



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: JULY 28, 2015**

**FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** **WARDS: ALL**  
**DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF A SOLAR ORDINANCE FOR THE EXPEDITED REVIEW AND**  
**APPROVAL OF SMALL RESIDENTIAL ROOFTOP SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS**  
**TO UPDATE RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 16**

## **ISSUE:**

The issue for City Council consideration is the adoption of an ordinance for the expedited review and approval of small residential rooftop solar energy systems as required by Assembly Bill 2188 to update Riverside Municipal Code Chapter 16.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council adopt an ordinance for the expedited review and approval of small residential rooftop solar energy systems as required by Assembly Bill 2188 to update Riverside Municipal Code Chapter 16.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Assembly Bill 2188, approved by Governor Brown on September 21, 2014, is an act to amend Section 65850.5 of the Government Code relating to solar energy. Section 65850.5(a) of the California Government Code provides that it is the policy of the State to promote and encourage the installation and use of solar energy systems by limiting obstacles to their use and by minimizing the costs of such systems. Section 65850.5(g)(1) of the California Government Code requires that, on or before September 30, 2015, every city, county, or city and county must adopt an ordinance that creates an expedited, streamlined permitting process for small residential rooftop solar energy systems.

The City is required to adopt an ordinance by Section 65850.5(g) (1). The ordinance (Attachment 1) is intended to satisfy that requirement. The ordinance codifies the requirements of Section 65850.5(g)(1), such as accepting and approving applications electronically, directing the City's Building Official to develop a checklist of all requirements with which small rooftop solar energy systems shall comply to be eligible for expedited review, and authorizing the Building Official to administratively approve such permit applications. In addition, the bill also requires that the building inspection process be expedited by requiring a single final inspection in lieu of multiple inspections, along with a quick turnaround for scheduling inspections once permits are issued.

The current practice for solar interconnection for small residential rooftop projects is a concurrent process with Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) and the Building and Safety and the Planning Divisions of the Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD). The

Planning Division performs a design review and the Building and Safety Division completes the plan review including obtaining the required approvals from RPU. The plan review for CEDD is approximately ten business days which mirrors other small permit applications. AB 2188 requires an expedited, streamlined permitting process. In order to accommodate the requirements, process efficiency efforts have been conducted between RPU and CEDD that have updated the current practice of processing small residential rooftop solar project.

RPU will now be the initial point of contact for all solar projects within the City. The RPU review and approval process includes an electrical engineering review, confirmation that solar design conforms to sizing and design regulations and it includes a required production meter. RPU will then process a Net Energy Metering interconnection agreement.

Once an applicant obtains approval from RPU, the plans will be submitted to the Building and Safety Division for the expedited review and approval in order to obtain building permits and an inspection. Building and Safety will be the single point of contact for CEDD to help meet the streamlining and expediting requirements.

AB 2188 also includes mandated electronic submission. The City has opted to use its e-Plan Review software to meet this requirement. As part of a public outreach program, CEDD established an "External Users e-Plan Review Training Seminar" through Avolve, Inc., the e-Plan solution provider. The Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce has partnered with the City to help promote and host the training, which is scheduled in September 2015. Local solar companies will be encouraged to attend and learn how to submit plans electronically

Assembly Bill 2188 will have an immediate impact on the processing of permit applications for small residential rooftop solar systems and their associated accessory structures. Though small residential solar systems make up the vast majority of our solar permit applications, it is important to note that this law does not apply to any ground mounted solar structures, any single family residential system that exceeds 10 kilowatts in size, or any multi-family or commercial solar project. Those types of solar projects will continue to be processed through our standard timeframes, policies and procedures.

RPU and CEDD will be performing public outreach to promote the new process to ensure a smooth transition for our customers.

The Riverside Public Utilities General Manager concurs with this report

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact to the General Fund includes staff time, training costs and additional public counter and inspection staff was included in the Community & Economic Development Department's Building and Safety Division's Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

Prepared by: Emilio Ramirez, Interim Community & Economic Development Director  
Certified as to  
availability of funds: Brent A. Mason, Finance Director/Treasurer  
Approved by: Al Zelinka, FAICP, Assistant City Manager  
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachment: Solar Ordinance