NYSEIA

## *Leveraging Solar and Energy Storage to Power an Affordable, Resilient New York City*

# A Solar + Storage Playbook for Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani

NYSEIA

Policy Memorandum

December 17th, 2025

# *Leveraging Solar and Energy Storage to Power an Affordable, Resilient New York City*

A Solar + Storage Playbook for Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani

## Introduction: An Historic Opportunity

Distributed solar and energy storage will play a critical role in Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's commitment to affordability. These technologies lower energy costs for families, improve resilience against outages, and advance climate goals—all while creating good-paying jobs in New York City. The partnership between the industry and the Mayoral administration presents an historic opportunity to harness the benefits of distributed solar and energy storage.

The New York Solar Energy Industries Association (NYSEIA) is the voice of the solar and energy storage industry in New York State. We represent the companies that design, install, and maintain solar and battery systems in New York City and across the state. Together, we represent thousands of workers and businesses delivering utility bill savings and driving the clean energy transition.

# Policy Recommendations for the Incoming Administration

## *Establish Ambitious Clean Energy Goals for NYC*

### Proposal

Raise NYC's **solar goal to 2 gigawatts by 2035**, and raise NYC's **energy storage goal to 2 gigawatts by 2030**.

### Why It Matters

- The New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) is projecting that NYC could have reliability shortfalls over the next several years as demand for electricity rises and polluting generators are retired. Distributed solar + storage are our fastest and cheapest tools to meet NYC's needs for clean, reliable power. Setting ambitious solar and storage targets and driving regulatory reforms to drive faster deployment is key.
- New York City's existing goals are out of date and should be updated to reflect the incoming Mayor's clean energy and affordability ambitions.
- New York City is already on track to achieve its 1 gigawatt by 2030 solar goal, which was established a decade ago. Establishing a more ambitious goal that is further in the future will demonstrate NYC's continued commitment to rapidly deploying cost-saving clean energy resources in the City.
- New York City does not currently have an established 2030 goal for energy storage. In 2024, Governor Hochul announced New York's 6 gigawatt by 2030 energy storage goal, and NYSERDA's Energy Storage Roadmap indicates that at least 2 gigawatts should be installed in NYC. Setting a 2 gigawatt by 2030 goal will align City and State policy, and help ensure that NYC receives its fair share of state funding for local infrastructure that improves local air quality and lowers electricity bills.

### Actions

- Issue an Executive Order establishing a 2 gigawatt by 2030 energy storage goal and a 2 gigawatt by 2035 solar goal. Direct relevant City agencies, including the NYC DOB, FDNY, and DCAS to identify and execute process improvements, programs and investments to support the timely and cost-effective achievement of these expanded goals.
- Issue a memo in support of the Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power (ASAP) Act (S.6570 | A.8758), State legislation that would raise New York's statewide distributed solar goal to 20 gigawatts by 2035 and drive down costs through interconnection reforms.

## *Enable Safe Residential and Medium Battery Energy Storage Systems*

**Proposal:** Align the New York City Fire Code with the recently enacted state fire code to allow safe residential battery installations.

### Why It Matters

- More than 13 years after Superstorm Sandy, NYC's 8 million residents still lack access to resilient power due to a de facto ban against residential batteries in the fire code.
- Residential batteries paired with solar provide backup power during outages, reduce electricity bills, and reduce reliance on polluting peaker plants.
- Modern energy storage systems meet rigorous UL safety standards and are regulated by FDNY and Department of Buildings, ensuring safe deployment.

### Actions

- Direct the FDNY to enable safe residential energy storage systems and streamline permitting for medium batteries
- Support Int. No. 1480, introduced by Council Member Jim Gennaro, to modernize the city's fire code and unlock resilient energy solutions.

---

## *Deliver Affordable Solar Power to Nonprofits and Affordable Housing*

**Proposal:** Support state legislation to make the New York City Solar & Storage Property Tax Abatement refundable for nonprofits and income-restricted affordable housing (S.4272 | A.5959).

