ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project Name	**Rooftop Solar Countywide Certificate of Appropriateness Criteria**
Review Type	Work Session
Proposal	To establish design criteria for rooftop solar installations in the Entrance Corridor Overlay District to be used by staff in the review of Countywide Certificate of Appropriateness applications.
ARB Meeting Date	November 30, 2026
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

HISTORY

- 9/2/2025: The Architectural Review Board (ARB) reviewed and approved three applications for rooftop solar installations. At the meeting, the ARB expressed interest in developing design criteria by which future applications of this type could be reviewed and approved by staff.
- 12/10/2025: The Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted a Resolution of Intent to amend the County Code to add a category of Countywide Certificate of Appropriateness for rooftop solar installations.
- 1/20/2026: The ARB reviewed draft criteria for the Countywide Certificate, commented on the criteria, and asked for revisions to be reviewed at an upcoming meeting.
- 5/11/2026: The ARB reviewed revised criteria resulting in 1) most of the January edits being accepted, 2) a change in the allowable distance from roof to panel, and 3) continued discussion on installations on flat roofs.
- 5/26/2026: The Planning Commission recommended approval of the text amendment to add the category of Countywide Certificate of Appropriateness for rooftop solar.
- 6/15/2026: The ARB reviewed revised criteria for rooftop solar and agreed that: 1) The maximum distance from roof surface to top of panels on pitched roofs should be 10". 2) Staff should pursue revised flat roof criteria to address roof-to-top-of-panel measurements, optimal panel angle, and panel size. 3) Staff should pursue additional flat roof criteria to address rooftop installations that represent independent design features that complement the building.
- 7/15/2026: The Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 26-18(1) to amend the zoning ordinance to add a category of Countywide Certificate of Appropriateness for rooftop solar.
- August and September 2026: Staff met with representatives of local solar companies (Community Climate Collaborative (C3), Virtue Solar, Sun Day Solar, Tiger Solar, Madison Energy) to receive comments and suggestions on the draft criteria.
- 11/9/2026: The ARB provided comments on 1) stair stepping of solar panels on pitched roofs and 2) factors contributing to coordinated appearances of installations on flat roofs.

DISCUSSION

<u>6/15/26 and 11/9/2026 Follow-up</u>

- The draft criteria have been revised to incorporate the ARB's recommended edit regarding the 10" maximum distance from roof surface to top of panels on pitched roofs.
- In June, panel height, size and angle were discussed as possible criteria for staff review of installations on flat roofs with parapets. Following discussions with industry reps, staff added a flat roof criterion that limits maximum panel height above the roof surface to 16". Criteria for panel size and angle did not seem necessary with a height limit in place.
- In June, the ARB discussed the potential difficulty in establishing criteria for installations that represent independent design features. Due to the variety of buildings and design options available, staff have been unsuccessful in drafting simple, clear criteria to address these types of installations. A statement has been added to the introductory notes to clarify that these installations will require ARB review.

- The criteria for pitched roofs have been revised by eliminating the requirement to avoid stair stepping and adding a preference for maintaining consistent offsets when stair stepping is required. The criteria for flat roofs have been revised to add a preference for panels arranged in a grid pattern coordinated with the edge of the roof.

Industry Input

The draft criteria have been revised to incorporate suggestions made by the industry representatives staff spoke with in August and September. Sidebar comments in the red-line draft (Attachment 2) provide background on the changes. The reps' comments are combined in Attachment 5. Among the changes are 1) the addition of a 500' distance beyond which Entrance Corridor review/approval would not be required and 2) a revision to make the conduit/hardware/related equipment criterion less challenging to meet.

The staff report and related items from the June 15 meeting are provided for reference as Attachment 1. Attachment 2 is a red-line version of the criteria showing the new proposed changes. Attachment 3 is a clean version of the revised criteria for easier reading. Attachment 4 is a draft document that includes images illustrating the various criteria, intended to be a companion document to the criteria to assist applicants in interpretation.

QUESTIONS FOR THE WORK SESSION

1. Does the ARB agree with the addition of the 500' distance beyond which rooftop solar installations do not require ARB or staff review? (see #1b under Review Process)
2. Does the ARB agree that visible rooftop solar installations that represent independent design elements should require ARB review? (see #2c under Review Process)
3. Does the ARB agree with the revised criterion for conduit, hardware and equipment? (see pitched roof #10, flat roof #3)
4. Does the ARB agree with the other revisions to the criteria?
5. Does the ARB agree with the images used to illustrate the various criteria? (see Attachment 4)

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: Rooftop Solar Criteria: June 15, 2026, staff report
Attach. 2: Rooftop Solar Criteria: Revised draft design criteria redline
Attach. 3: Rooftop Solar Criteria: Revised draft design criteria clean copy
Attach. 4: Rooftop Solar Criteria: Images illustrating the draft criteria
Attach. 5: Rooftop Solar Criteria: Comments from industry representatives