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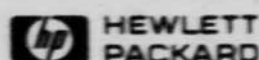
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Checklist sets guidelines

City solar code ensures access to sun's energy

By **DIANE WINOCUR**
Of the Emerald

According to the local joke, housing developers in San Diego install city-required solar panels on the wrong side of houses because solar access standards aren't well defined.

But Eugene developers have been spared this plight, says Deborah Brewer, Eugene Water and Electric Board's governmental liaison.

In a forum on Eugene's new Solar Access Ordinance held last Wednesday, Brewer outlined the "Eugene Solar Access Checklist." Developed by EWEB and Eugene city planners, the checklist gives developers logical guidelines for installing solar energy systems and maintaining access once a system is built.

Access is defined as "protecting the solar energy consumer's investment from infringements such as a neighbor's tree or second story addition," Brewer says.

The city ordinance, passed in April 1981, requires that solar access be preserved in any new housing development.

The ordinance originally required that all new streets run east and west to ensure new houses of southern exposure. Early plans also specified locations for fences and vegetation.

But local architects saw the plans as being too inflexible, and pressured the city into rejecting them.

The city council hesitated to pass the compromised ordinance, citing a lack of specific enforcement guidelines. The "checklist," which outlines requirements, satisfied both groups.



Photo by David Corey

Deborah Brewer explains the checklist developers follow to comply with a city ordinance ensuring solar access.

The checklist includes criteria that developers must follow when building to the north of existing structures and erecting fences or walls that may shade the south sides of existing buildings.

The checklist also explains shadow patterns created by buildings at different times during the day, it goes as far as offering a procedure for constructing buildings with acceptable shadow patterns.

Developers must include a shadow-pattern map with the maps and charts they usually submit for council approval. The map must demonstrate that

even on the day when shadows are longest, December 21, the proposed development will provide "fair" solar access.

Other areas covered by the checklist include the location and installation angle of solar collectors, the recommended density of buildings for maximized solar access and even what type of roof will create the smallest shadow.

Since implementation of the ordinance, plans for only three or four one-lot buildings have been brought before the board, and no sub-divisions are planned.

Brewer said Eugene's ordinance came after much research by the Planning Commission over the economic feasibility of solar orientation, and the actual worth of protecting the public's right to sunlight.

The study that eventually convinced the commission to go ahead with its plans was prepared by the state energy department. The study says that a home's energy bill can be reduced 10 percent by proper solar orientation of the house, which can amount to 600 kilowatt hours per year.

A home utilizing maximum solar applications, such as solar paneling or a greenhouse, can generate up to 50 percent of its heating energy, a savings of 3 million kilowatt hours for every 1000 homes, according to the energy department's study.

"Three million kilowatt hours doesn't amount to much; it's less than 1 percent of EWEB's total load," Brewer says. "But it does allow us to reduce our annual growth rate, and reduce the amount of new power we have to buy."

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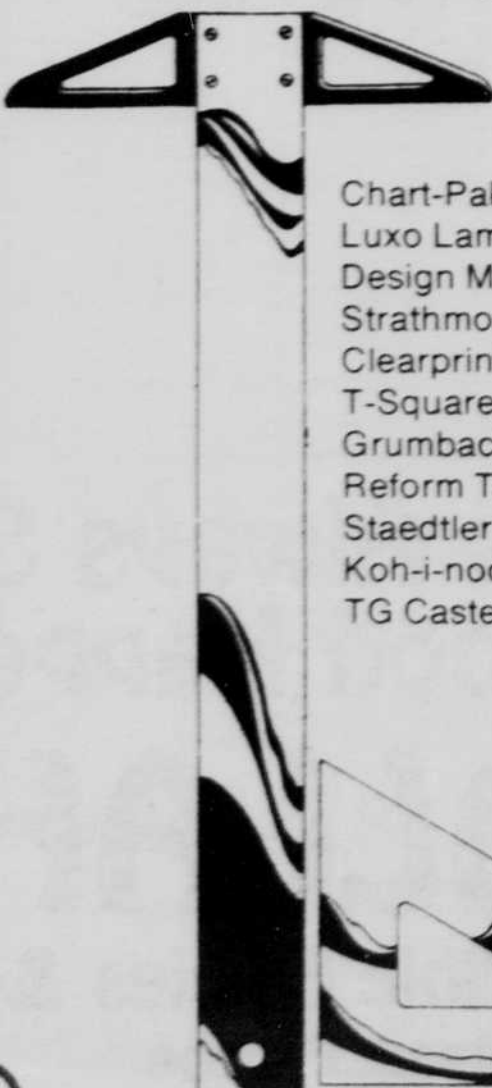


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