### Why It Matters

- Nonprofits and affordable housing providers are currently unable to access NYC's most meaningful solar incentive.
- Refundability ensures these mission-driven organizations can reduce their operating costs with solar + storage, providing enhanced services and bill savings to residents.
- Expanding access to solar savings helps stabilize housing costs and shields vulnerable communities from rising energy prices.

### Action

- Issue a Memo in Support of this legislation and work with state partners to implement refundability this legislative session (S.4272 | A.5959).

## *Power Local Law 97 Compliance Through Local Clean Energy*

**Proposal:** Allow Covered Buildings to purchase credits from in-city behind-the-meter solar energy systems on small buildings for Local Law 97 compliance.

**Why It Matters**

- Local Law 97 imposes steep penalties for non-compliance, creating significant cost burdens for large building owners.
- Many Covered Buildings have financial resources but are unable to install onsite solar to meet their obligations, while owners of small buildings in the outer boroughs lack financial resources to install solar, especially as federal tax credits are eliminated in 2025 and 2027.
- Allowing in-city net-metered projects to generate Renewable Energy Credits (or a similar value offset/deduction) for LL97 compliance is a win-win: small building owners gain a new revenue stream to make solar more affordable, and large Covered Buildings gain access to a cost-effective local clean energy source to support compliance.

**Action**

- Direct the Department of Buildings (DOB) to solicit input from stakeholders and then issue a Bulletin that allows Covered Buildings to purchase credits from in-city net-metered solar projects for Local Law 97 compliance. This action will create an additional compliance pathway for Covered Buildings while incentivizing more rooftop solar in the City at no cost to taxpayers or electric ratepayers.

---

## *Update Local Law 97 to Allow for Long-Term Participation from In-City Solar and Energy Storage*

**Proposal:** Clarify that in-City solar and energy storage can be used for Local Law 97 compliance beyond 2029 and ensure that the carbon emissions reduction value of solar energy is accurately accounted for.

**Why It Matters**

- Local Law 97 is an important driver for in-City solar and energy storage development, and local solar + storage are impactful tools for decarbonization.
- Based on current rules, the Local Law 97 compliance value of solar and energy storage is significant during the first compliance period, but drops considerably starting in 2030.
  - 1 RCNY §103-14 provides Covered Buildings with a deduction for onsite solar energy or energy storage, but this is limited to the first compliance period (2024-2029) only.

- The 2030-2034 carbon coefficient of electricity included in 1 RCNY §103-14 is 0.000145 tCO2e per kWh: far lower than the actual emissions reduction value of solar energy. Solar generation coincides with peak demand and directly offsets in-City fossil fuel combustion. According to the US Energy Information Administration, the carbon coefficient of electricity generated from natural gas is 0.000435 tCO2e per kWh; 3X higher than the value included in LL97.

**Action**

- Direct the DOB to update the rules for LL97 to extend deductions for onsite solar and energy storage beyond the first compliance period and to create a more accurate carbon coefficient of electricity (or solar impact multiplier) to ensure that Covered Buildings are fairly credited for the value of in-City solar energy generation.

## *Faster Electrical Inspections, Lower Costs for New Yorkers*

**Proposal:** Allow self-certification or expand the use of Special Inspection Agencies for standard rooftop solar systems.

**Why It Matters**

- Electrical inspection delays increase solar project costs and could cause New Yorkers to miss deadlines for valuable federal tax credits.
- Streamlining inspections reduces bottlenecks, lowers soft costs, and accelerates access to affordable energy.
- Efficient permitting reflects the administration's commitment to modernizing city services.

**Action**

- Implement a DOB policy enabling self-certification or authorize the use of Special Inspection Agencies for solar electrical inspections.

