

SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEM PERMITTING AND INSTALLATION

The basic, pre-submittal checklist below contains the minimum information and project plan details required to be submitted to the City of Fairfax when applying to install a solar photovoltaic (PV) energy system (residential or commercial). The intent of using the checklist is to expedite the Plan Review process by minimizing the number of required revisions.

Installing a residential solar PV system requires obtaining a building permit and an electrical permit from the City's Office of Code Administration. Installation of a solar PV system on a commercial or multifamily building that is visible from public spaces requires building and electrical permits from the Office of Code Administration, and a zoning permit from the Office of Community Development and Planning – Zoning Division.

In addition to the City, the local utility [Dominion Energy](#) (Dominion), requires Installers to obtain a Permission to Operate (PTO) approval to turn on the solar PV system. Click [here](#) for an overview of the Dominion approval process. Please contact Dominion with questions on their process.

CHECKLIST: General Solar Permitting and Installation Process

- Installer must have proper state licensing and local licenses to pull a permit.
- Installer determines eligibility for the [Expedited Plan Review Program](#).
- Installer submits the following to Code Administration:
 - [Building Permit Application](#)
 - Permit fee: \$90.00 plus 2% state levy
 - [Electrical Permit Application](#)
 - Permit fee: \$90.00 plus 2% state levy (up to 400 amperes)
- Installer submits a [Zoning Permit Application](#) to Community Development and Planning - Zoning Division (*ONLY required for commercial or multifamily buildings whose solar PV system would be visible from public spaces*)
 - Permit fee: \$30.00 (Residential), \$60.00 (Commercial)
- Installer submits sections 1-4 of the [Form Net Metering Interconnection Notification](#) (Form NMIN) to Dominion. There is no fee associated with this form.
- **With all permits and Dominion approval, Installer may now install the solar PV energy system.**
- After installation, Installer completes Section 5 of the original Form NMIN and resubmits it to Dominion. There is no fee associated with this form.
- Installer calls City to schedule final inspection(s).
- City inspects and informs Dominion of successful inspection(s).
- Upon successful inspection(s) and Dominion approval of Section 5 of the Form NMIN, Dominion sets the meter and sends Installer the Permission to Operate (PTO) letter for system Owner signature.
- Installer has Owner sign the PTO; Installer returns signed PTO to Dominion.
- Installer may now energize and initiate operation of the solar PV energy system.
- Owner generates electricity, saves money, and reduces his/her carbon footprint!

For more information, contact the City of Fairfax's permit staff at (703) 385-7830.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I find the required permit application forms?

- o Refer here: [Building Permit](#), [Electrical Permit](#), [Zoning Permit](#) (commercial or multifamily buildings whose solar PV system is visible from public spaces only), and [Plumbing Permit](#) (for a solar thermal water heater only).

How much do permits cost?

- o Building permit fee is \$90.00 (plus 2% state levy) per installation. Electrical permit fee is \$90.00 (plus 2% state levy) per installation for a system of 400 amperes or under. Plumbing permit fee is \$90.00 (2% state levy). Zoning permit fee is \$30.00 (Residential) or \$60.00 (Commercial). See [Fee Schedule - Rates and Levies](#).

How do I schedule an appointment for inspection?

- o Go to [Online Inspection Requests](#) or call 703-385-7830. Requests **MUST BE RECEIVED ON A WORK DAY BY 2:00 PM** the day before the inspection. If we are unable to meet your request, we will attempt to notify you by e-mail or telephone the day before the inspection. Inspections must be scheduled by the Installer, unless permits were pulled by the homeowner. In that case, the homeowner will schedule the inspections. To cancel an inspection please call (703)385-7830 for assistance during regular business hours.

What does a Project Plan include?

- o The Project Plan must include a description of the basic solar PV energy system requirements. For the building permit the requirements are: Manufacturer's Specifications, Mounting System Details, and Structural Analysis. For the electrical permit the requirements are: Manufacturer Specifications, System Kilowatt (kW) rating (including the number of arrays), a Single Line Diagram as per the 2011 National Electrical Code Section 690, Labelling as per the 2011 National Electrical Code Section 690, Grounding Details, and Wiring Method.

The information in this [guideline](#) is intended to help Installers determine when PV system installations are simple, needing only a basic review, and when an installation is more complex. Installers may choose to use the one-page [Structural Review for Small-Scale PV Systems - Standard String System](#) as a resource to complete the Project Plans for a solar PV energy system less than or equal to 25 kW. These optional resources are intended to expedite the project plan review process by minimizing the number of required revisions. For projects greater than 25 kW, Installers may access additional resources and suggestions available [here](#).

What about solar projects on historic properties?

- o Check [here](#) for the *Design Guidelines (1993). Any accessory equipment or items placed on a building are regulated and covered under this guidance. Generally, solar PV equipment should not have adverse impacts to the structure or district, and preferably located on additions to historic buildings, in areas with limited visibility, and installed in such a way as to not harm the building. The City reviews each case on its own merits. The City also follows the US Department of Interior's Solar Panels on Historic Properties [technical standards](#). *Note: The City of Fairfax is in the process of [rewriting its design guidelines](#). For more information and for questions, contact the Department of Community Development and Planning at (703) 385-7892.

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