

## Chandler loosens rules on solar-energy systems

by *Edythe Jensen* - Jun. 15, 2011 10:03 AM  
The Arizona Republic

Chandler residents and businesses will have more options for solar energy under a zoning code changes approved by the City Council. But a high-ranking industry spokesman said the changes don't go far enough and may still be too restrictive to encourage widespread use.

The new code excludes solar-energy systems from restrictions applied to "structures" that effectively ruled out devices that weren't mounted on rooftops for many households. Now residents can install freestanding systems anywhere in their backyards so long as they're hidden from neighbors' views. That means the devices can't be taller than **backyard** walls and aren't allowed in yards that have open-view fencing like wrought iron or chain link.

Michael Neary, executive director of the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association in Phoenix, said requiring the panels to be hidden from view is a sticking point that will discourage many. "What Chandler did is a step in the right direction, and it does loosen things up a bit," he said. "But if you have a nice-looking solar **installation** in a backyard, it doesn't hurt the neighbors to see it."

The association has been battling solar regulations for years and is best know for overcoming bans on roof-mounted devices by many homeowners associations.

Chandler planner David de la Torre said the city is likely the first in the state to recognize solar energy as a separate category in the zoning code. "Most significant is this is creating more flexibility for solar energy and encouraging it," he said. Vice Mayor Trinity Donovan praised the planning staff for proposing the change.

The city has been getting more requests lately from residents who want to install freestanding solar systems but couldn't under the old rules that considered them "structures" governed by a long list of building restrictions, de la Torre said. That included setback and lot coverage limits that forced resident to put them in the center of **backyards**. Since single-family zoning districts allow only one accessory building per lot, residents couldn't install freestanding solar systems under the old code when they already had one of the other building types.

The changes approved last week exclude solar systems from those restrictions so long as they're no taller than the backyard wall.

The code amendment also expands

Advertisement



**Protect Your Home  
with ADT!**

**Click Here  
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

commercial users' solar options by excluding the systems from lot coverage limits and removing setback requirements if they can't be seen from the ground floor of nearby homes.

Robert Hoskins, director of marketing for Chandler-based Solar Topps, said before the vote that cities shouldn't impose any type of restrictions on solar-energy systems, noting that they stand to save Valley households millions and cut the need for fuel-generated electricity.

He said requiring that they not be visible above fence lines often places them in shaded areas.

Copyright © 2011 azcentral.com. All rights reserved.

Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#) and [Ad Choices](#)

Advertisement

**Protect Your Home  
with ADT!**

**Click Here  
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™