

UNIFIED SOLAR PERMIT CASE STUDY: TOWN OF NORTH EAST

Questions answered by Building Inspector Ken McLaughlin and Climate Smart Task Force Member Jennifer Dowley

Community Snapshot



2,900 people



44 square miles

Favorite clean energy project: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory

Sustainability Website: <https://climatesmartmillerton.org/about/>

Solar Permitting Snapshot

Solar Permits Issued (since March 2021): 2

Year of Adoption of the Unified Solar Permit: 2021

Adoption Timeframe (Start to Finish): 4 months

Building Department Size: Part-time Building Inspector, part-time Deputy Building Inspector, part-time Administrator

Clean Energy Communities High-Impact Actions Completed



Benchmarking – Municipal Buildings



Benchmarking – Advanced Reporting



Energy Code Enforcement Training



Unified Solar Permit



Is your community considering the Unified Solar Permit? Here's why the Town of North East thinks you should adopt.

1) Why did your community choose to adopt the Unified Solar Permit application?

It was a good fit for us as the Town had recently passed a Solar Law primarily dealing with ground mounted solar. Our Building Inspector was comfortable with it and the Unified Solar Permit seemed like it would make solar applications easier for individuals as well as for solar companies. It's an opportunity to show the public that the town wants to be sustainable - easily.

2) Did your community have a solar energy law in place prior to adoption of the Permit application, and did the Permit result in an update?

The Town Attorney stated in reviewing the Resolution for the Unified Solar Permit that the previously passed Solar Law needed updating. That is still in process.

3) Were there any challenges that occurred during the adoption of the Permit? If so, what were they and how did you overcome them?

The only real challenge was that our Task Force member did not understand of all the technical information involved and so spent a good deal of time with our Building Department to help prepare the form.

4) What was the Permit application's impact on your building department's workload?

Minimal so far as it just became part of the normal compliance review.

5) What is the resident perception? Has it changed since your community implemented the Permit application?

Not known yet. But we surmise that it will bring residents comfort knowing that the permit is aligned with state code and best practice among municipalities.

6) What is the solar installer perception? Has it changed since its implementation?

We believe solar installers will have a higher level of comfort knowing that there are procedures in place that are consistent with those of other municipalities.

7) What advice would you give communities considering passing the Unified Solar Permit today?

Solar installations have become much more common since the Unified Solar Permit was originally introduced when it might have had a significant impact. However, it's still very useful because it provides continuity of regulation among municipalities thereby making it easier for solar installers.