Delivering Affordable Energy in NYC
With the Power of the Sun

Solar and Storage Recommendations for Mayor Mamdani in 2026

Dear Mayor Mamdani,

We congratulate you on your leadership of New York City and commend you for centering affordability and quality of life in your vision for your Administration. We are excited to work with you and your team to ensure that working families thrive in New York City, and to deliver affordable, renewable, and reliable energy to our communities. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels –one of the defining challenges of our time– is critical to this mission, and we are hopeful your Administration will meet the moment by rapidly scaling renewable energy.

New York City is faced with compounding climate, energy, and affordability crises. We are projected to experience some of the state's largest increases in extreme heat. Sea level rise will increase the height and frequency of coastal floods, and by 2040, the City could experience high tide floods for almost a quarter of the year, every year. Meanwhile, powered by some of the oldest infrastructure in the country, New York City is projected to experience an energy shortfall. And, New Yorkers are expected to face rate increases on top of electricity costs that are already over 50% higher than the national average.

More solar and storage are the answer to these problems. They are the fastest and cheapest technologies for delivering clean, reliable electricity and are a proven success across the state. Deploying more local solar and storage will deliver meaningful cost savings to families, small businesses, and affordable housing as utility costs continue to skyrocket. A January 2026 study demonstrates that expanding local solar and storage could deliver $1 billion in direct utility bill savings for *all* New Yorkers annually by 2035. And with federal attacks on offshore wind and incentives for large-scale renewables phasing out, coupled with the cancellation of the Clean Path NY project, our city needs to ramp up renewable energy generation and storage to meet electricity demand.

Due to our space constraints, investing in distributed solar – specifically rooftop and small-scale community solar – is the most viable path to increasing local clean energy. As extreme weather and strains on the electric grid intensify, we need to scale up energy storage in tandem with solar to deliver life-saving backup power to households and stabilize the grid. Energy storage is also critical for transitioning New York off dirty Peaker plants, enhancing the power of wind and solar, and bringing substantial energy bill savings to New Yorkers.

We are sharing here a set of concrete actions that the Mayor's Office can take in your first year

to accelerate affordable, renewable energy for New Yorkers– prioritizing investments that improve the quality of life. As the federal administration abandons renewable energy and efforts to combat the extreme effects of climate change, the City must step up and lead.

Signed,

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Daniel Chu, Senior Energy Planner, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA)
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Year One Actions to Advance Affordable Solar and Storage in NYC

1. Scale Up New York City's Clean Energy Goals to Meet the Moment

Actions

1. Issue an Executive Order to increase New York City's distributed solar goal to 2 gigawatts by 2035 and to establish a battery storage goal of 2 gigawatts by 2030. Direct city agencies to identify and enact policy improvements to ensure that these goals are met efficiently.
2. Issue a Memo of Support for the ASAP Act (S.6570 | A.8758) to double the State's distributed solar goal to 20 gigawatts by 2035 and modernize our grid to bring projects online more quickly and cost-effectively.

Why

Action 1: The City is on track to meet the established goal of 1 gigawatt of distributed solar by 2030; now is the time to build on this success to power our grid and deliver meaningful savings to NYC residents and businesses.

NYC does not yet have a goal for energy storage, though NYSERDA's Energy Storage Roadmap indicates that at least 2 gigawatts could be installed within the city. Formalizing an energy storage goal will align city targets with state policies and help drive state funding to make our city more resilient and relieve a constrained grid.

Action 2: At the state level, New York is on track to meet its 10-gigawatt distributed solar goal by 2030 early and under budget, one of the Community Leadership and Community Protection Act's (CLCPA) few clear successes. The ASAP Act builds on that momentum by doubling the target to 20 gigawatts by 2035 and streamlining interconnection so that clean energy can connect to the grid faster and at a lower cost. Raising the state goal would unlock the funding and regulatory certainty needed to decarbonize the grid statewide, lower utility bills, and protect public health.

Impact

Setting more ambitious city and state solar and storage goals will drive the regulatory and policy changes needed to bring clean, affordable energy online for residents and businesses, and address the growing reliability crisis facing our city. Supporting the ASAP Act's passage will also bring down the cost of building new community solar, unlocking savings for renters and others who can't install rooftop solar. Finally, New York City's goals are more than ambitious numbers on paper—they set a precedent for the state and the nation and raise the bar on climate action.

