

## **Protocol for the Installation of Solar Panels on Parish or School Owned Roofs in the Archdiocese of Atlanta**

On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis called for environmental action with his encyclical about integral ecology, **“Laudato Si, on Care for Our Common Home.”** In short, he said that we need to protect the people and the planet from harm caused by burning fossil fuels, wasting, and polluting. He asked all people to “cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, and talents.” We all need to act now, and there are things we can do now.

In November 2015, the **Laudato Si Action Plan for the Archdiocese of Atlanta (LSAP)** was published. A group of interdisciplinary, interfaith University of Georgia scientists had created it at the recommendation of and with full support of Archbishop Wilton Gregory. The LSAP offers practical suggestions and ten categories of actions we can all take as parishes, schools, and individuals. Energy Conservation and Efficiency is a key topic.

Many churches and schools in the Archdiocese are making substantial progress in consideration of the environment, economics, and social justice by doing energy and water audits, replacing old water fixtures and air conditioning systems, creating school gardens, recycling, etc. Pastors and principals are willing to lead locally, but many lack needed resources and knowledge for more complex actions. They want and need Archdiocesan leadership and support.

In February 2020, the Archdiocese of Atlanta began a new, 7-year effort called **“The Atlanta Laudato Si Initiative” (LSI)**. Via the LSI, the Archdiocese is increasing its efforts to lead and support all North Georgia Catholics as they take urgent and important action on the Pope’s plea to the people of the planet. The LSI will directly address the challenges put forth in Laudato Si by helping parishes, missions, and schools to assess facilities and practices; prioritize, plan, and implement improvements; and offer education and supporting programs. This includes the consideration of rooftop solar systems as appropriate.

Some parishes have installed relatively small solar panel systems on rectory roofs. One parish has made a request to undertake a large commercial solar rooftop project. In response, the Archbishop asked the Project Review Committee to study rooftop installations and, if appropriate, develop a protocol for the investigation and installation of solar panels on parish and school buildings. The ten steps below describe this protocol. See the following two pages for more info.

1. Improve Energy Efficiency first.
2. Preliminary Assessment of Solar Power Viability and Permission to Investigate.
3. Request Vendor Proposals.
4. Review Vendor Proposals and Solutions to Establish Vendor Short List.
5. Aesthetics Review.
6. Engineering Evaluations.
7. Select the Preferred Vendor and Solution.
8. Submit Project for Review and Approval.
9. Project Review and Approval, Sign Contract.
10. Detailed Design, Installation, and Startup.

## Protocol Detail

Consistent with the Archdiocese of Atlanta Large Capital Project Process, pastors and principals considering the installation of roof top solar panels must follow the steps and guidelines below. Reference information for contacts and resources are at the end of this protocol.

1. Improve Energy Efficiency First. Prior to giving serious consideration to solar power systems, the parish or school needs to conduct an independent, professional energy audit (including HVAC systems, lighting, etc.) and implement most of the recommended energy efficiency improvements. Only after the parish or school has implemented most of these improvements should they pursue rooftop solar. The Archdiocesan Sustainability Program Coordinator can assist you with getting this energy audit and building your 3-Year Energy Conservation Improvement Plan. See “Contact Information” below.
2. Preliminary Assessment of Solar Power Viability and Permission to Investigate. Conduct a preliminary assessment for rooftop solar, including current power use, orientation of site, tree cover, and power vendor. Georgia Interfaith Power & Light (GIPL), Southface, and others can do this for the parish or school at little to no cost. If rooftop solar is viable, and the parish/school wishes to proceed, then the pastor or principal will write a letter to the Archbishop to seek permission to further investigate solar. Contact the Sustainability Program Coordinator for more info.
3. Request Vendor Proposals. If the installation is viable, parish/school will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to Qualified Vendors (3 – 5). The vendor and solution must meet or exceed the minimum RFP requirements as defined in the following categories: Vendor, Technical, Operational, Legal and Financial. **Note: Catholic Construction Services, Inc. (CCSI) will assist in this step and all subsequent steps.** Parish/school, with CCSI’s help, will manage the RFP process and provide information to vendors as needed. In this process, the vendors will provide a detailed assessment of rooftop solar solutions and options. Criteria:
  - Utility-related: Power rate structure, availability of net metering, grid connection
  - Site-related: Orientation of site, tree cover
  - Roof: Roof profile, material and age (replace roof within project?)
  - Most beneficial system size, location, orientation and configuration
  - Benefits: Financial payback/ROI, GHG reduction, backup power, set example
4. Review Vendor Proposals and Solutions to Establish Vendor Short List. Upon receiving vendor proposals, the parish/school team will assess, compare, and contrast the rooftop solar proposals based on the RFP requirements and the criteria above. Establish short list of vendors (1 or 2).
5. Aesthetics Review. Parish/School must conduct a review of the aesthetics of vendor solutions and renderings, via survey or town hall.
6. Engineering Evaluations. Before the implementation of a solar power system, a qualified, independent party must review the proposed solar energy system as well as the roof surface and structure. CCSI will assist the parish/school with the hiring of these parties.

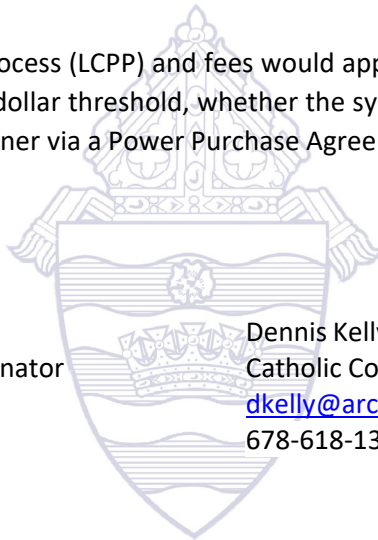
7. Select the Preferred Vendor and Solution. Parish/school team will evaluate proposals and select the vendor and solution.
8. Submit Project for Review and Approval. To request approval to implement the selected rooftop solar power solution, the pastor or principal will submit a project summary letter, a letter of support from the Parish Council or School Advisory Board, and supporting information to the Archbishop.
9. Project Review and Approval, Sign Contract. Project Review Committee and various other parties will review and provide a recommendation to the Archbishop. Archbishop will sign the contract.
  - Archbishop
  - Catholic Mutual
  - Project Review Committee
  - Archdiocese CFO
  - Attorney from Smith, Gambrell & Russell
10. Detailed Design, Installation, and Startup. Vendor will complete the detailed design of the system, purchase components, and install the system. Vendor will start up the system and verify initial performance.

NOTE: The Large Capital Projects Process (LCPP) and fees would apply to any solar energy system whose cost (to anyone) is above the LCPP dollar threshold, whether the system is purchased and operated by a parish/school or by a third-party owner via a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

Contact Information

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Additional Resources can be found on our website at: <https://archatl.com/offices/construction-services/resources/>