

Spreading **Sunshine** All Over the Place

City moves forward with new solar initiative

The City of Lancaster has become the first city in America to require all new residential construction projects to include solar power beginning in 2014.

Part of Lancaster's ongoing commitment to produce more clean energy than it consumes, the new rules were adopted on a 5-0 vote by the City Council, after previously being recommended unanimously by the City's Planning Commission.

The new regulations do not require solar panels to be installed on every home within a new subdivision, but do call for a minimum average solar generating capability of .5 to 1.5 kW per unit depending on lot size and location. New multi-family developments are also covered by the ordinance. Developers may alternately elect to purchase solar energy credits from other facilities within the City in lieu of constructing solar equipment on site.

"We've taken a forward looking approach to this new ordinance. It is much more about the future than the past," said Brian Ludicke, Planning Director for the City. "This plan will help reduce our residents' energy costs while lessening the impact of fossil fuel on our environment."

In developing the new "Residential Zone Update," the Planning Commission and City staff tried to balance the needs of builders with the desires of the City to reduce its environmental impact and improve overall quality of life.

"City planning staff and commissioners did a great job in collaborating with the residential building industry, as well as real estate and building trade associations to obtain the necessary input and feedback on the ordinance," offered Planning Commission Chair James Vose. "We spent a year discussing this in public meetings, workshops and field trips before recommending these regulations to the City Council."

In addition to the solar requirements, the new ordinance provides builders with greater flexibility in their site designs, to help improve the walkability of neighborhoods. The new regulations also call for increased use of porches and recessed garages in new developments, thus encouraging more front yard activity. It has been shown that such architectural features help create a more cohesive neighborhood while discouraging crime by putting more "eyes on the street."



The new zoning rules also provide incentives for infilling existing vacant parcels within the City rather than consuming raw land along the edges of the City. The rules also make it easier to accommodate "granny flats" and similar accessory dwellings in new developments, for use by family members. They also ease regulations on live/work situations in homes along major thoroughfares.

For more information on the new Residential Zone Update, visit the City's website at www.cityoflanasterca.org/residentialzoneupdate.

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