



September 10, 2010

*(This is the twentieth in a series of updates on zoning in Kenton County. The series is intended to keep city and county elected officials abreast of issues being addressed by NKAPC in the **2020 Sourcebook**, a new model zoning ordinance for Kenton County's local jurisdictions. We hope you find it timely and thought provoking and encourage you to contact us using the link below if we can provide more information or answer any questions.)*

Growing interest in solar energy prompts zoning questions

As the many costs associated with fossil fuel production continue to increase, a growing number of home and business owners across the country are looking into Solar Energy Systems. Now seen as a viable means to lower utility costs and help protect the environment, solar energy was once considered expensive and impractical. Recent technological advances have allowed solar energy to compete as a cost-effective method for energy production which can be applied at even the smallest of scales.

Solar Energy Systems provide significant benefits to both the individual owner and society as a whole. Among these benefits are:

- i **money savings**—the sun is a FREE source of energy; once the upfront costs of the system have been repaid, the excess energy produced is pure profit;
- i **renewability**—the sun provides an endless supply of energy;
- i **reliability**—Solar Energy Systems contain no moving parts which allow them to last many years with minimal maintenance; and
- i **eco-friendly**—unlike traditional fossil fuel energy production, Solar Energy Systems do not produce or release hazardous by-products.

While Solar Energy Systems provide many benefits to individual users, as with many other home improvements, it's important that they are constructed in a manner which promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Online reports are full of anecdotal evidence of what can occur when property owners construct these systems without regard to issues they may create for neighbors.

None of Kenton County's jurisdictions include any regulations—zoning or otherwise—pertaining to Solar Energy Systems. Accordingly, one of the objectives of the *2020 Sourcebook* is to create provisions for these energy systems that will:

- i promote and encourage responsible use of Solar Energy Systems;
- i identify appropriate areas for installation;
- i ensure that the systems are compatible and properly integrated into the surrounding community; and
- i protect existing and future surrounding land uses from possible conflicts.

The popularity and demand for Solar Energy Systems is predicted to increase as new more-efficient technology becomes available. Lowes Home Improvement Stores in the US southwest are now stocking single and multiple panel Solar Energy Systems designed so that any home or business owner equipped with a power drill can install them. It's only a matter of time before technology makes these systems attractive for locales that don't get the same level of sunshine as the southwest.

As such, it's increasingly important for communities in Northern Kentucky to examine the issues so as to promote proper use and integration of Solar Energy Systems into the existing fabric of our neighborhoods. The *2020 Sourcebook's* will do that.

To contact a staff member who can answer your questions about the issues covered in this update or on the *2020 Sourcebook* in general, click [here](#).

To view past editions of this update series, click [here](#).