2. Expand Access To Affordable Energy for Affordable Housing

Actions

1. Issue a Memo of Support for state legislation enabling "Direct Pay" for the Solar and Storage Property Tax Abatement for affordable housing and nonprofits (S.4272 | A.5959).
2. Build on the success of NYCHA's ACCESSolar program through increased funding for roof repairs and replacements on NYCHA buildings so that more campuses can participate in the program.

Why

Action 1: New York City's affordable housing developments and community-driven nonprofits face significant barriers to rooftop solar because of limited upfront capital and complex ownership and tax structures. This is particularly true with the sunsetting of federal incentives for solar.

NYC's only solar incentive, the Solar and Storage Property Tax Abatement, provides a major financial incentive to install rooftop solar and storage projects for residences, businesses, and multifamily buildings - reducing their property taxes by 30% of the cost of solar and/or storage. However, this key incentive excludes entities that are already exempt from property taxes, such as affordable housing, houses of worship, and non-profit organizations.

The Direct Pay Solar and Storage Property Tax Abatement Bill makes this key incentive accessible for affordable housing and nonprofit organizations. The Direct Pay model, which

already exists for federal clean energy tax credits, and the New York State Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Tax Credit, increases equitable access by allowing these entities to receive the tax credit as a payment.

Action 2: The NYCHA ACCESSolar program installs community solar on NYCHA public housing, delivering bill savings to low-income neighbors, and incorporating education and workforce development opportunities for NYCHA residents. To expand these projects across more NYCHA campuses, the city must invest in much-needed roof repairs for NYCHA buildings, improving safety and comfort for residents, while preparing roofs for solar installations that could take place through an expanded ACCESSolar initiative.

Impact

When the city enables solar on affordable and public housing, it helps reduce operating costs, frees up funding for other necessary health and safety repairs, generates community solar savings, and brings more clean energy onto the grid. In addition, preparing more NYCHA campuses for rooftop solar not only improves the quality of life for residents by addressing roof issues, but it also drives workforce development programs so that NYCHA tenants have access to clean energy jobs.

3. Streamline Permitting and Inspection for Residential Solar

Actions

1. Work with city agencies, such as DOB and FDNY, to implement smart permitting and remote inspections and deliver cheaper, easier rooftop solar to NYC households.
2. Issue a Memo of Support for the state-level automated permitting bill (S.5781A | A.6270B), which would drive down residential costs and unleash deployment across the state.

Why

Action 1: As federal incentives for residential solar were eliminated at the close of 2025, NYC households who want to install rooftop solar and save on skyrocketing utility bills are facing greatly increased costs.

New York City can lead on keeping residential solar– and the utility bill savings it delivers– within reach for families by streamlining the complicated and inefficient approval process for simple installs. Complex permitting and inspection can add $6,000-$7,000– or as much as a $1/watt– to the sticker price of a standard residential solar installation. And, headaches associated with permitting lead more than 20%residential solar installs to be cancelled.

Automating the permitting process and offering remote inspections for simple code-compliant solar projects reduces project costs and delays. These are proven interventions that unleash solar deployment and cut red tape for consumers without compromising quality or safety. More than 300 municipalities have adopted smart permitting platforms, and universal access to smart permitting is mandated in five states (CA, FL, TX, MD, and NJ). Remote inspections are also widely utilized in cities and states across the country, including by the NY SUN program as a quality assurance check on the work of on-site inspectors.

Action 2: At the state-level, the Residential Solar Automated Permitting bill requires municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more to adopt an automated online permitting platform and provide remote inspections for residential solar and solar + storage systems. If adopted statewide, automated permitting is expected to reduce the cost of residential solar by as much as $5,200 by 2040 and result in 355,000 additional installs statewide.

Impact

Streamlining residential solar permitting and inspections will reduce agency burden and permitting delays, while delivering cheaper rooftop solar and utility bill relief to New Yorkers.

