

PZD-1: Review zoning requirements and identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo.

This SolSmart prerequisite requires communities to conduct a review of zoning requirements and identify restrictions that prohibit PV development. To assist your community, solar specialists at Great Plains Institute have conducted an initial review of your community's code to address possible obstacles (i.e., height restrictions, set-back requirements, etc.) and gaps. Below, please find the outcome of their review. By reading the narrative, reviewing the example code language provided, and signing the statement at the bottom of the page, your community will satisfy PZD-1 and be one step closer to achieving SolSmart designation.

Considerations for incorporating solar into municipal zoning codes

Section(s)	Element	Reviewer Comments	Example(s) from other codes	SolSmart Credit	Priority Level
114.1	Definitions	Ordinance includes “solar apparatus” within the definition of “structure.” Recommendation: Include definitions for rooftop solar, ground-mount solar, and principal use solar as these are different types of land uses. Consider additional definitions as appropriate.	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section III	Enables several credits	High
Sects: 114-273; 114-293; 114-307; 114-327; 114-347; 114-367; 114-407; 114-427; 114-447; 114-467; 114-487; 114-507; 114-527; 114-567; 114-587	Rooftop Solar Accessory Uses	Ordinance currently does not explicitly allow rooftop solar uses as an accessory use in any district. Recommendation: Explicitly allow rooftop solar energy systems as an accessory use in all zoning districts where buildings are allowed	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.	PZD-2:	High

Sects: 114-274; 114-293; 114-308; 114-328; 114-348; 114-368; 114-408; 114-428; 114-448; 114-468; 114-488; 114-508; 114-528 ; 114-568; 114-588;	Principal Use Solar Land Uses	Ordinance does not allow any solar principal uses as it is not noted as a land use, and is therefore prohibited Recommendation: List principal use solar (solar gardens or solar farms), as a conditional use in at least one district.	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section V	PZD-12a,	Moderate
Sects: 114-273; 114-293; 114-307; 114-327; 114-347; 114-367; 114-407; 114-427; 114-447; 114-467; 114-487; 114-507; 114-527; 114-567; 114-587	Ground-Mount Accessory Use	Ordinance does not currently explicitly allow ground-mount solar as an accessory use in any district. Recommendation: Explicitly allow ground-mount accessory solar as a permitted accessory use in at least one major district, consider allowing in all districts if solar design standards are developed (see examples in model ordinance for more information)	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV	PZD-10a	High
114-693	Rooftop Solar Height Standard Exemption	Ordinance provides for exceptions to height standards for functional considerations of some residential accessory uses. Recommendation: Add rooftop solar arrays to height regulation exceptions	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.A	PZD-10b	Moderate
114-734	Rooftop Solar Aesthetics/Screenings	Ordinance does not specify that rooftop solar must be screened, nor does it currently have restrictions on aesthetics. For future development, we recommend clarifying that rooftop solar is exempt from such regulations insofar as they effect the array's functionality Recommendation: Exempt rooftop solar energy systems from screening requirements (except in special districts such as historic districts), or explicitly limit aesthetic standards to maintain the design function of the solar array.	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.C.2	PZD-10b	Moderate
114-692	Setbacks for	The ordinance only allows accessory	Wisconsin Local	PZD-10c	Moderate/

	ground-mount solar	structures to occupy the rear yard of any lot. Recommendation: Consider exemption for ground-mount solar.	Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IVB.2		Low
114-734	Screening of ground mount solar	The ordinance is silent on screening for ground-mount accessory use systems, however, it appears that the city does not have screening standards that would apply to accessory structures except for some specific uses (that do not include solar installations). Recommendation: For clarify, exempt ground-mount solar energy systems from screening requirements that could affect the functioning of the system, or add “except that screening shall not affect the designed operation of a solar array.”	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.C	PZD-10c	High
114-692	Lot Coverage for ground-mount solar	Ordinance specifies that no more than 25% of a required rear yard nor 50% of additional space in rear of principal building may be occupied by the accessory structure. Recommendation: Exempt accessory-use ground-mount solar from lot coverage standards, or create a separate lot coverage standard for solar accessory uses.	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.D	PZD-10c	Moderate
New Solar Section	Solar Rights	Wisconsin State Statutes protect the rights of property owners to install solar arrays, and provide provisions for promoting access to, and protecting existing access of, sunlight for solar collectors (State Statute 66.0401, 7900.41, 844.22). Recommendation: Develop standards for cross-property solar access, including	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV	SR-3; SR-4	Moderate

		procedures for solar easements, consistent with Wisconsin Statutes.			
114-273; other relevant zoning districts	Solar Carport Incentives	Recommendation: Recognize solar carports or parking structures as a permitted accessory use in non-residential or multi-family districts. Consider parking requirement incentives (reduction of required spaces) to encourage such solar development, particularly if coupled with EV charging infrastructure.	EV parking incentives, Plug-in Georgia model ordinance	PZD-8	Consider
Sect 114 (relevant zoning districts)	Principal Use Solar Development Pathway	Ordinance does not currently allow any solar principal uses as it is not noted as a land use in any zoning district and is therefore prohibited. Recommendation: Evaluate individual districts where principal use solar could be allowed as a conditional use. Add “solar farm” or “large solar arrays” as conditional uses in the relevant zoning district regulations section. Consider developing standards for minimizing stormwater and aesthetic impacts, such as requiring installation, establishment, and maintenance of pollinator or native grasses as ground cover for the site.	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section V	PZD-12b	Low
114-735-5;	Solar Ready Zoning Standards	Recommendation: Include an incentive or requirement for making buildings meet “solar-ready” standards in zoning standards in at least one zoning district, particularly Planned Unit Development District (15.112).	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section VII	CC-2	Consider
114-615	Historic Districts	Recommendation: Establish clear guidance for installing solar PV on historic properties	Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance Section IV.E	PZD-4	Moderate

--	--	--	--	--	--

Additional notes

The zoning ordinance for Racine, WI currently makes only one reference to solar energy. Without clearly addressing solar energy in the zoning ordinance, there exists a barrier for technology adoption. Recommend that Racine integrate planning, zoning, and development regulations for solar systems consistent with State Statutes and the Wisconsin Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance. We recommend using the Wisconsin Local Government Solar Toolkit Model Ordinance as a source for language and best practice guidelines for incorporating solar into the zoning ordinance.

Zoning Review – Racine, Wisconsin

I, _____, as _____ of _____, _____
[Name] [Title] [Community] [State]
have read the review above and commit to discussing these barriers at the next community zoning review, scheduled for _____, with the goal of removing them from the code.

Signature _____

Date _____