

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN  
CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
REPORT  
June 29, 2020**

➤ **AGENDA ITEM – 20-0866 (Tim Acklin)**

Review of plans for the solar facility located at 3181 Berlin Dr in the International Business Park. (Habitat for Humanity)

➤ **ROUTING:** CPC Only

➤ **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The applicant is proposing to install solar panels on the roof of the building located at 3181 Berlin Drive in the International Business Park. The mounting system for the panels will be attached to the existing metal seam roof and extend approximately 13” into the air. All panels will be located at least 5ft from the edge of the building and will be limited to the portion of the building with the flat roof. Plans and specifications for the solar facility are attached to the legislation.

The International Business Park Covenants require review by the City Plan Commission for solar collector or outside equipment.

**GENERAL LOCATION:**

3131 Berlin in the International Business Park

➤ **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

N/A

➤ **CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

The following solar energy standards implement the following objectives from the Comprehensive Plan:

- (1) *Objective.* Safeguard and improve environmental features as a means of promoting sustainable urban development, revitalization, and quality of life.
- (2) *Objective.* Improve building and site design in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings to serve current and future generations.
- (3) *Objective.* Use "Smart Growth" strategies to maintain the City's leadership role in regional economic development.
- (4) *Objective.* Invest in system improvements strategically to ensure they are cost-effective.

(5) *Objective.* Establish and maintain an open, fair planning and regulatory process that is consistent with other jurisdictions

➤ **PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:**

Planning staff has no concerns with the placement of solar panels on the roof of the building. The proposed placement of the panels on the roof meets all of the requirements for fire access around and between the panels.

The IBP covenants require that *“Roof mounted equipment shall be so located and/or screened and/or painted to minimize visibility from streets and adjacent Sites.”* Visibility of the panels would be possible from both Hwy 16 and Berlin Drive as well as from the nearby park properties. There would be two options to reduce visibility of the panels:

- 1) Screening. Due to the existing flat roof there is no parapet to use, nor would it be possible to construct one. Additionally, staff is concerned that any type of screening constructed in front of the panels would look aesthetically worse than viewing the panels. There would also be a concern that it could affect the efficiency of the panels and their ability to capture as much sun as possible.
- 2) Move the rooftop equipment further away from the roof edges to reduce visibility. The design and structural capacity of the existing roof has been carefully calculated and the proposed location of the panels have been determined accordingly. There is little opportunity to rearrange the panels on the roof. Additionally, removing some of the panels from the edges and not replacing them elsewhere makes the system less efficient for the building.

Municipal Code requires that roof-mounted systems blend into the architecture of the building and reduce reflective light. The existing building is industrial in nature and made with masonry and metal siding, as well as a metal seam standing roof. Staff feels that the metal solar panels blends into this style of architecture.

The minimal height of the panels from the roof and distance from the roof edge will not have a negative visual impact on the building from the adjacent streets and properties. Additionally, staff feels that no additional screening is needed, particularly as any additional screening would likely have more a negative visual impact than the panels themselves. Lastly the City of La Crosse has committed to reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Solar energy is an abundant, renewable, and nonpolluting energy resource and that its conversion to electricity or heat will reduce our dependence on nonrenewable energy resources and decrease the air and water pollution that results from the use of conventional energy sources.

**Staff recommends approval of the plans as submitted.**



## BASIC ZONING DISTRICTS

	R1 - SINGLE FAMILY
	R2 - RESIDENCE
	WR - WASHBURN RES
	R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE
	R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTI
	R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING
	R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE
	PD- PLANNED DEVELOP
	TND - TRAD NEIGH DEV.
	C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS
	C2 - COMMERCIAL
	C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS
	M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
	M2 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
	PS - PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
	PL - PARKING LOT
	UT - PUBLIC UTILITY
	CON - CONSERVANCY
	FW - FLOODWAY
	A1 - AGRICULTURAL
	EA - EXCLUSIVE AG
	City Limits
	SUBJECT PROPERTY

