

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY’S ZONING REGULATIONS
CONCERNING SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS**

WHEREAS, the City of Rolling Meadows is a home rule municipality in accordance with Article VII, Section 6 of the Constitution of the State of Illinois of 1970 and has the authority to exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs; and

WHEREAS, the City’s Sustainability Plan, as adopted by Resolution 23-R-149, states as policy that the City will “replace polluting energy generation with renewable resources such as solar and wind production” by, among other actions, making “policy changes necessary to expedite solar deployment within Rolling Meadows;” and

WHEREAS, Section 122-394 (“Amendments”) of Chapter 122 (the “**Zoning Regulations**”) of the Code of Ordinances, City of Rolling Meadows, Illinois (“**City Code**”) sets forth procedures for considering amendments to the map and text of the City’s Zoning Regulations; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to amend the Zoning Regulations in order to modify regulations pertaining to solar energy systems that eliminate certain restrictions upon the installation of solar energy systems and recognize and explicitly permit community solar installations following the passage of the Future Energy Jobs Act in 2016 and the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act in 2021 (collectively, the “**Requested Amendments**”); and

WHEREAS, the City’s Planning and Zoning Commission (“**PZC**”), after notice was provided as required by law, conducted a public hearing on November 4, 2025 to consider an application to consider the Requested Amendment; and

WHEREAS, after taking and considering all testimony presented at the public hearing, the PZC made the findings of fact enumerated in **Exhibit A** and recommended that the City Council approve the Requested Amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Corporate Authorities of the City of Rolling Meadows have determined that it would be in the best interests of the City to approve the Requested Amendment as set forth in this Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Rolling Meadows, Illinois:

Section 1: Recitals. The recitals set forth above are incorporated herein by reference as the findings of the Corporate Authorities.

Section 2: Amendment to Section 122-42. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 (“Amendments”) and the City’s home rule authority, Section 122-42 (“Definitions”) of Article II (“Definitions”) of Chapter 122 (“Zoning”) of the City Code is hereby amended as follows, with any additions in the correct alphabetical order [additions are **bold and double-underlined**; deletions are struck through]:

“Sec. 122-42 Definitions.

The words defined are those which have special or limited meanings as used in this Code. Words whose meanings are self-evident as used in this Code are not defined.

* * *

Community solar: A solar energy system that qualifies as a community renewable generation project under the Illinois Power Agency Act (20 ILCS 3855/1-10). Such installations are interconnected at the distribution system level of an electric utility and enable multiple individual subscribers to receive credit for electricity generated by a single photovoltaic system. The term “community solar” identifies a specific type of solar energy system (as defined herein) and does not constitute a separate land use category under this Chapter.

* * *

Impervious surface: Any area that prevents or significantly impedes the infiltration of stormwater into the underlying soil. Impervious surfaces include, without limitation: building roofs; driveways and parking areas constructed of asphalt, concrete, compacted gravel, crushed stone, or compacted dirt; paved or hard-surfaced walkways; patios; decks with impervious flooring; swimming pools; and recreational courts such as tennis or basketball courts. Semi-pervious or permeable pavement and paver systems shall be considered 100 percent impervious, regardless of their design or materials.

* * *

~~Solar-energy system: An energy-producing device which converts solar energy by means of a photovoltaic system into electrical energy.~~ **A device, array of devices, or structural design feature, the purpose of which is to provide for generation or storage of electricity from sunlight, or the collection, storage, and distribution of solar energy for space heating or cooling, daylight for interior lighting, or water heating.**

* * *

Section 3: Amendment to Section 122-78. Pursuant to Sections 122-394 (“Amendments”) and the City’s home rule authority, Section 122-78 (“Accessory uses and structures.”) of Article III (“Regulations of General Applicability”) of Chapter 122 (“Zoning”) of the City Code is hereby amended as follows [additions are **bold and double-underlined**; deletions are struck through]:

“Sec. 122-78. Accessory Uses and Structures.

