



# POLICY STATEMENT FOR ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

CITY OF CHARLESTON

2 George Street, Third Floor

Charleston, South Carolina 29401

843-724-3765

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING &amp; PRESERVATION

Fax: 843-724-3772

www.charleston-sc.gov

**\*\*This policy statement is not exhaustive, does not constitute an automatic approval, and final determination rests with preservation staff on a case-by-case basis. \*\***

By motion of the Board of Architectural Review – Small at the December 11, 2025 meeting and the Board of Architectural Review – Large at the January 14, 2026 meeting, the following criteria and guidelines were adopted to provide direction and encourage the use of solar panels, solar film or photovoltaic cells (collectively, “Solar Collectors”) and electric vehicle chargers in the Old and Historic District, Old City District, Landmark Overlay Zone, and Historic Corridor District (collectively, the “Districts”).

The appropriate Board of Architectural Review (BAR) must consider the visual impact of all required components of Solar Collectors in relation to the historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the property and the placement location. Therefore, the following criteria and guidelines for the installation of the Solar Collectors should be followed:

Solar Collectors and Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers proposed to be installed on properties rated **Category 1 or 2 on the Architectural Inventory**<sup>1</sup> shall not be visible from the public right-of-way, unless appropriately concealed.

Solar Collectors and EV chargers proposed to be installed on **Category 3 or 4 or non-rated historic properties within the Districts** may be allowed some visibility from the public right-of-way, while not detracting from the historic character of the property, as determined by the BAR.

Solar Collectors and EV chargers proposed to be installed on **new construction** shall be permitted, but the BAR shall have purview over the placement and size of such Solar Collectors and EV chargers for potential negative impact to the character of the neighborhood.

### General Guidelines for Solar Collectors:

1. Solar Collectors and EV chargers on historic properties should be located on rear roof slopes, behind architectural features or parapets, or other locations not visible (following the criteria for visibility listed above). Solar Collectors and EV chargers on Accessory Buildings shall be encouraged.
2. Significant, character-defining features, including, but not limited to, roof slopes, dormers, chimneys, windows, shutters, roof ridges, eaves, and other architectural features, shall not be removed, damaged, altered or obstructed to accommodate Solar Collectors and EV chargers.
3. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* shall be consulted when evaluating the installation of Solar Collectors and EV chargers on historic properties.
4. The load, wind load, and uplift capacity of any roof structure proposed to accommodate Solar Collectors and EV chargers shall be confirmed by a qualified structural engineer as necessary.
5. Installation generally should not penetrate historic materials due to the fragile nature of these materials. Custom details are required that are specific to each structure and application method. All alternative means should be explored before penetrating historic materials, including positioning panels on auxiliary structures, free-standing installations, and locating panels on secondary roof forms, all with restricted visibility from the public right of way.
6. The Solar Collectors should be low-profile or no more than 8" above the roof surface, and at a pitch consistent with the existing roof.
7. EV chargers should be low-profile and minimized from the public right-of-way.
8. The color of conduit and all attachment mechanisms for Solar Collectors and EV chargers shall be painted to be compatible with the existing material, including roof, siding, etc.
9. The Solar Collectors and EV chargers shall be installed in a manner that is reversible.

The Board of Architectural Review resolves to review applications for Solar Collectors, and will consider those applications on a case-by-case basis.

<sup>1</sup> In the Historic Architectural Resource Survey of the Upper Peninsula, Brockington and Associates, 2004.