

Solar Energy System Zoning Permit (SESZP)

Application Information

This application information pertains to the staff review and approval of photovoltaic or thermal solar energy systems within the corporate limits of Ames. Please submit this application **BEFORE** purchasing any equipment. A system not meeting the criteria for this staff-reviewed application, may meet the criteria for a Solar Energy System Special Use Permit, reviewed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This application does not replace a building permit application. Please contact the Inspection Division for information regarding any trade permits, such as building, electrical, plumbing or mechanical.

1. **Application.** *Be sure to complete and submit the materials that are specified on the Solar Energy System Zoning Permit Form.*
2. **What must be submitted?**
 - One (1) completed and signed Application Form, including:
 - Property location;
 - Legal description of the subject lot, tract or parcel;
 - Written responses to questions about the proposal's compliance with city zoning code;
 - Names and signatures of the owner(s) of the subject property;
 - Name and signature of the applicant;
 - Name, signature and contact information for the contact person;
 - Responses to code questions;
 - Completion of the checklist portion of the application form.
 - A plot plan, a minimum of 8-1/2" x 11" in size, but no larger than 11" x 17" (must be clearly legible), drawn to scale.
 - Elevation views and dimensions, a minimum of 8-1/2" x 11" in size, but no larger than 11" x 17" (must be clearly legible), drawn to scale.
 - Manufacturer's information
 - Specifications sheet, including industry certifications and wattage capacity.
 - Manufacturer photographs or renderings
 - A check or cash for the application filing fee as established by the City Council. ***No fee has been established as of November 17, 2009.***

3. What about “grid-tied” (interconnected) systems?

- Interconnection Information
 - Some portions within the Ames Corporate limits are not within the Ames Electric Services territory. Please look at your utility bill to find out which electric utility serves your area. All public electric utilities are familiar with the terms “interconnection” or “grid-tied” solar energy systems, but the individual requirements of each utility may vary. For example, some may require a liability insurance policy and some may not. Also, the reimbursement (credit) rates for net metering may vary among utilities. The city recommends working with the applicable utility **BEFORE** purchasing any equipment. The Iowa Public Utilities Board outlines the net metering requirements of rate-regulated utilities.

4. What is the process?

Solar Energy System Zoning Permit applications will be processed according to the table below:

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM APPLICATION PROCESSING SCHEDULE					
Submittal Date	Notice of Completeness	Begin Review Process	Staff Comments to Applicant	Revisions Submitted	Final Decision
Determined by applicant	Within 3 working days of submittal	Upon determination of a complete app	Within seven (7) working days of complete app	Determined by applicant	Between seven (7) and 14 days from complete app
Applicant may request a pre-application meeting before this.	If application is incomplete, process begins anew on submittal date of new information.	Staff may find during the review process that additional information is needed to determine compliance.	If there are no comments, the SESZP will be approved. Otherwise, the comments will identify any shortfalls of the proposal.	Staff response to revisions within 7 working days of submittal. Applicant may revise again or request staff decision.	If a grid-tied system, the interconnection agreement must be submitted prior to approval An approval allows the applicant to continue to the next step, and apply to the Inspection Division for any building, electrical, plumbing or mechanical permits.

- Review of the Application. The Planning and Housing Department will review the application for completeness within three days of submittal. Once complete, the application is assigned to a staff planner. The staff planner will provide comments to the contact person within seven (7) working days of the complete application. The applicant then has the option of resubmitting additional or revised information, or to request a decision be rendered by staff.
- Completion of Approval Process. Once a SESZP is approved, the applicant is then required to seek any trade permits before commencing any field or site work. A copy of the approved permit packet will be forwarded to the Inspection Division. Applicants are encouraged to speak with Inspection staff **BEFORE** purchasing any equipment, to determine if any building code requirements may be prohibitive to the project.

5. What is the *Municipal Code* related to this application?

- *Section 29.1309 of the Ames Municipal Code identifies the requirements for obtaining a Solar Energy System Zoning Permit.*

6. Does the City offer assistance prior to the application being submitted?

- Yes, the Planning & Housing Department encourages “pre-application meetings” for solar energy projects. If you would like to have questions answered before submitting a formal application, the city planning staff is available. Please contact us to schedule the meeting. This packet does not need to be completed prior to a pre-application meeting. Complete as much as possible for an effective pre-application meeting. City staff can also meet the applicant on site to facilitate the submittal, application, and review process.

