

**Subject: Conditional Use Permit to Allow a Solar Carport at 1 Mendota Rd. W. – Dakota County**

<b>Meeting Date:</b> Monday, September 25, 2023	
<b>Submitted/Presented by/Department:</b> Melissa Houtsma - Community Development	
<b>Action Type</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Item	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion/Direction
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Informational Only
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action/Motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Report
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<b>Action</b>	
Approve the conditional use permit to allow a solar carport in an R1 – Single Family Residential district at 1 Mendota Road West.	
<b>Background</b>	
<p>McKinstry, on behalf of Dakota County, has requested a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow a solar carport in an R1 – Single Family Residential zoning district at 1 Mendota Road West (Dakota County Northern Service Center). City staff had been communicating and coordinating with McKinstry and Dakota County throughout the recent amendment process that allows solar carports.</p> <p>For further details and information related to the application, please see the attached planning commission report.</p> <p><u>Planning Commission Review</u></p> <p>The planning commission met in regular session to review the application and held a public hearing. No one from the public called or came forward to speak on the item.</p> <p>The planning commission discussed the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, how/where the collected energy would be utilized, either on or off site. As well as the option to encourage or require a certain amount or percentage of the energy be kept and utilized for the subject property. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The applicant clarified that approximately 14% of the power would indeed go directly into the building, to help offset the current energy use. If/when there is a surplus, it is then credited back to the account by Xcel.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The proposed design and scale of the structure and what may or may not be covered with the current CUP application. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff detailed that while the code does allow up to 50% coverage, this application would only be for the structure as shown on the submitted plans, any sort of expansion would need to be an amendment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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- The decision and reasoning to locate the structure in the proposed location as well as the decision to build the structure at all.
  - The applicant explained that the project was partially made possible through the guaranteed energy savings program, actually not through a grant as was mistakenly communicated by staff. The northern service center made sense as a location due to the larger size of the building, expansive parking lot, and ability to place the structure in proximity to the building to allow a connection directly into the building.
- Ongoing and long term maintenance of the structure and the surrounding area such as snow clearance, security lighting, as well as examining what level of damage or disrepair would deem the structure as in-operable or non-functioning.
  - The applicant detailed the longevity of solar panels generally, warranted for 25 years and commonly see an efficiency decrease of about ½% per year, which at the end of the 25 years means the system is often operating at or above 87%.
  - Conversations continued on the threshold to determine warranting the non-functioning status, with the commission ultimately including this be more clearly defined as a recommended condition.
  - Staff later discussed with the applicant and learned that the structure will have a continuous monitoring device that would make note of any changes in efficiency. As for a specific threshold, staff is recommending a threshold of 33% for qualifying as non-functioning. This is based on the fact that the structure will have 3 power inverters and if one of the three inverters were to stop working that would result in a 33% reduction in production. Which at that point, the structure would be considered inoperable or non-functioning.

Ultimately, the commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval of the conditional use permit application subject to the conditions as recommended by city staff, with one added condition that staff establish a clearer and more defined threshold for determining when the structure becomes inoperable or non-functioning. Staff has addressed this recommendation and included such language in the draft resolution.

### **Attachments**

Application and narrative  
 Planning commission memo and presentation  
 Plans  
 Resolution

### **Previous Relevant Actions**

N/A

### **Alternatives**

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If city council is not satisfied with the proposal as written, please advise staff of the desired changes and/or recommendations.	
<b>Financial</b>	
Budgeted: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Financial Impact
Fund: N/A	
Department: N/A	
Account: N/A	
Amount: N/A	