



Thurston County
Building Development Center
3000 Pacific Ave. SE, Suite 100
Olympia, WA 98501

Solar PV Permitting & Zoning Fact Sheet

Thurston County allows the installation of rooftop and ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) energy systems on both residential and non-residential/commercial properties.

Permit applications and fee guides can be found on the Thurston County website at www.thurstoncountybdc.com.

Note: In Washington, all solar PV installations (including residential rooftop) are subject to electrical permits through Washington State Labor and Industries (LNI). For information on how to purchase permits, request inspections, and track job status, please visit:

lni.wa.gov/licensing-permits/electrical/electrical-permits-fees-and-inspections/

Residential Rooftop Solar

- County permits are not required for residential rooftop solar systems.

Residential Ground-Mounted Solar

- A Residential Building Permit is required for ground-array solar systems to verify structural adequacy and compliance with land use requirements. Permit fees are based on the valuation of the project.

Non-Residential/Commercial Rooftop Solar

- New Structures: If solar PV is proposed on a new commercial structure at the time of building permit application, no additional fee will apply.
- Existing Structures: A Fire Code Construction Operation Permit is needed for new installation. Permit fees are based on the value of the work.
- Thurston County inspects only the placement on the roof. Electrical inspections are completed through LNI.

Non-Residential/Commercial Ground-Mounted Solar

- A Non-Residential Building Permit is required for a solar PV ground array to verify structural adequacy and compliance with land use requirements. Permit fees are based on the value of the work.
- Thurston County inspects only the structural elements. All electrical inspections are completed through LNI.

Building Code or Inspection Questions?

Contact the Building Services Division at (360) 754-3355 ext. 7289
or by email at building@co.thurston.wa.us.

Permitting Questions?

Contact the Building Development Center at (360) 754-3355 ext. 7288
or by email at permit@co.thurston.wa.us

Zoning Clarification for Accessory Use Solar PV

Thurston County wishes to encourage the use of accessory solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and confirm for property owners that such systems are allowed in all zoning districts when conforming to certain requirements.

Thurston County controls the use and placement of buildings and structures on land through the establishment of zoning districts, as identified in the Development Code. Each zoning district, which includes residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, and mixed-use districts, has a list of permitted buildings, structures, businesses and activities.

Accessory uses (defined in Section 21.06.070) are subordinate and incidental to the main building or structure on a lot. The Thurston County Development Code does not explicitly permit accessory-use roof-mounted solar PV systems as a by-right or allowed use. However, in the Tumwater Urban Growth Area Zoning, “energy systems” (defined in Section 22.04.200), which include solar energy, are permitted as an accessory use within all zoning districts.

Roof-mounted and ground-mounted solar energy systems will be approved as accessory uses in all zoning districts provided they meet the definition of accessory use and the property is in compliance with all Thurston County Codes and Ordinances. This determination was made by the Thurston County Zoning Administrator and confirms the interpretation that solar panels are an accessory use to a permitted primary use, building or structure, and are permitted by right in all zoning districts. A zoning amendment is not needed to allow solar panels in all zoning districts.

Learn more about solar rights, incentives, financing, installation and more at:

<https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/solar>