44 KW System on a Bay Ridge Co-Op
Photo: Brooklyn SolarWorks

## *Lower Electric Bills and Improve Air Quality by Scaling Up Deployment of Community Batteries*

New York City is a load pocket, with high density and high peak electricity demand. As New York City seeks to lower electricity bills and improve public health by reducing reliance on polluting in-City fossil fuel generators, community-scale energy storage systems ("community batteries") are among our most powerful tools. Community batteries reduce electricity prices for all New Yorkers by charging overnight when power is cheap and plentiful and discharging during times of grid constraints and peak demand. These batteries don't just lower wholesale energy prices and eliminate in-City fossil fuel combustion; they also eliminate the need for extremely expensive traditional utility infrastructure that would otherwise be paid for by Con Edison customers through rate hikes. NYC has a strong policy framework to encourage community battery deployment, but there are emerging permitting, interconnection, and economic barriers that threaten to slow our progress.

**Proposal:** Call on Con Edison to provide transparent and fair access to the electric distribution system for battery energy storage systems.

Credit: PSE Healthy Energy

### Why It Matters

In the summer of 2025, Con Edison shut down community battery energy storage system (BESS) development in large swaths of its service territory, claiming there are emerging "capacity constraints" that prevent the utility from safely interconnecting proposed battery systems without cost-prohibitive investments in the utility system. Con Edison has not provided any data to justify its claims and actions, which are undermining progress toward City and State clean energy mandates. Mayor-elect Mamdani can call for Con Edison to ensure fairness and transparency for energy storage interconnection, urging the utility to reverse course without a lengthy regulatory process at the New York State Public Service Commission.

### Action

- Issue a public statement calling for Con Edison to expeditiously remove roadblocks to community BESS development, and to ensure fair and transparent access to the grid so New Yorkers can enjoy lower cost electricity and cleaner air. Escalate the issue to the New York State Public Service Commission if Con Edison does not resolve it in the first 100 days of the administration.

**Proposal:** Expand agency staffing and streamline permitting for community batteries.

**Why It Matters**

- The FDNY and DOB are tasked with regulating BESS technology, and robustly staffing the agencies can ensure that they maintain timely and complete application reviews while they work toward streamlining their processes.
- Currently, the NYC DOB and FDNY conduct significant, and occasionally overlapping, reviews for community BESS. As the volume of BESS projects increases, this creates significant delays and additional costs.
- Eliminating redundant reviews, such as the Office of Technical Certification and Research (OTCR) project-specific review, will lower costs and expedite BESS development while preserving safety.

**Action**

- Authorize agency funding to enable robust staffing for the DOB and FDNY so they can handle a high volume of BESS permit applications. Direct the DOB and FDNY to streamline their permitting and review processes for BESS to eliminate redundancies and inefficiencies.

---

**Proposal:** Support sales tax exemption for BESS equipment.

**Why It Matters**

- Most energy infrastructure is exempt from sales tax. However, BESS is a newer technology and therefore it does not benefit from this sales tax exemption.
- The NYCEDC is currently evaluating and granting sales tax exemptions for BESS one-at-a-time; a cumbersome process for the City and BESS developers.
- By modernizing our energy infrastructure sales tax exemption, more energy storage systems can be built in NYC faster and at a lower cost, delivering significant air quality and affordability benefits to residents.

Credit: NineDot Energy

**Action**

Issue a memo in support of S.1527 (Parker) / A.313 (Paulin); pending state legislation that would eliminate state sales tax on BESS. Consider passing legislation at the City-level to make BESS exempt from the City sales tax.

# Programmatic Strategies

## *Launch Robust Public Education Campaigns to Promote Clean Energy Adoption and Acceptance*

### Proposal

Launch robust programs to: 1) assist New York building owners, renters, and homeowners to adopt cost-saving clean energy solutions; and 2) to educate stakeholders about the benefits of clean energy.

