

City of Boulder
Chapter 9-9: Development Standards

9-9-17 Solar Access.

(h) Solar Access Permits:

(1) Purpose of Solar Access Permit: In order to promote opportunities for the use of solar energy and where basic solar access protection established by this section is inadequate to protect potential solar energy users, or to insure maximum utilization of solar energy resources consistent with reasonable use of surrounding property, persons may obtain permits under this section. Beneficial use is the limit and measure of any right conferred by permit and no permit shall restrict use of other property beyond the extent reasonable to insure efficient and economical beneficial use of solar energy by the permittee. Further, no permit shall restrict the reasonable use and enjoyment of adjacent properties.

(2) Eligibility Standards: Any owner or possessor of property who has installed a solar energy system or who intends to install such a system within a year from the date of application may apply for a permit if:

(A) The lot for which a permit is requested is included in SA Area III;

(B) The system that has been or will be installed is capable of applying to beneficial use substantial amounts of solar energy outside the hours of the day during which basic protection is provided for under this section;

(C) A solar energy system is in existence on the lot or is planned to be built within a year and the lot is changed from SA Area I to another solar access area or is changed from SA Area II to SA AREA III, resulting in a diminution or elimination of protection previously afforded the user or potential user of the solar energy system;

(D) A new structure is built on a lot in SA Area I or SA Area II after the effective date of this section whose locations renders the basic solar access protection inadequate, and the structure could not reasonably have been constructed at a location where it would have substantially benefited from the basic solar access protection provided by this section; or

(E) The applicant demonstrates that there are substantial technical, legal, or economic factors that render it infeasible to collect a reasonable amount of solar energy by utilizing the basic solar access protection available under this section without a permit. Such factors include, without limitation, structural characteristics of the applicant's building that limit possibilities for economical retrofit of a solar energy system or

shading by objects, structures, or vegetation that are beyond the applicant's control and are exempt from the requirements of this section.

(3) Application Requirements: An applicant for a permit shall pay the fee prescribed by subsection 4-20-33(a), B.R.C. 1981, and complete an application in writing on a form furnished by the city manager that includes, without limitation:

(A) The applicant's name and address, the owner's name and address, and a legal description of the lot where the solar energy system is located or will be located;

(B) A statement by the applicant that the solar energy system is already installed or that the applicant intends to install such a system on the lot within one year of the issuance of the permit;

(C) A description of the existing or proposed size and location of the system, its orientation with respect to south, and its elevation and orientation from the horizontal;

(D) A statement describing the beneficial use to which solar energy is or will be applied and certifying the energy capacity of the system in BTUs or BTU equivalents and its reasonable life expectancy;

(E) A statement and accurate drawings describing the access protection desired beyond the basic solar access protection provided by this section, specifying the hours of the day, seasons of the year, and locations on the applicant's lot for which protection is desired;

(F) A description of all existing vegetation, objects, and structures wherever located that will or may in the future shade the solar energy system, together with a map or drawing showing their location to the extent possible;

(G) Information showing that the applicant has done everything reasonable in designing and locating the system so as to minimize the impact it will have on use and development on nearby land;

(H) Survey plats or other accurate drawings showing lot lines, dimensions, and topography of the lot on which the solar energy system is or will be located and all surrounding properties that are intended to be subject to the permit; and

(I) A list of all lots that may be affected by the permit, including the names and addresses of all owners of such lots.

(4) Public Notice: The city manager shall provide public notification pursuant to the requirements of section 9-4-3, "Public Notice Requirements," B.R.C. 1981.

(5) Permit Issuance: The city manager shall issue a solar access permit and may impose additional conditions or restrictions as the manager deems appropriate if the application complies with the requirements of paragraph (h)(7) of this section.

(6) Appeal of City Manager's Decision: The city manager's decision may be appealed to the BOZA pursuant to the procedures of section 9-4-4, "Appeals, Call-Ups and Public Hearings," B.R.C. 1981. Public notification of the hearing shall be provided pursuant to section 9-4-3, "Public Notice Requirements," B.R.C. 1981.

