

JORDAN WYATT: An Ordinance initiated by the Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County amending Chapter 154, Planning and Zoning of the St. Joseph County Code to permit and establish regulations for solar energy systems. This Ordinance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for South Bend and St. Joseph County, Indiana (2002), Goal 1: Alleviate and minimize the loss of agricultural land; Goal 4: Preserve and protect the natural environment; Goal 4, Objective C: Conserve open space and protect natural and scenic resources; and Goal 5, Objective A: Provide utility services to support both existing and future residents and businesses. Currently, the St. Joseph County Zoning Ordinance doesn't directly address solar energy systems (SES) which greatly limits its application within the County. Building-mounted SES and accessory use Ground-mounted SES is only permitted because of an interpretation by the Zoning Administrator. To do a standalone Ground-mounted SES project a rezoning to I: Industrial District would be required. In 2018 the County Commissioners issued a statement with the goal that the County would take steps to achieve a high ranking in the Depart of Energy SolSmart program which nationally ranks municipalities and jurisdictions based on their solar-friendliess. Because land use regulations are the major factor in how these projects come to be developed, the Area Plan Commission has taken it upon themselves to achieve the goal of the County Commissioners and allow St. Joseph County to rank as one of the highest counties in the nation in the SolSmart program. The major changes of this ordinance are as follows: