



Department of Planning & Zoning Staff Report – Text Amendment Case No. 2023-1-ORD

**Introduced by La Sandra Darensbourg Gordon
Councilwoman, District 1**

An ordinance to amend Ordinance 81-10-6, the St. Charles Parish Zoning Ordinance of 1981, as amended, Section III; Section VI.A.[I.].1. c.; Section VI D.[I.].1.c.; Section VI.D.[II.].1.a.; and Section VII.1. to add definitions, specify permitted primary uses and accessory uses in appropriate Zoning Districts, and add supplemental use and performance regulations for Large Solar Energy Systems (LSES) and Small Solar Energy Systems (SSES) in order to regulate and promote renewable energy production.

BACKGROUND

Per the U.S. Department of Energy, solar power generation makes up 3% of the nation's overall energy production. And data gathered by the U.S. Energy Information Administration indicates expansions in utility scale solar facilities will account for nearly half of all new U.S. energy generating capacity.

St. Charles Parish does not have regulations governing solar production facilities.

With the anticipated growth in solar energy production coupled with the identification of rural areas as suitable locations for utility scale solar energy production facilities, it is important to adopt regulations providing a path for the permitting of such facilities while ensuring they are appropriately located and designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Parish residents, businesses, and visitors.

In addition to utility-scale facilities, these regulations will also provide guidance for the addition of solar energy producing equipment at a smaller scale as accessories to primary uses.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

St. Charles Parish will be better equipped to handle the growth expected from the solar energy producing sector.

Proposals for the development of both large and small scale solar energy production will have guidance as to where and how such facilities may be located, along with what will be expected as part of the review and permitting process.

Both large and small scale energy production facilities must meet regulations ensuring they are not detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of St. Charles Parish residents, business, and visitors.

The adoption of the proposed regulations will work toward fulfilling Land Use Action 4.2 of the *St. Charles Parish 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update*:

- *Remove or adjust inadvertent impediments to sustainable development (e.g. existing restrictions on uses, or dimensional standards) that may prevent the use of renewable energy production technologies*

The adoption of the proposed regulations will expand St. Charles Parish's ability to address the needs of the Louisiana Climate Action Plan, 2022.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Approval