

Criteria for Solar Panels in Historic Neighborhoods and Buildings

The National Park Service (NPS.gov) provides guidance on incorporating solar panels into historic buildings and landscapes, emphasizing preservation of the site's character. Key considerations include minimizing visibility from public view, ensuring reversibility, and avoiding damage to historic materials.

Voting Criteria

Solar Panel installation must meet these 3 criteria to be approved:

1. Minimally visible from public view (Pg. 28, SISR Guidelines)
2. Installation is reversible (Pg. 15, SISR Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability)
3. Does not damage historic materials (Pg. 28, SISR Guidelines)

Governing Documents

<https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/sustainability-guidelines/solar-technology.htm>

Technical Preservation Services (TPS) > Solar Technology

(This has all 3 voting criteria)

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/solar-panels-on-historic-properties.htm>

Technical Preservation Services > Solar Panels on Historical Properties

(Examples of solar panels on historic properties)

<https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/rehab-guidelines/rehabilitation-guidelines-1997.pdf>

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings > Page 28, Alterations/Additions for the New Use

“Installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof such as air conditioning, transformers, or **solar collectors** when required for the new use so that they are **inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.**”

Narrative

Source: The Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

Alterations/Additions for the New Use Installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof such as air conditioning, transformers, or solar collectors when required for the new use so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.

The National Park Service (NPS) emphasizes preserving the historic character of buildings and landscapes when incorporating solar panels. They've established key considerations to guide these projects:

Minimizing Visibility:

Solar panels should be installed in locations not readily visible from public areas like streets and sidewalks. Flat or low-slope roofs may be suitable locations if the panels can be set back from the edge and screened by features like parapets or dormers.

Ground-mounted systems can also be considered, ideally placed in inconspicuous locations in side or rear yards and screened from public view.

Panels should be installed flat and avoid altering the roof's slope.

Ensuring Reversibility:

Installations should be reversible, meaning they can be removed without causing permanent damage to the historic building or site.

This includes avoiding modifications that impact historic roofing materials or alter the roof's character-defining features.

Solutions like ballast or clamp mounts can help avoid puncturing the roof.

Avoiding Damage to Historic Materials:

Solar panel installations must not damage historic building materials or alter the building's historic character.

This is especially crucial for sensitive materials like slate or clay roofing.

Removing or altering historic roof features to install solar panels is generally not recommended.

By carefully considering these factors, projects can integrate solar panels while respecting and preserving the historical significance of the site.