4. Wield Public Land, Buildings and Purchasing Power to Grow Local Solar and Storage

Actions

1. Carry out the Mayor's *Green Schools for a Healthier New York City* campaign promise to renovate 500 public schools with renewable energy infrastructure and HVAC upgrades, reform schoolyards, create thousands of union jobs and build resilience hubs, incorporating priorities from the Green, Healthy Schools initiative.
2. Facilitate the rapid buildout of Public Renewables by working with NYPA to develop solar and storage on underutilized city-owned lots and rooftops.
3. Support the passage of City Council Intro. 700 (CM Nurse) and direct resources to achieve energy storage targets. This bill directs DCAS and the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability to identify suitable city-owned sites to install energy storage systems, develop a plan to build 300 MW by 2030, and report annually on progress.
4. Leverage New York City's buying power through bulk procurement of decarbonization technologies, including solar and energy storage systems.

Why

Action 1: We support the Mayor's Green Schools for a Healthier New York City initiative and hope to see it implemented. Improving NYC's aging k-12 public school infrastructure is critical to helping students learn and thrive, and to creating resilient places for communities to harbor

during extreme events. Over a quarter of public schools face risk of flooding, and many more are in dire need of upgraded HVAC systems to combat extreme heat. The conditions of school buildings reflect race and class disparities by neighborhood, with nearly 70% of schools with ventilation issues located in environmental justice areas where residents experience more environmental health issues, like asthma.

Schools face impacts from climate change, but are also a source of pollution, accounting for nearly one-third of the City's building emissions. The Green, Healthy Schools initiative, championed by the Climate Works for All coalition and ALIGN, would decarbonize, electrify, and modernize New York City's public K–12 schools—starting with those in environmental justice communities—while creating good, union green jobs. The campaign calls for $11.1 billion in capital investment through 2030 ($2.2 billion annually) to install solar, upgrade HVAC systems, eliminate fossil fuel heating, and improve learning environments, aligning with major city and state climate mandates.

Action 2: The Build Public Renewables Act, passed in 2023, directed the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to build publicly owned renewable energy. The most recent update to the Strategic Plan proposes 5.6 GW of renewables across the state. However, studies show that New York needs approximately 15 GW of public renewables to reach New York's Climate Act target of achieving 70% renewable energy by 2030. NYPA projects are also important because they can be designated to provide bill credits through the Renewable Energy Access and Community Help (REACH) program to ratepayers enrolled in the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) within the utility area where the projects are built. New York City must work with NYPA to find and utilize suitable sites for solar and storage to increase the portfolio of public renewables within NYC boundaries, thereby helping to reach our state targets, bring more bill savings to local EAP customers, and stabilize the grid.

Action 3: Supporting Intro 700 is needed to spur more development of energy storage on public buildings, increasing resiliency and reducing operating costs of city buildings. Additionally, targeted deployment of storage resources on critical facilities like schools, libraries, and other city-owned buildings could help establish resiliency hubs in Disadvantaged Communities with the most climate vulnerabilities, protecting frontline communities, and improving health conditions and quality of life.

Action 4: City-led bulk procurement of decarbonization technologies and making them available for New Yorkers would help reduce the immense upfront cost burden that NYC home and building owners face in making their homes more sustainable, efficient, and livable. It would also help larger buildings comply with Local Law 97 emissions limits. By leveraging the City's buying power and achieving economies of scale, technologies like heat pumps, induction stoves, electric domestic water heaters, and solar and storage can become more accessible to NYC residents.

Impact
New York City is in a unique position to leverage its resources, public buildings, land and strong labor standards to accelerate the buildout of solar and energy storage. These efforts make our communities safer, healthier, and resilient in the face of extreme weather events, and improve the lives of people who rely on city-owned buildings every day—from students in classrooms to seniors seeking safety during storms.

5. Ensure Long-Term Local Law 97 Participation for Solar and Storage

Action

1. Direct the Department of Buildings to extend the valuable emissions deductions for onsite solar and energy storage beyond the Local Law 97 first compliance period to reflect an accurate value of emissions offset for solar and/or storage generation.

Why
The Local Law 97 building emissions limits are a key incentive for decarbonization in NYC, and solar and energy storage deployment are important tools for reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The current compliance period for Local Law 97 (ending in 2029) per 1 RCNY §103-14 strongly values solar and energy storage in emissions deduction calculations. But that credit drops significantly beginning in 2030, from 0.000288962 tC02e (tons of carbon dioxide) per kWh to .000145 tC02e per kWh, meaning it undervalues the benefits of local solar energy, while overestimating how clean the grid will be by 2030.