7. Where should submittals be made?

- Submit the completed *SESZP Application* to:

Department of Planning and Housing
Room 214, City Hall
515 Clark Avenue
P.O. Box 811
Ames, Iowa 50010

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS WHILE COMPLETING THIS APPLICATION,
PLEASE CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND HOUSING.**

Phone: 515-239-5400
FAX: 515-239-5404
E-mail: planning@city.ames.ia.us

Solar Energy System (SESZP) *Application Form*

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1. Property Location (Address):

2. Legal Description of the lot, tract or parcel where the system will be located:

3. Tax Parcel Number of the lot, tract or parcel where the system will be located:

4. Brief Description of Proposed Project (Attach if lengthy):

5. Property Owner (Add a person's name if owner is a corporation or other type of group):

Name: _____

Business: _____

Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: _____
(Home) (Business) (Fax)

6. Contact Person

Name: _____

Business: _____

Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: _____
(Home) (Business) (Fax)

E-mail address: _____

7. Applicant Name (enter "Same" if same as contact person): _____

Business: _____

Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: _____
(Home) (Business) (Fax)

E-mail address: _____

The questions below highlight the major portions of the Solar Energy System Code, but do not cover every portion of the code.

See Section 29.1309 of the Ames Municipal Code.

8. What is the zoning classification of the subject property?

This determines whether "Non-Residential" or "Residential" regulations apply to the proposal. Regulations differ regarding height projection from the roof and also maximum square footage.

9. Is the proposed system Freestanding, Attached, or both? Circle One.

10. If a proposed attached system is classified as a "Residential" property, is the system proposed as:

A) Mounted flush B) Not Visible from streets C) Not Applicable

11. If the system is an attached system, how far from the roof or wall does it project?

In Feet/Inches: _____

This will need to be documented by an attached elevation drawing.

12. If the system is freestanding (on a self-supporting structure), what is the overall height at maximum angle? _____ What is the total area of the receiving surface? _____

13. What are the setback distances from the property lines to the system?

Front: _____ Side: _____ Rear: _____

This will need to be documented by an attached plot plan.

14. Does the operation of the system depend on solar access through adjacent properties? _____
Solar access is the responsibility of the system owner, not the City of Ames.

15. Is the subject property in a historic overlay district? _____ *If yes, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required first.*

16. Is the system photovoltaic or thermal? *Circle one.* If photovoltaic, is the system off-grid or interconnected? *Circle one.*

If the system is interconnected, evidence of signed Interconnection Agreement between the owner and the utility will be needed prior to installation.

17. Do you claim that the system, or any portion of the system is not visible from abutting street rights of way, for any exemption purposes? _____ *If yes, you will need to set up a site-visit appointment with Planning staff to confirm no visibility. This is called the "Demarcation of Dimensions." You will need to simulate the dimensions of the system by placing posts, rods, balloons, or similar representation for the field visit.*

18. Do any of the responses to these questions exceed the base criteria? _____ *If yes, a Solar Energy System Special Use Permit may be an option for exceeding some of the criteria. Contact staff for more information.*

19. Submittal Checklist:

The following items are included with this submittal for a Solar Energy System Zoning Permit:
Check those that are included, and write "N.A." next to those that are not applicable.

- One (1) completed and signed *Application Form.*
- Two (2) paper copies of a plot plan, a minimum of 8-1/2" x 14" in size, but no larger than 11" x 17" (must be clearly legible), drawn to scale, showing at least the following information:
 - Existing structures on the lot
 - Proposed system(s)
 - Property lines
 - Setbacks of existing and proposed structures
 - Rights of way
 - Easements
 - Utility diagram applicable to the proposed system
 - Property address, date, scale, north arrow and preparer's name
 - May be able to reproduce from original site plan, with applicable amendments

- Two (2) paper copies of an elevation drawing, a minimum of 8-1/2" x 14" in size, but no larger than 11" x 17" (must be clearly legible), drawn to scale, showing at least the following information:
 - Elevation drawings and dimensions shall be in a form sufficient for staff to determine compliance with dimensional standards
 - Recommend submitting drawing views from at least two sides (can be on same sheet)
 - More than one scale of drawing may be needed, if, for example, the system is attached to an existing structure
 - These drawings do not replace any drawings which may be required of a building permit
 - Can be hand drawn if clearly legible, or can be reproduced from manufacturer's specifications
 - Property address, date, scale, view direction and preparer's name
 - May be able to reproduce from original building drawings, with applicable amendments

- Manufacturer's information:
 - Specifications sheet, including industry certifications and wattage capacity
 - Manufacturer photographs or renderings

- Application fee:
 - No fee for the zoning permit has been established at this time. But, building permit fees may apply after the zoning permit is issued by the Planning & Housing Department. Contact the Inspections Division at 515-239-5153 for more information.

I (We) certify that the above information is true, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, and that (we) am (are) familiar with applicable state and local codes and ordinances, the procedural requirements of the City of Ames, and have submitted the required information.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____
Property Owner(s)

Print Name

(Note: No other signature may be substituted for the Property Owner's Signature, unless accompanied by an affidavit of agent authority.)