Solar Ready Construction Guidelines

In Southwest Colorado we benefit from excellent solar resource, with close to 300 sunny days a year.

One of the major barriers to the installation of solar energy systems is the traditional design of our building stock which can make installing solar PV much more complicated and expensive than it needs to be. A few fairly simple changes to the way buildings are designed and constructed can help make new homes 'solar ready.'

Home owners and businesses are increasingly interested in maximizing this resource to generate clean, local, renewable energy. With the price of solar panels continuing to fall rapidly and the evolution of innovative financing models, installing solar PV is becoming more accessible for more people.

The City of Durango Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) includes provisions for encouraging neighborhood and building designs which optimize the use of the sun for both active solar PV and water heating, and for passive heating (See Section 4-1-3-1 Solar Access and Design.)

Designs compliant with the following Minimum Solar Access Standards may be eligible for modified setback and design requirements:

1. An overall reduction in heating load of at least 15% relative to a comparable design
2. At least 80% of the buildings will present not less than 450 square feet of roof area within 30° of due South, which is not shaded between the hours of 9AM and 3PM on Dec 21
3. Shading or overhangs are provided on Southern exposures to prevent direct sunlight from accessing the interior of buildings between Spring and Fall equinoxes
4. Planting areas for large trees are located to protect the solar access between 10AM and 2PM on Dec 21.

In addition, buildings constructed on sites which are approved for modified setbacks or design standards must be designed to accomodate rooftop solar equipment and be pre-wired for installation on the South-facing roof.

City of Durango Land Use and Development Code Standards

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