



USE OF SOLAR PANELS AND OTHER SOLAR DEVICES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The purpose of these guidelines is to allow for the use of alternative energy sources while protecting the integrity of Howard County's Historic Districts and to recognize environmental initiatives of the County, State and Federal governments. These guidelines will apply to the Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill Local Historic Districts. This policy is based upon the Guidelines as approved by the Historic District Commission on August 6, 2009.

Solar Panels and Other Solar Devices

Solar panels and other solar devices are becoming increasingly popular as the use of alternative energy sources become more readily available to the general public. In 2008, the Maryland Legislature passed a bill prohibiting Maryland Homeowners Associations from placing unreasonable limitations on the installation of solar collection panels on homeowners. Historic properties were exempted from this act, but the Howard County Historic District Commission acknowledges the desire of homeowners to use these devices and has formulated the guideline recommendations to reach a balance between historic preservation and energy conservation.

1. Recommended

- Use of solar panels should not conflict with recommendations set forth in Chapter 6.E for Roofs, Dormers, and Gutters.
- Add solar panels on roof surface not visible from a public way. However, solar shingles may be added to a roof surface visible from a public way if low or non-reflective shingles are used.
- Place solar panels or other solar devices on roofs on a non-character-defining roofline of a non-primary elevation (not readily visible from public streets). Run solar panels and devices parallel to the original roofline.
- Set solar panels and solar devices back from the edge of a flat roof to minimize visibility. Panels and devices may be set at a pitch and elevated, if not highly visible from public streets.
- Select solar panels, solar devices, mechanical equipment and mounting structures with non-reflective finishes such as an anodized finish.
- Paint mechanical equipment attached to the building fascia the same color as the fascia in order to blend into the building.
- Locate detached arrays of solar panels and solar devices at a historic site in the rear or side yard if the arrays are not highly visible from the public streets and do not detract from other major character-defining aspects of the site. The location of detached solar arrays should also consider visibility from adjacent properties, which shall be reduced to the extent possible while still maintaining solar access.
- Use solar devices in non-historic windows, walls, siding or shutters which do not face public streets.
- For new structures within the Historic District, include building-integrated solar panels and other solar devices into the initial design.
- Use solar panels and solar devices that are similar in color to roof materials.

2. Not Recommended

- Removing historic roofing materials in order to add solar panels.
- Disturbing the original roof line, dormers, chimneys or other original features to add solar panels.

- Altering character-defining elements such as historic windows, walls, siding or shutters which face public streets or contribute to the character of the building.

For More Information

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