

# CITY OF PLATO, MINNESOTA

## ORDINANCE NO. [ ]

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE XV OF THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES BY ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 157, ENTITLED "SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS"

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Plato recognizes the importance of renewable energy resources; and

WHEREAS, the City supports the use of solar energy systems as an accessory use to existing residential and commercial properties; and

WHEREAS, the City finds it necessary to establish uniform regulations for solar energy systems to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses and community character; and WHEREAS, the City Council desires to prohibit large-scale solar farms within the city limits in order to preserve land use balance and community aesthetics;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PLATO, MINNESOTA ORDAINS:

### CHAPTER 157: SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS

#### **§157.01 TITLE AND PURPOSE.**

(A) This chapter shall be known as the "City of Plato Solar Energy Ordinance"

(B) The purpose of this chapter is to:

1. Encourage the safe and efficient use of solar energy systems that reduce the consumption of fossil fuels;
2. Establish clear standards for solar installations as accessory uses to existing development;
3. Protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public;
4. Preserve the small-town character and visual quality of the City of Plato;
5. Prohibit large-scale solar farms that are inconsistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and development pattern.

#### **§157.02 DEFINITIONS.**

**ACCESSORY SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM.** A solar energy system that is secondary to the principal use of the property and supplies power, sometimes combined with storage, primarily for on-site consumption.

**BUILDING-INTEGRATED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM.** A solar energy system that is integrated into the structure of a building, such as solar roof shingles or panels that serve as roofing material.

**GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM.** A solar energy system that is mounted to the ground and not attached to any building.

**LARGE-SCALE SOLAR FARM.** A commercial solar energy installation that generates energy for sale off-site and is not accessory to an existing principal use. Large-scale solar farms are prohibited within the City of Plato.

**SOLAR PANEL OR MODULE.** A device that collects and converts solar energy into electricity or heat.

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM.** A device or structural design feature intended to provide heating, cooling, electric generation, or daylight for a building or structure by collecting and converting solar energy.

**§157.03 APPLICABILITY AND PERMITS.**

(A) This ordinance applies to all solar energy systems installed within the City of Plato.

(B) Solar energy systems shall be permitted only as accessory uses on already developed lots, and only after the principal structure is in place.

(C) Systems that meet all standards of this ordinance shall require a building permit.

(D) Systems not meeting any requirement of this chapter shall require a Variance in accordance with the City Code.

(E) Large-scale solar farms are expressly prohibited in all zoning districts, including potential growth areas as defined in the Plato Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

**§157.04 GENERAL STANDARDS.**

(A) Compliance. All solar energy systems shall comply with the most currently adopted State of Minnesota Building Code, National Electric Code, National Electric Safety Code and Plumbing Code and all other applicable standards.

(B) Placement.

1. Notwithstanding the height limitations of the zoning district, roof or building mounted solar energy systems shall not extend higher than three (3) feet above the ridge level of a roof on a structure with a gable, hip or gambrel roof and shall not extend higher than ten (10) feet above the surface of the roof when installed on a flat or shed roof.

2. Ground-mounted systems are prohibited in all zoning districts except Highway Business (B-2) and Manufacturing Industrial (M-1), and shall not exceed fifteen (15) feet in height, 1,000 square feet in area, and shall meet accessory structure setbacks under §154.130.

3. No portion of a ground-mounted system may be located in a front yard.

4. Solar energy equipment shall be located in a manner to reasonably minimize view blockage for surrounding properties and shading of property to the north, while still providing adequate solar access for collectors.

5. Systems shall not obstruct access to doors, fire escapes, utilities or public right of ways.

6. All power exterior electrical or other service lines must be buried below the surface of the ground.

(C) Aesthetic and Screening Standards.

1. Ground-mounted systems visible from public streets or neighboring residential properties shall be screened to the extent practical with landscaping or fencing as approved by the zoning administrator or Plato Planning Commission.

2. Solar panels shall be neutral or non-reflective in color.

(D) Maintenance. All solar energy systems shall be maintained in good repair, free from rust, damage, or missing components. Inoperable systems shall be removed within ninety (90) days after ceasing operation, including foundations whether buried or visible.

(E) Glare. Systems shall be designed and sited to minimize glare onto adjoining properties and public rights-of-way.

(F) Decommissioning. Ground-mounted systems that are no longer in use must be removed, and the site restored to its previous condition within ninety (90) days of discontinuation, including anything below ground that was part of the system

**§157.05 ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES.**

(A) Failure to comply with this ordinance or permit conditions constitutes a violation of the City Code, and shall be a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in jail and/or \$1000 fine.

(B) Upon notice of violation, the property owner shall have thirty (30) days to correct deficiencies or remove the system.

(C) The City may impose administrative fines and recover costs associated with enforcement or system removal.

**§157.06 EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This ordinance shall take effect upon completion of a public hearing, passage by the City Council and publication in the official city newspaper as required by law.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PLATO, MINNESOTA THIS \_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

CITY OF PLATO, MINNESOTA

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk-Treasurer