

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE August 3, 2026

TO Honorable Chair Stewart and Members of the Parks, Trails, and the Environment Committee

SUBJECT **Solar Panel Permitting Process Improvements and Performance Annual Update**

This memorandum provides an update on the City's residential solar panel permitting activity, recent process improvements, and ongoing efforts to reduce review times while maintaining safety and code compliance.

Background

The City of Dallas evaluated its solar permitting process following feedback that review times were longer than expected for standard residential solar installations. A comparison was conducted between the City's current process and alternative tools such as SolarAPP+. The evaluation found that while SolarAPP+ offers faster approvals, it relies on checklist-based submissions and does not include full plan review. This creates limitations in identifying code issues prior to permit issuance and may increase field inspection workload. Based on this evaluation, staff focused on improving internal processes rather than adopting an automated approval platform.

Solar Permitting Activity

Solar permit activity increased significantly in late 2025 due to the anticipated expiration of the federal Residential Clean Energy Credit on December 31, 2025.

From June 2025 through July 2026:

- 959 residential solar panel applications were submitted
- 5 third-party review applications were submitted

Peak activity occurred between September and November 2025, when 440 applications were submitted in a three-month period, representing a typical six-month volume.

Following the expiration of the tax credit:

- January 2026 submissions dropped to 30 applications
- Activity is consistent from February through July 2026

Process Improvements

Staff implemented several targeted improvements to reduce review times and improve efficiency:

- Intake and plan review are now performed concurrently
- Electrical reviews are subject to a 24-hour review target
- Review cycles have been reduced to limit applicant resubmittals
- Coordination between review teams has been improved

These changes were implemented in advance of the DallasNow system launch and are designed to streamline the process without reducing review quality.

Performance Results

Current performance metrics show significant improvement:

- 54 percent of residential solar permits are approved within 24 hours after initial fee payment
- 100 percent of residential solar permits without battery storage (ESS) are approved within 24 hours after payment

These results reflect substantial progress compared to prior average timelines, which exceeded two weeks for issuance. We anticipate continued improvement as processes stabilize under recently implemented online submittal system (DallasNow).

Key Considerations

- Solar-only systems can be reviewed quickly due to lower complexity
- Systems with battery storage (ESS) require additional review for safety and electrical compliance
- Maintaining full plan review ensures code compliance and reduces risk compared to checklist-only systems
- Peer cities that implemented automated systems reported increased field issues and enforcement challenges

Next Steps

Staff will continue to monitor solar permitting activity and performance metrics following the DallasNow implementation.

Future actions include:

- Continued reduction in review times
- Evaluation of third-party review usage
- Ongoing coordination with the Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability
- Reevaluation of alternative tools, including SolarAPP+, after system stabilization

Conclusion

The City has made measurable improvements in solar permitting efficiency while maintaining full plan review and safety standards. Current performance demonstrates that residential solar permits can be processed within 24 hours in many cases, positioning Dallas as a competitive and responsive jurisdiction for solar development. Staff will continue refining the process and will provide additional updates as needed.

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If you have any questions, please contact Emily Liu, yu.liu@dallas.gov.

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