



## CITY OF RICHMOND

DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW  
ZONING ADMINISTRATION

October 2, 2017

City of Richmond  
Department of Planning and Development Review  
900 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

### RE: ADVISORY DETERMINATION OF USE - Accessory Uses - Solar Panels

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Many different uses may be considered accessory to the primary use, building or structure within the City of Richmond. Chapter 30 of the City of Richmond Code (the Zoning Ordinance) does not list each accessory use separately, and it is not required to list each accessory use separately. When there is a question of whether a use is considered primary or accessory to a primary use the Zoning Administrator must make a determination.

In accordance with Sec. 30-1000 of the Zoning Ordinance, the following advisory determination for how the use of solar panels in the City of Richmond are permitted will be confirmed in writing. This advisory determination does not pertain to solar power generation (i.e., a solar farm) as a primary use of the property. The Zoning Ordinance must be amended, via the Zoning Text Amendment process, to permit solar power generation as a primary use either by right or by special use permit.

#### Analysis

Each zoning district, which includes residential, commercial, industrial and planned districts, has a list of uses permitted by right and by special use permit. In all residential, industrial and planned districts, and by interpretation of the uses within the commercial districts, accessory uses are a by right use. Accessory use is defined in City Code Sec. 30-1220 as follows;

Accessory use means a use of land or use of a structure or building for purposes incident and subordinate to the principal use of the premises.

The Zoning Ordinance does not list solar panels as either a primary or an accessory use. In the past an interpretation and determination were made, by the Zoning Administrator, to allow solar

panels as an accessory use to dwelling units and commercial or industrial buildings which would be the primary use, building or structure on many parcels in the City of Richmond.

With this advisory determination, I am confirming, in writing, the previous interpretation that solar panels are an accessory use to a permitted primary use, building or structure and permitted by right in all zoning districts. A Zoning Text Amendment is not needed to allow solar panels in all zoning districts.



William C. Davidson  
Zoning Administrator