



GROUND MOUNT SOLAR APPLICATION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Hollis regulates the installation of Ground Mounted Solar Systems by requiring property owners to seek Site Plan approval and a Conditional Use Permit from the Hollis Planning Board. Through this process, the Planning Board can work with applicants to provide an appropriate location for these systems and ensure the protection of the public's health, safety, and welfare.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

A complete Planning Board application must be submitted to the Planning Department in order to be placed on the next available Planning Board agenda. Application forms and submission due dates can be found on the Town website under the Planning Department tab: <https://www.hollisnh.org/planning-department>

The following materials are required in addition to the completed application form:

1. **An engineered Site Plan set, stamped by a licensed engineer or surveyor, of the property showing the proposed location of the system to be installed. The plan must also show:**
 - Existing property lines, building setbacks, physical features, and roads;
 - Proposed changes to topography, access ways, landscape of the site, grading, drainage, vegetation clearing and planting, exterior lighting, screening vegetation or structures.
2. **Documentation of the major system components to be used, including the panels, mounting system, and inverter.**
3. **Name, address, and contact information of the proposed installer.**

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The limiting dimensional regulations for a Ground Mount Solar Energy System:

Height:

The distance from the ground to the top of the array cannot exceed 10 feet.

Setbacks:

All Ground Mount Solar Energy Systems shall adhere to applicable required front, side, rear yard, and wetland buffer setbacks. A Ground Mount Solar energy System shall be considered a principal structure for the purposes of determining the required setbacks.

Area:

The total area of the system cannot exceed one acre.

Screening:

The design must incorporate a detailed screening plan for the system. The screening or landscape buffering is required to address specific neighborhood sensitivities, mitigate visual impacts, and maintain the rural character of the community. The screening should be designed to obscure the system from the public right-of-way. Existing vegetation may be used for screening. Discreet placement of panels can also lessen the need for screening.

REVIEW PROCEDURE

Once the application has been received by the Planning Department, planning staff will review the application for completeness. Additional materials may be requested by both planning staff and the Planning Board in order to appropriately review the application.

A Public Hearing will be held at the next available Planning Board meeting. This allows abutters and other Town residents to comment and ask questions about the proposed Ground Mounted Solar Energy System. The Planning Board encourages applicants to reach out to their neighbors prior to the hearing.

It is common practice for the Planning Board to request a Site Walk of the property. This provides the Board an opportunity to gain first hand knowledge about the site and the proposed system.

SITE WALK

During the Planning Board meeting, the Board can request that a Site Walk be conducted to better inform the Board on the location and impact of the proposed Solar Energy System.

For the Site Walk, the Board will request that the applicant stake out the proposed location of the Solar Energy System. Simulating the area of the system and its visual impact will provide the Board with critical information in making their final determination to either approve or deny the application.

Below are photos of a properly staked out Solar Energy System:



Simulates the visual impact of the Solar Energy System from the public right-of-way



Grading sticks of various lengths are used to simulate the pitch of the array



Allows the Board to see the overall footprint of the Solar Energy System on the property

WAIVERS

Applicants can apply for waivers from specific requirements of the Solar Energy Systems section of Hollis Zoning Ordinance and/or Site Plan Regulations. The Planning Board may grant a waiver if the Board finds that the waiver would not be contrary to the spirit and intent of the regulation.

The most common waiver requests are:

Height:

Many tracking Solar Energy Systems are much taller than the 10 foot height limit. For the Board to consider a waiver, the applicant must identify the total height of the system to be installed in lieu of the 10 feet permitted.

Engineered Site Plan:

If the applicant has a scaled plot plan in some form or an aerial image with the property lines and setbacks shown, the Board may waive the need for the plan to be stamped by a Professional Engineer.

TIMELINE

The Planning Board approval process can be time consuming so make sure to plan ahead. The application deadline is approximately 22 days before the Planning Board meeting date. In some cases, an application may require additional review by the Planning Board. This means that the applicant will have to come before the Board for an additional meeting, adding another month to the process. Once the application has been approved by the Planning Board, the chair will sign the Site Plan after the 30 day appeal period per RSA 677:15. Once the chair has signed the Site Plan the applicant will be able to apply for a Building Permit from the Hollis Building Department.