



COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

| | |
|---|--|
| Project Name: TA-2025-00004 – Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors | Staff: Margaret Maliszewski, Planning Manager |
| Planning Commission Public Hearing: May 26, 2026 | Board of Supervisors Hearing: TBD |
| Proposal: A proposed ordinance to amend the Albemarle County Code to add rooftop solar installations as a category of structures, sites, improvements, or architectural elements eligible for county-wide certificates of appropriateness. | |
| Factors Favorable: The ordinance would allow for more streamlined review of solar installations in the Entrance Corridors. The proposal is consistent with the goals of the County’s Climate Action Plan. | Factors Unfavorable: None. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends approval of TA-2025-00004 – Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors. | |

STAFF CONTACT: Margaret Maliszewski, Planning Manager
PLANNING COMMISSION: May 26, 2026
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: TBD

PETITION: TA-2025-00004 – Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors

ORIGIN: On December 10, 2025, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution of intent (Attachment 1) to consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to add a category of county-wide certificate of appropriateness for rooftop solar installations.

PROPOSAL: To amend the Albemarle County Code to add rooftop solar installations as a category of structures, sites, improvements, or architectural elements eligible for county-wide certificates of appropriateness.

PUBLIC PURPOSE TO BE SERVED: To expedite the review and approval of development applications for rooftop solar installations. Establishing a category of county-wide certificate of appropriateness for rooftop solar installations would provide for a streamlined review process for this type of application, which is prudent use of public funds and consistent with the County's Climate Action Plan.

BACKGROUND: On May 12, 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted ZTA-2009-09 – a zoning text amendment to establish a new class of certificate of appropriateness, called a county-wide certificate of appropriateness, to allow expedited review of certain classes of development in the Entrance Corridors. For each class of development, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) adopts a set of criteria against which proposals are reviewed. Applications received under any class of development are reviewed by staff according to the ARB-adopted criteria, without being heard at an ARB meeting. This streamlines the development review process and allows for quicker review times.

On September 2, 2025, the ARB reviewed and approved three applications for rooftop solar installations. (Previously, solar installations were approved for two properties in 2017 and 2019.) Following the 2025 reviews, the ARB expressed interest in establishing a category of county-wide certificate of appropriateness for the application type. On December 10, 2025, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution of Intent to amend the Zoning Ordinance to add that category. In January 2026, the ARB began work on the required design criteria.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

Zoning Ordinance section 33.6(B) establishes factors to be reasonably considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in the review of ZTAs. Each factor is reviewed below:

(i) the existing use and character of property

The proposed ordinance would not impact existing uses. It would support the maintenance of appropriate character along the Entrance Corridors.

(ii) the Comprehensive Plan

The proposed ordinance supports Objective 5 of the Cultural Resources Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan: “Preserve and protect the county’s scenic viewsheds, landscapes, waterways, and the scenic character of the county’s roads” and supports the County’s climate action goals.

(iii) the suitability of property for various uses

The proposed ordinance and related design criteria would ensure that the use is suitable for the property.

(iv) the trends of growth or change

The proposed ordinance addresses a trend toward incorporating solar energy into residential and commercial properties.

(v) the current and future requirements of the community as to land for various purposes as determined by population and economic studies and other studies

The proposed ordinance would not impact the availability of land for other purposes.

(vi) the transportation requirements of the community

Rooftop solar installations do not directly impact transportation requirements.

(vii) the requirements for airports, housing, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation areas, and other public services

Rooftop solar installations would not directly impact these services.

(viii) the conservation of natural resources

A streamlined review and approval process can encourage the use of solar energy, which conserves natural resources.

(i) the preservation of flood plains

The proposed ordinance would not directly impact this factor.

(i) the protection of life and property from impounding structure failures

Rooftop solar installations have no unique impacts on impounding structures.

(i) the preservation of agricultural and forestal land

The proposed ordinance would not directly impact this factor.

(i) the conservation of properties and their values

The streamlined review would maintain regulatory control of the Entrance Corridor overlay district, which is intended, in part, to maintain visual integrity of the county’s roadways and to enhance and protect property values.

(i) the encouragement of the most appropriate use of land throughout the County

By streamlining the review and approval of solar installations, the proposed ordinance would encourage the appropriate and efficient use of land.

(ii) equity

By simplifying the review and approval process, the proposed ordinance removes a potential barrier to installation of solar projects. The establishment of design criteria supports equal treatment of all properties in the overlay district.

This ordinance will be reviewed by the three (3) criteria previously established by the Board for amendments:

Administration/Review Process: The proposed ordinance would establish a new class of county-wide certificate of appropriateness. County-wide certificates allow for expedited review of development in the Entrance Corridors. For each class of development, the ARB adopts a set of criteria against which proposals are reviewed. Applications received under any class of development are reviewed by staff according to the ARB-adopted criteria, without being heard at an ARB meeting. This allows for more predictable results, a streamlined review process, and quicker review times.

Housing Affordability: This proposal would have no direct impact on housing affordability.

Implications to Staffing/Staffing Costs: Generally, streamlined review processes reduce the amount of staff time spent, but the overall impact will depend on the number of applications received. With a streamlined review process, an increase in applications can be more easily absorbed without impacting staffing or costs.

SUMMARY

Staff find the following factors favorable to this request:

The ordinance would allow for more streamlined review of solar installations in the Entrance Corridors. The proposal is consistent with the goals of the County's Climate Action Plan.

Staff find the following factors unfavorable to this request:

None.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommend approval of TA-2025-00004 – Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors.

POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS - TA-2025-00004 – Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors

A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this Zoning Text Amendment:

Move to recommend approval of TA-2025-00004: Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors.

B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this Zoning Text Amendment:

Move to recommend denial of TA-2025-00004: Add a New Category of County-wide Certificate of Appropriateness for Rooftop Solar Installations in the Entrance Corridors. *Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.*

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: TA-205-00004: Add Category of CWCoA – Resolution of Intent

Attach. 2: TA-205-00004: Add Category of CWCoA – Proposed Ordinance