* * *

(k) *Sustainable energy systems.*

(1) Solar energy systems (SES):

a. Purpose: The City of Rolling Meadows seeks to **promote the development and use of local renewable energy resources, such as solar energy systems (SES), in order to meet the City’s sustainability goals. The development of solar energy systems within the City will promote air quality and public health through the displacement of electricity consumption generated by fossil fuels; promote sustainable building design and practices; and allow residents and businesses to realize cost-savings and efficiencies.**

~~encourage environmentally sensitive development techniques to benefit its residents, business owners, and others in the community. This goal is supported by sustainable energy techniques such as solar energy systems (SES). The purpose of this section 122-78(k)(1) is to ensure that solar energy systems are compatible in character and appearance with the principal structure and surrounding neighborhood or area of the zoning districts in which they are located. Solar energy systems,~~
including systems used for community solar, are permitted as an accessory use to any principal permitted or special use subject to the following development standards.

b. All SES shall meet applicable requirements of chapter 18, Buildings and Building regulations of the City Code.

c. Building mounted facilities:

i. ~~**Reserved.** Appearance and materials: Solar energy systems shall be neutral in color and generally match the roof color of the principal structure. All such devices shall have the following characteristics:~~

~~1. Not be plastic or other non-UV stable material;~~

~~2. Include frames, where applicable, of anodized aluminum or painted steel; and~~

~~3. Where devices are encased with glass, the glass shall be nonreflective tempered glass.~~

~~4. Solar panels must be placed so that concentrated solar radiation or glare is not directed onto nearby properties or roadways.~~

ii. Yards **for mounted SES:** Solar energy systems **mounted to the principal building** shall be subject to the following yard requirements:

1. Solar energy systems are an allowed encroachment in front, side, and rear yards so long as they do not project more than five feet from an exterior wall.

2. Solar energy systems shall be located flush to the exterior wall of the principal and street facing facades.

3. In side or rear wall installations, solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of three feet from any property line.

iii. Height **for mounted SES:** Solar energy systems **mounted to the principal building** shall be subject to the following height requirements:

1. ~~Solar energy systems complying with this subsection may not exceed the maximum building height requirements for the district in which they are located; **A mounted SES may be erected above the height limitations imposed by this Chapter, subject to the following limitations.**~~
 2. SES located on sloped roof buildings shall not extend beyond one foot above the roof surface at any point in residential zoning districts and 15 inches for all other zoning districts.
 3. SES located on flat roofed buildings shall not extend beyond two feet in overall height above the roof on which they are mounted in residential zoning districts or eight feet in all other districts. In no case shall solar collection devices extend above the parapet wall of the structure.
- iv. Bulk requirements **for integrated SES**: Solar energy systems integrated into the structure or building cladding shall be subject to the yard, height and any other bulk requirements of the zoning district in which they are located.
- d. **Ground-Mounted**: Ground mounted separate or adjacent to the principal structure: ~~Solar energy systems mounted on the ground shall not:~~
- i. **Ground-mounted systems shall not** be more than eight feet high;
 - ii. ~~Have a footprint (as determined by a horizontal plane at the ground generated by extending all parts of the structure vertically down) greater than 25 percent of the principal building footprint; or~~
 - iii. **On a lot with a principal building,** be located in front- or street-facing yards. **For the purposes of this subsection, a yard abutting Illinois Route 53 or Interstate 90 is not a "street-facing yard."**
 - iii. **Notwithstanding any other provision of this Section, an accessory ground-mounted solar energy system may be located on a vacant lot that is separate from the lot containing the principal use or building it serves. Such a system shall be kept in common ownership or control as the principal use or building. Such a system shall not be used for community solar.**
 - iv. **Ground-mounted solar energy systems are not included when calculating building coverage.**
 - v. **The contribution of the area of ground-mounted solar energy systems, if any, when calculating impervious surface shall be**

based upon the ground cover beneath the solar energy system.

vi. The zoning administrator may approve the addition of a ground-mounted solar energy system to an existing planned development. Such a system shall be kept in common ownership or control as a principal use or building in the planned development. The addition of such a ground-mounted solar energy system is considered a “minor change” to an existing planned development as defined in Section 122-462 of the City Code.

e. Accessory structures: Solar energy systems mounted to accessory structures:

i. Shall comply with all yard requirements for accessory structures; and

ii. May extend up to four feet above the roof ridge for sloped roof structures and up to five feet above the roof height for flat roofed structures. **A SES mounted to an accessory structure may be erected above the height limitations imposed by this Chapter for accessory structures subject to these limitations.**

* * *

Section 4: **Severability.** If any provision of this Ordinance or part thereof is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions of this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect, and shall be interpreted, applied, and enforced so as to achieve, as near as may be, the purpose and intent of this Ordinance to the greatest extent permitted by applicable law.

Section 5: **Effective Date.** This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval, and publication in pamphlet form in the manner provided by law.

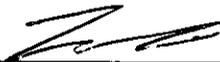
[Signature page follows.]

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council of Rolling Meadows, Cook County, Illinois, this 25th day of November, 2025.

