

## ARTICLE 14

### SOLAR ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEMS

#### Sections:

- 14-1 Intent and Purpose
- 14-2 Definitions
- 14-3 Domestic SECS
- 14-4 Commercial and Utility SECS; General Requirements for a SECS Conditional Use Permit

#### SECTION 14-1 INTENT AND PURPOSE

##### 14-101.

- a. Purpose. It is the purpose of this Article to outline the requirements Linn County has for ground-mounted solar energy conversion systems (SECS). As SECS, depending upon their size and location, can be detrimental to the preservation of the predominantly rural, agricultural character of the County, and of its important natural resources.
- b. Intent. The regulations set out in this Article are intended to address the major issues generally associated with SECS. Because issues not addressed below may be deemed significant to public health, safety or welfare but only emerge during the course of the County's review of the application for conditional use permit, applicants are encouraged to maintain close consultation with the Zoning Administrator during the preparation of the plans and other requirements of this Article.
- c. SECS placed on the rooftops of structures are not subject to the regulations of this Article.

**14-102.** Consistent with the definitions at 14-201, Linn County allows domestic SECS in specified zoning districts as an accessory use. Commercial SECS and Utility SECS will be prohibited in all zoning districts.

#### SECTION 14-2 DEFINITIONS

##### 14-201.

- a. A ***domestic solar energy conversion system (SECS)*** is a system that converts sunlight into usable electricity for the primary purpose (*i.e.*, 51% or greater) of providing electricity for its use on-site and not for commercial power production. Domestic SECS are allowed as accessory uses in the A, R, CS, C and P zoning

districts, in accordance with the provisions of this Article, and if the total area of the SECS is less than 10 acres.

- **Commercial solar energy conversion systems (SECS)** are systems that convert sunlight into usable electricity for the primary (*i.e.*, 51% or greater) purpose of sales or off-site use. **Commercial SECS** are conditional uses in the A zoning district and comprise 0-160 acres. All commercial SECS must comply with the provisions of this Article.
- b. **Utility solar energy conversion systems (SECS)** are systems that convert sunlight into usable electricity for the primary purpose of wholesale sales or off-site use. Utility SECS are a conditional use in the I-1 and I-2 zoning districts and comprise over 160 acres. All industrial SECS must comply with the provisions of this Article.

### **SECTION 14-3 DOMESTIC SECS**

**14-301.** Domestic SECS are allowed as accessory uses in the A, R, CS, C and P zoning districts.

**14-302.** Ground-mounted domestic SECS shall comply with the following:

- a. Yard requirements
  1. Side yard setback: 20 feet
  2. Rear yard setback: 20 feet
  3. No placement in front yard, except in the A district with a 40' front yard setback from public road or street rights-of-way.
- b. Rear yard maximum lot coverage:
  1. A zone no limit
  2. R zone 25%
  3. CS zone 25%
  4. C zone 25%
  5. P zone no limit
- c. Domestic SECS are encouraged to utilize vegetation under and around solar panels in order to reduce stormwater runoff.

### **SECTION 14-4 PROHIBITED OF COMMERCIAL AND UTILITY SECS**

**14-401.** All SECS other than domestic SECS, allowed as accessory uses in accordance with this Article, are prohibited within the unincorporated area of Linn County.

**14-402.**

- a. The County has determined that non-domestic SECS are incompatible with protection and enhancement of the rural character of the County. Further, limiting SECS to domestic SECS is consistent with the goals and objectives of preserving agricultural lands and the natural resources of the County, including environmentally sensitive areas, as stated in the 2022 Linn County Comprehensive Plan.
- b. The 2022 Plan further sets the objective of minimizing adverse effects of intrusive developments and land use. The County finds that non-domestic SECS would create such “adverse effects of intrusive development” due largely to the characteristics inherent to solar farms, specifically the extreme land use.

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