



Heritage Commission

Review of Guidance for Solar Installations for Locally Designated Historic Properties

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Title

Review of Guidance for Solar Installations for Locally Designated Historic Properties

Recommended Action

Discuss recent solar installations and Heritage Review Committee decisions, and whether to amend the Commission's Guidelines for Solar Installations.

Report

Issue:

Whether to amend the Commission's current Guidelines for Solar Installations.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Garner Miller, Heritage Review Committee Chair
Pamela Banff, Climate Program Manager, City of Olympia

Background and Analysis:

The Commission adopted Guidelines for Solar Installations for historic buildings and districts in February 2021. The guidelines support placement of panels on roof areas not visible from the street and discourage placement on street-facing roofs, but provide some flexibility for street-facing placement when there are no other "viable" options. "Viable" is defined as a Total Solar Resource Fraction (TSRF) of 80% or higher, to be assessed and documented by a professional solar consultant or installer.

Issue One:

The Guidelines are currently interpreted to mean that street-facing placement is allowable when the following two conditions occur:

- 1) An 80% TSRF cannot be achieved with any other combination of less visible rooftop locations on the property - meaning the homeowner looked at other placement options first; **and,**

- 2) The proposed street-facing, visible location receives enough sunlight to generate a minimum of 80% TSRF; (in effect, making sure that the energy savings achieved is enough to merit the loss historic integrity).

The Committee may wish to consider

- whether both of these conditions should be required,
- the effect and intention of the second requirement, and if there are other ways that it can be met, such as requiring that other home energy-saving measures be pursued.
- To what degree visibility should play a role in acceptability of primary façade installations (see Issue Two below).

Issue Two:

Should the guidelines be amended to:

- Allow more leeway for committee judgment on when primary façade placement is considered visually intrusive.
- Allow primary façade placement without committee review if the location is not visible.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Historic homeowners and historic districts.

Options:

1. Amend the Guidelines
2. Do not amend the Guidelines
3. Defer for further consideration and future amendment.

Attachments:

Solar Guidelines Markup