(7) Permit Requirements: In order to issue a permit, the approving authority must find that each of the following requirements has been met:

(A) The applicant meets at least one of the eligibility standards of paragraph (h)(2) of this section;

(B) The applicant has done everything reasonable in designing and locating the proposed solar energy system to minimize the impact it will have on use and development of nearby land. However, the fact that an alternate design or site may be more expensive does not necessarily establish that the applicant's failure to select that alternate design or site is reasonable. In making this finding, the board or the city manager may consider whether the additional cost of alternative, less intrusive sites or solar energy systems, if any, would exceed the difference between the adverse effects, if any, imposed on other lots by the proposed site and solar energy system and the adverse effects, if any, that would be imposed on other lots by alternative sites or solar energy systems;

(C) Issuance of the permit is consistent with reasonable use and enjoyment of nearby land, excluding landscaping considerations. Issuance of the permit will be presumed not to be consistent with reasonable use and enjoyment of nearby land if issuance would prevent any affected property owner from erecting, consistent with legal requirements, a structure of a size, character, and usefulness reasonably typical of those in existence on similar lots subject to the same zoning requirements located within one-fifth mile of the lot in question. However, nothing in this subsection prohibits issuance of a permit only because it would impose requirements on a neighboring lot owner that are more restrictive than the height or setback requirements that would otherwise apply, if reasonable use and enjoyment of such lot is preserved; and

(D) Issuance of the permit is consistent with reasonable landscaping of nearby land. In determining consistency, the board shall consider the need for any additional landscaping in the future, including any energy conservation value that such landscaping may have.

(8) Conditions of Approval: The board may grant permits subject to such terms and conditions as it finds just and equitable.

(9) Records: The city manager shall maintain complete records of all permits that have been issued and shall make them readily available for public inspection.

(10) Expiration of Permit: A solar access permit expires if:

(A) A functioning system is not installed within a year after the issuance of the permit;

(B) The solar energy system protected by the permit has not functioned to fulfill its intended purpose for a continuous period of two or more years; or

(C) The term established under paragraph (h)(11) of this section expires.

(11) Term of Solar Energy System: The city manager or the BOZA shall specify the term of each solar access permit, which shall be for the reasonable life expectancy of the particular solar energy system, as determined by the manager or the board. At the expiration of a permit, it may be renewed in the same manner as new permits are issued.

(12) Renewal of Permit: If no functioning solar energy system is installed within a year of the issuance of the permit, the city manager may grant a renewal of up to one additional year to the holder of the expired permit if the permittee demonstrates that the permittee has exercised due diligence in attempting to install the system.

(13) Enforcement: A solar access permit is enforceable by the beneficiary, if and only if the beneficiary has properly recorded the permit in the real property records of the Boulder County Clerk and Recorder with respect to each affected lot in such a manner that it could be detected through customary title search.

(A) On sale, lease, or transfer of the lot on which the protected solar system is located, the right to enforce its terms passes to the beneficial user of the system.

(B) No property owner shall be requested to remedy vegetative shading unless a protected solar system is installed and functioning.

(14) Impacts of Vegetation on an Issued Permit: Upon application of a beneficiary to the BOZA, vegetative shading may be remedied to the extent necessary to comply with the terms specified in a solar access permit. However, no vegetation in the ground and growing at the time the permit application is filed may be ordered removed or trimmed. After notice to at least the beneficiary and the vegetation owner, the board shall hold a hearing and, based on evidence submitted by any interested party, may issue any necessary order and specify the time in which actions thereunder must be performed. Absent unusual circumstances, the cost of remedying shading from vegetation not in the ground and growing at the time the permit application is filed shall be borne by the vegetation owner. If an owner or possessor of real property who receives an order to remedy vegetative shading

fails to comply within the specified time, the city manager may order the condition remedied and charge the actual cost thereof to the person to whom the order is directed, who shall pay the bill. If any person fails or refuses to pay when due any charge imposed under this subsection, the manager may, in addition to taking other collection remedies, certify due and unpaid charges to the Boulder County Treasurer for collection as provided in section 2-2-12, "City Manager May Certify Taxes, Charges, and Assessments to County Treasurer for Collection," B.R.C. 1981.

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