Complete the Building Permit Application – Universal Form located on our web site Columbus.gov/BZS, under the Document Library tab, it is within the Building and Permit Applications section.

How to Complete the Application

When completing the application Check the box marked “Plan Review only”. In the project \ work description section include the phrase “install rooftop solar panels”.

As part of assembling your documents please include the name of the third party inspector that will perform the city’s required inspection. To see the list of city registered Photovoltaic Inspectors go to our web page, Columbus.gov/BZS, under the Document Library tab click on Inspection Information and go to the document Special Inspection Testing Agencies and Inspectors. From there, scroll down to Photovoltaic Systems. This will be our most up to date registration list of photovoltaic inspectors.

How to Submit For Review

Upon completion of the steps above, there are 3 methods to submit the application for review and approval.

- 1) **The quickest method:** Email your completed application and documents to BZS-intake@columbus.gov
- 2) Mail the completed application and documents to 111 N. Front St, Columbus, Ohio 43215
- 3) Drop the completed application and documents at our office located at 111 N. Front St, Columbus, Ohio 43215

Once the application and documents are received, you will receive an email to pay fees. Once you make that payment, review will begin. If all is correct and submitted by email, then you will receive an email within 3 business days stating your permits are approved and can be printed. At this point the project begin construction.

NOTE: Your city registered electrical contractor, not the home owner, will need to pull the electrical permit showing how the solar panels will connect to the structure’s electrical system.

If you have any question please call 624-645-7562 or email BuildingPlanReview@Columbus.gov

Construction Industry Communication #40

From: Amit Ghosh, Chief Building Official
Re: Permit/Inspection Process – Photovoltaic (PV) Systems
Date: December 15, 2011

Requirements: The Ohio Building Code (OBC) requires all Building Services Equipment to be inspected per OBC 108.2.9. The Building Services Equipment designation encompasses those electrical systems located within or for use by building operations including any Photovoltaic Systems (PV) being installed. Additionally, Building Services Equipment are required to comply with the plan approval process as designated within OBC 107 and the inspection process designated within OBC 108 including any special inspections deemed necessary by the Chief Building Official per OBC 108.2.11 & OBC Section 1704.

Background: Due to the inherent nature of PV Systems necessitating the use of sunlight for optimum operation, the majority of this equipment is located in elevations that increase the hazards for inspections, requires specialized training and equipment to inspect safely and increases the time necessary to successfully complete. The City of Columbus has established procedures to comply with these requirements which will not adversely affect customer service levels expected by both the electrical industry and the citizens of Columbus.

Memorandum: The following shall be utilized for permit and inspection procedures for all PV Systems installed within the City of Columbus;

Plans sealed by a design professional registered in the State of Ohio are required to be submitted for approval in accordance with OBC 107 / RCO 106.

- The documentation within the expedited permit process for PV Systems will be required to be utilized for plans to be accepted for review, see link below.
<http://brooksolar.com/files/Expermitprocess3.pdf>
- All standard plan review fees will apply as identified within the Building and Zoning Services (BZS) Fee Schedule.

An approved special inspector from the “Special Inspection Testing Agencies and Inspectors” list must be designated by the permit applicant to perform the required special inspections of the PV System.

Upon receipt of an approved plan review and a qualified special inspector, a City of Columbus electrical permit will be required to be obtained by the permit holder per CBC 4113.

- All standard electric permit fees will apply as identified within the BZS Fee Schedule.

Upon completion of all work identified within the approved construction documents, a special inspection will be required by the qualified special inspector.

- A City of Columbus Photovoltaic System Checklist will be required to be prepared by the approved special inspection entity verifying the installation to be in accordance with the approved construction drawings.

Upon completion of the above, the Photovoltaic System Checklist (Page 2) shall be sent to electricinfo@columbus.gov for approval.

SCOTT MESSER

Director



DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING
AND ZONING SERVICES

PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM INSPECTION CHECKLIST

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 17 of the Ohio Building Code and Construction Industry Communication #40, the undersigned special inspector certifies the following list:

- Work was completed in conformance to the approved documents.
- All equipment is identified and listed for the application.
- All equipment is installed per the manufactures specifications and requirements.
- Installation is in compliance with Section 1512 of the Ohio Building Code, Article 690 of the National Electrical Code and all applicable referenced standards.
- Electrical permit is obtained by a registered electrical contractor with the City of Columbus.

Customer Name: _____

Job Site Address: _____

Date of Inspection: _____

Plan Approval Number: _____

Electrical Permit Number: _____

Special Inspector: _____

Company Phone Number: _____

NABCEP or PE Certification Number: _____

Signature of Special Inspector: _____