### Why It Matters

- New Yorkers are struggling to keep up with rising energy bills. Programs that connect New Yorkers with utility energy assistance, energy efficiency, and community solar can directly reduce energy burden for these families.
- Decarbonizing buildings and adopting clean energy can be complex, especially for affordable housing properties and small landlords. Robust technical assistance programs can increase clean energy adoption and support compliance with Local Law 97.
- Misinformation regarding energy storage is spurring opposition to local energy storage projects in NYC and across the State. Providing accurate information, site tours, and resources to stakeholders, local decision-makers, community organizations, and the general public can foster community support for local clean energy projects.

### Actions

- Expand the NYC Accelerator program's budget and scope so it can provide strong support to buildings covered by LL97 and smaller buildings.
- Supplement the budget of the NYSERDA Clean Energy Hubs and seek to integrate programs in order to holistically and efficiently serve the clean energy needs of buildings and tenants alike.
- Support and expand upon successful affordable housing clean solar initiatives, such as NYCHA ACCESSolar and HPD's Solar Where Feasible program.
- Allocate City funding toward public education regarding the benefits of local clean energy.
- Consider opportunities to combine and streamline programs while ensuring that local organizations, MWBEs and small businesses play a central role.

Credit: Solar One

## *Scale Up Solar + Storage on Public Facilities*

**Proposal:** Accelerate and expand deployment of solar and energy storage on City-owned buildings, especially schools and public housing.

### Why It Matters

- Limited real estate is a key barrier to clean energy deployment in NYC. The City of New York is a large real estate owner, and can leverage its public buildings to deploy solar and energy storage.
- Solar paired with energy storage can provide clean, resilient backup power to NYC schools, libraries and critical facilities to support emergency readiness and response.
- Solar and energy storage are powerful tools for education and workforce development; deploying solar on schools and public housing can ensure that NYC students and NYCHA residents have access to opportunities in these emerging fields.

### Actions

- Direct the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) and the NYC School Construction Authority to improve coordination and to accelerate the City's K-12 solar program.
- Fund expedited roof replacements for schools and NYCHA to support NYC's K-12 solar program and NYCHA's ACCESSolar program.
- Direct DCAS to identify city-owned lots and community facilities suitable for battery storage systems.

Credit: DCAS

# Shared Gains: Affordability, Resilience, and Jobs

These actions don't just modernize energy systems—they deliver tangible savings, strengthen communities, and support the administration's vision for an affordable, livable city.

**Lower Energy Bills:** Solar and storage reduce Con Edison bills for families and affordable housing providers.

**Resilience:** Battery storage provides reliable backup power during outages and reduces the need for Con Edison rate increases.

**Efficiency:** Streamlined permitting and inspections cut delays and costs, improving service delivery.

**Local Jobs:** Expanding solar and storage deployment creates family-sustaining jobs, builds the city's skilled workforce, and attracts private investment to New York City.

**Public Health:** Accelerating solar and storage will help the City reduce its reliance on peaker plants, avoiding future adverse health outcomes for vulnerable populations.

# Conclusion

Mayor Mamdani was elected to make the city ***more affordable and livable*** for all New Yorkers. Bold initiatives that scale up solar + storage deployment will help deliver on this vision. The policy proposals in this memo aren't just technical fixes — they are meaningful initiatives that will unlock solar + storage as powerful tools to lower household energy costs, stabilize expenses for affordable housing, provide reliable power during outages, and improve air quality by reducing reliance on in-City fossil fuel combustion.

These policies, paired with impactful programs, will put money back into New Yorkers' pockets, create good-paying local jobs, and ensure that clean energy solutions serve communities in every zip code of the City. Together, they represent an important plank of an affordability agenda for a new New York City.

NYSEIA and our members look forward to partnering with the incoming administration to deliver on an "affordability-first" clean energy agenda for New York City. Let's go!

Please contact us with questions or to discuss these recommendations further.

**Noah Ginsburg**
Executive Director
New York Solar Energy Industries Association
noah@nyseia.org

**Jonathan Cohen**
Policy Director
New York Solar Energy Industries Association
jonathan@nyseia.org