

**Village of Manchester, Vermont**  
**Ordinance on the Screening of Solar Facilities**

- 1) **Purpose.** In accordance with 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2291, this Civil Ordinance establishes screening requirements for ground-mounted solar electric generation facilities and siting for roof mounted solar electric generation facilities sited in the Village of Manchester. This Ordinance advances the goal of preserving the Village’s scenic, natural, agricultural, and historic resources by mitigating potential adverse impacts of solar electric generation facility development. The requirements in this Ordinance are consistent with and further the policies of the Village’s Plan of Development the “Manchester Village Vermont Inventory of Scenic Resources,” dated August 2007 and Manchester Village Zoning Bylaws. This Ordinance is further intended to ensure that solar facilities do not degrade the natural visual appeal of hillsides, ridgelines, or open fields, and do not encroach visually or otherwise aesthetically upon a natural or historic area or gateway or upon a stream, wetland, or other water resource.

**A. Siting and Screening Requirements for Ground Mounted solar facilities:**

Ground mounted solar facilities shall be screened in accordance with the screening requirements set forth in this Ordinance which:

- i. Are consistent with the screening requirements applied to commercial development as set forth in the Zoning Bylaw of the Village of Manchester, Vermont.
  - ii. Articulate reasonable aesthetic mitigation measures to harmonize a solar facility with its surroundings.
- a. Ground mounted solar facilities shall be sited, screened and maintained so that visual impacts of such facilities, including but not limited to, solar panels, transformers, utility poles, fencing, etc., are mitigated as viewed from public streets, sidewalks, scenic viewpoints and neighboring properties.
  - b. Solar facilities shall be located at the rear of buildings and not in front or side yards. If the parcel is undeveloped, without building structures; the siting of solar facilities must conform to established front yard setbacks and conform to screening requirements.
  - c. Setback requirements for ground mounted solar facilities are consistent with existing Rural Residential district dimensional requirements and shall conform to setback requirements as stated below:

Front yard setback	50 feet from property line
Side yard setback	30 feet from property line
Rear yard setback	40 feet from property line

- d. Screening of ground mounted solar facilities shall conform to existing zoning requirements for similar commercial development and parking lots as follows:

- i. Solar facilities shall be screened from adjacent roads, sidewalks and adjoining residential uses. Vegetation used for this purpose shall include both conifers for winter screening and deciduous plants to provide added density of screening in the summer.
  - ii. Screening shall be located within the setback zones in order to create the most effective visual screening from roads, sidewalks and neighboring properties.
  - ~~iii.~~ Screening may also include features such as berms, low walls or fences where such features are incorporated into an overall landscape design.
  - iv. At planting of screen, conifers shall be at least five (5) feet tall and deciduous trees shall be at least 2.5 inches diameter at breast height. (DBH).
- e. It is not expected that screening will create an impenetrable visual barrier. Rather, the objectives of the screening are:
  - i. To create a pleasant streetscape
  - ii. To create a visual edge for the public space along the street
  - iii. To prevent unobstructed views of the solar facility and minimize visual perception of the facility beyond the screening
  - iv. To provide a year-round visual screen which shall occur on property owned or controlled by the owner and/or operator of the solar facility. A diversity of materials shall be used to create a diverse, naturalized screen rather than a large expanse of uninterrupted, uniform material.
  - v. To ensure that screening shall always be maintained to optimize its effectiveness by the owner and/or operator of the solar facility until the solar facility is decommissioned and removed and to ensure that dead, dying or diseased plants shall be promptly removed and replaced as soon as possible, consistent with good landscape planting practice.

**B. Siting of roof mounted solar generating facilities:**

Roof mounted solar facilities shall adhere to siting guidelines as follows:

- a. General Review Sub-District – Siting of roof or building mounted solar panels shall be placed as inconspicuously as possible and screened from public view to the extent possible.
- b. Preservation Sub-District – Siting of roof or building mounted solar panels shall be governed in the same manner as other utilities or mechanical fixtures and shall only be installed on non-character defining elevations and shall not be visible from the streets or sidewalks.
- c. Historic Core Sub-District – Siting of roof or building mounted solar panels shall be governed in the same manner as other utilities or mechanical fixtures and shall only be installed on non-character defining elevations, must not be visible from the street or sidewalks and must be located as inconspicuously as possible so that they do not diminish the original character of the historical setting into which they are installed.

- 2) **Recommendations.** Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2291, the Village of Manchester may make recommendations to the Public Utility Commission applying the requirements of this Ordinance to a proposed solar facility. The Board of Trustees is designated to make such recommendations.

- 3) Condition of Certificate of Public Good.** Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Sec. 2291, the screening requirements of this Ordinance and the recommendations of the Village of Manchester shall be a condition of a certificate of public good issued under 30 V.S.A. Sec. 248 for a solar facility in the Village.

THIS ORDINANCE IS HEREBY ADOPTED by the Board of Trustees of the Village of Manchester this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022 and shall, unless a petition is filed as provided by law, become effective upon the expiration of 60 days after said date.

Board of Trustees  
Village of Manchester, Vermont