AYES: Boucher, Reyez, Koehler, McHale, Budmats, O'Brien

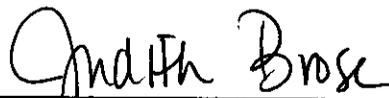
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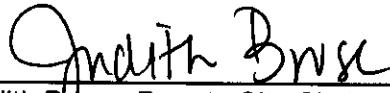
Lara Sanoica, Mayor

ATTEST:



Judith Brose, Deputy City Clerk

Published this 26th day of November, 2025.



Judith Brose, Deputy City Clerk

Exhibit A

PZC Findings of Fact

Text Amendment Standards

Potential Impact: *The amendment shall not adversely impact the overall zoning district purpose or intent of a code section proposed for amendment.*

Petitioner's Findings: The amendments advance the code's fundamental purposes of promoting public health, safety, and welfare by facilitating clean energy generation that improves air quality and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The amendments enhance and clarify the original regulatory intent of the City's solar policies by clarifying unclear sections of the Code and by supporting the deployment of solar energy systems (SES) consistent with current practices.

Trend of Development / Consistency: *[...] In the case of a text amendment, the amendment shall be consistent with the overall zoning district purpose or intent of a code section proposed for amendment.*

Petitioner's Findings: *[See "Potential Impact," above, which is duplicative of this standard in the case of a generally applicable text amendment.]*

Externalities: *Relevant physical or market conditions that may have changed to make the existing zoning of a property inappropriate, or that make the proposed text amendment necessary for this chapter to be in keeping with the desirable development of the city shall be specified.*

Petitioner's Findings: Numerous conditions have rendered this Section out of keeping with current practices in the marketplace:

Solar panel technology has advanced substantially since the original code provisions were adopted. Modern panels utilize diverse materials and designs (including flexible panels, building-integrated photovoltaics, and advanced mounting systems) that may not conform to outdated material specifications, yet meet or exceed current building and electrical code safety standards. Installation practices have matured, with industry-standard mounting heights now established to optimize performance and minimize wind damage risk—standards that should replace arbitrary code requirements.

The Future Energy Jobs Act (2016) and Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (2021) created community solar programs that enable distributed renewable generation. The current code does not contemplate these installations, creating uncertainty for projects that serve important public policy objectives.

Finally, experience demonstrates that prescriptive material and glare standards are unnecessary—market forces, building codes, and the inherent design of solar technology (which absorbs rather than reflects light) adequately address these concerns without code mandates.

Adopting the amendment will adapt the Zoning Regulations to these externalities and support the (desirable) development of SES within the City.

City plans: *Amendments should be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Official Map, and all other plans and policies adopted by the city.*

Petitioner's Findings: The proposed amendment is consistent with and directly implements the City's 2023 Sustainability Plan as adopted by Resolution 23-R-149. The Sustainability Plan

explicitly directs the City to “replace polluting energy generation with renewable resources such as solar and wind production” and to pursue the SoSmart recognition program that led to the policy recommendations that will be implemented by this amendment. The Sustainability Plan also highlights as a key success the 2021 installation of a 1.1MW SES by Northrop Grumman. The adoption of the Plan will enable more similar successes.

Zoning appropriateness: *The extent to which use of the subject property (or relevant properties in the case of a text amendment) is diminished by the current zoning standards or designation and is no longer suitable for the underlying zoning shall be specified.*

Petitioner’s Findings: To the extent that the amendment eliminates restrictive height regulations for SES that do not apply to other rooftop structures within the City, the amendment is eliminating an arbitrary restriction that diminishes the use of current properties built to their height limit. Under current regulations, any building that has been constructed to the maximum permitted height cannot accommodate roof-mounted solar systems. This restriction bears no rational relationship to safety or compatibility—a properly designed system that extends 12-15 inches above a sloped roof poses no greater impact whether the building is at maximum height or not. This particularly affects commercial and multi-family properties that represent the most efficient locations for solar generation due to large roof areas and high energy consumption.

Similarly, to the extent that the amendment allows larger ground-mounted accessory solar arrays, and for these arrays to be erected in additional locations, the current restrictions diminish the use of this property. The 25% footprint limitation renders ground-mounted solar systems virtually meaningless for office towers with small footprints relative to their floor area and energy demands. A 10-story office building on a small lot cannot generate meaningful solar power under this restriction despite having substantial electricity needs. These properties are precisely where solar installations would provide greatest environmental benefit and cost savings yet current regulations effectively prohibit meaningful systems. Relatedly, property owners who have acquired adjacent lots for ground-mounted solar face unnecessary subdivision requirements that increase costs, delay implementation, and may complicate future redevelopment.