

Refuge at Whitehall HOA Solar Energy Standards

To ensure The Refuge at Whitehall maintains the aesthetic beauty we have a come to appreciate, the board adopts these guidelines to allow the use of solar energy in our neighborhood. The following guidelines are written to ensure a continued uniform installation and design of solar energy systems within The Refuge.

1. Homeowners should first consider all existing structures and landscaping prior to submitting for approval of proposed solar system.
2. Plans must be approved by the Architectural Review Board (ARB) prior to any installation.
3. The aesthetic fit of an installation is the primary criteria by which installation requests will be judged. Additional criteria, such as (but not limited to) obvious safety concerns, current state of technology, unique circumstances (ex: Middleton Place Conservation Easement), etc, may also be used as the situation warrants. Precedent by itself will not be justification for future installations. The board will not be bound by poor decisions or unauthorized installations in the past as a means to justify future installation requests which do not meet the aesthetic standards for approval.
4. Variances to policy will be considered on a case by case basis, but will generally conform to the letter and intent of this document.
5. No solar panels may be placed on the street-facing-side of any home within The Refuge. Rear facing roof-mounted arrays must still not be visible from street side view (ex: an elevated installation which extends above the roof line of the house or otherwise protrudes from the building). If panels are installed on a side or rear roof, flush mounting of the panels (i.e. – the plane of the array is parallel to the roof) is strongly preferred. The panels on a side or rear roof may be tilted or raised if a variance is granted.
6. Properties located on the pond require additional consideration due to the clear view of these properties from the opposite side of the pond. An installation on the rear of a pond property may make it difficult for homeowners on the opposite side of the pond to sell their own property due to a less than desirable cross-pond view. The board will take this special circumstance into consideration before approving installations on pond properties.
7. All components of the solar system should be integrated into the design of the home. The color of the solar system components should generally conform to the color of the roof shingles to the extent practical. Solar shingles that mimic the look of a composite shingle are acceptable but should match the color of the current roof shingles as much as is practical.
8. *Pursuant to the 2017 NEC, and North Charleston Code Enforcement authorities, the installation of all solar systems shall only be done by licensed installers.* Applications submitted to the ARB should include the following:
 - a. A diagram drawn to scale by the licensed contractor installing the system showing where the system will be installed.
 - b. Photos of the roof area where the array will be mounted.

- c. Material to be used and/or manufacturer's description of the system, photos and/or pictures of the system and color of the system.
 - d. Where possible, provide photos of similar existing systems as examples.
- 9. Piping and electrical connections will be located directly under and/or within the perimeter of the panels, when possible, and placed as inconspicuously as possible when viewed from all angles.
- 10. The highest point of a solar panel array will be lower than the ridge of the roof where it is attached.
- 11. All painted surfaces will be kept in good repair.
- 12. Trees within the Refuge may be moderately trimmed to allow for solar panel installation; however, no tree will be removed for the sole purpose of installing a solar system.
- 13. Power storage units and all other accessories which accompany the use of solar panels will be evaluated as part of the installation request. The primary goal of good aesthetic fit to the neighborhood, as well as any secondary goals such as those mentioned previously, will also apply to these accessories.
- 14. Solar technology continues to evolve and new products are rapidly coming to market. In the event a request is made involving new technologies not addressed by this policy, the board reserves the right to grant or deny variances, and/or amend this policy as long as:
 - a. The community aesthetic is not compromised
 - b. Undue burdens are not placed on neighbors
 - c. Resale values of neighborhood homes are not adversely affected
- 15. Requests for solar panel installations will be evaluated by the standards contained in this document at the time of the request. This document will not be modified solely for the purpose of approving or denying an active request.
- 16. Should future energy technologies other than solar power become available (ex: geothermal energy, personal size wind turbines, etc), and should homeowners desire to install them on their property, this document will serve as a guide for evaluating those installation requests. If aspects of the new technology require guidelines which do not belong in this document, then the board has the right to draft a separate standards document applicable to the new technology as part of the first-time evaluation and approval process of the new technology. After that, the new document will be maintained independently, and subsequent requests for installation will be evaluated by the new document.

Helpful suggestions when looking for a solar contractor

The Refuge at Whitehall HOA suggests the following advice when selecting a solar contractor:

- Ensure the company you select for your solar project is the same company that will perform the work installing your solar system.
- Ensure the company you select for your solar project is license and insured and is willing to provide you copies of their license/policies or the phone number to their broker or agent if requested.
- Ensure the company you select for your solar project is the same company that will warranty and service your solar system.
- Make sure you check with the Better Business Bureau, online reviews and other means of ensuring you have made the best choice when it comes to local solar providers.
- Ensure the contract matches your installation. Make sure you are getting the equipment installed that you have purchased.

Example of installation with a higher chance of approval:

Panels not on front of building
Smaller gap between roof and panels
Good color matching with roof

Invisible piping
Invisible mounting hardware



Example of installation with a lower chance of approval:

Panels on front of building

Visible piping

Jagged/stair-stepped panel pattern

Poor color match to roof

Visible mounting hardware

Larger gap between roof and panels



Sample installation of a borderline case:

Pros:

Good color matching to roof
Invisible Piping
Invisible mounting hardware

Cons:

Visible from Street
Larger gap between roof and panels