Yet according to the US Energy Information Administration, the carbon coefficient of electricity generated from natural gas is 0.000435 tCO2e per kWh, which is three times higher than the projected value of solar as written in Local Law 97 starting in 2030. To address this, the city needs a more accurate accounting of the emissions and grid benefits of solar. NYC should create a "negative emissions coefficient" multiplier for solar-generated electricity or utilize some other strategy like what is currently being used for beneficial electrification measures.

Impact
When solar and storage are accurately valued for Local Law 97 compliance purposes, it rewards building owners for taking steps to decarbonize their properties using solar and storage, while decreasing building emissions and increasing NYC's supply of local clean energy.

6. Align with New York State's Nation-Leading Fire Codes to Expedite Safe and Resilient Battery Storage

Actions

1. Direct FDNY to align the NYC Fire Code with the recently enacted state fire code to enable safe and resilient energy storage systems in residential homes.
2. Direct FDNY to streamline permitting for medium batteries so that more NYC buildings can access resilient power.

Why

We need to accelerate energy storage in NYC to protect New Yorkers from ever-increasing extreme weather, pollution from peaker plants, skyrocketing energy bills, and a grid facing grave reliability risks. Yet residential storage is currently inaccessible to New York City residents due to outdated requirements, and medium-scale batteries on buildings face long and expensive permitting delays.

The recently enacted New York State fire code was developed with input from a highly technical working group of fire and safety experts. It serves as a nation-leading example for regulating energy storage using stringent safety and certification requirements and comprehensive oversight by local and state agencies. With these requirements, it lays out safe and evidence-backed requirements for energy storage at different scales – including residential storage, medium-scale storage, and larger utility-scale systems. New York City's fire code should be updated to mirror these detailed requirements, addressing reasonable safety requirements for specific building typologies, so that more residential and medium-scale storage systems can be installed safely and cost-effectively within the city.

Impact

Households and buildings that install small and medium-scale storage can access resilience and affordability: they can generate bill savings for homeowners and provide backup power during a grid outage.

7. Support Plug-In Solar to Give More New Yorkers Access to Home Solar

Action

1. Issue a Memo of Support for the State Legislation SUNNY Act (S. 8512A | A.9111A) that enables plug-in solar.

Why
New Yorkers want to use solar to save on their electric bills. But many people are renters or lack the space or money to install a full rooftop solar system. Plug-in solar systems are a key solution to this problem. They are easy to set up, portable, and cheap, ranging from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand. Right now, the market for plug-in solar is hampered by one-size-fits all utility interconnection rules designed for larger systems.

By supporting the SUNNY Act, New York City can help create an exemption from these onerous application requirements for small systems. In Germany, allowing simple plug-in solar and battery systems to be installed without an interconnection agreement has led to over 3 million of three systems being installed over the last few years. Similar levels of take up in New York State would see almost 1 million families and businesses using these systems to save on their utility bills.

Impact
Enabling plug-in solar will provide access to much-needed utility savings and renewable energy generation to New York renters and homeowners who cannot afford rooftop solar or do not have control of their roofs.

8. Advocate in Proceedings at the New York Public Service Commission (PSC)

Actions

1. Advocate for a Just and Affordable Con Edison Reliability Contingency Plan (NY PSC Case Number 25-E-0764).
2. Ensure Local Solar is Fairly Compensated Under the NY VDER (NY PSC Case Numbers 15-E-0751 and 19-E-0283)

Why
Action 1: New York City faces energy shortfalls as early as this coming year, and these shortfalls are expected to balloon over the coming decade. The reasons for these shortfalls include aging infrastructure, rapid growth in energy demand, and utility-driven challenges with getting distributed energy resources (DERs) operational. Left unaddressed, the shortfalls would likely result in more frequent blackouts and brownouts.

The PSC has directed Con Edison to develop a reliability contingency plan (Case 25-E-0764) to address this rapidly approaching shortfall and ensure our grid can consistently deliver enough power to meet local demand. This Plan is required to include meaningful consideration of non-emitting solutions. We are encouraged to see that the City has joined as an official party to this PSC proceeding.

If Con Edison's Reliability Contingency Plan is not robust, fossil fuel interests will jump at the opportunity to meet this energy shortfall, resulting in higher bills to pay for expensive and large-scale infrastructure that locks New Yorkers into decades of more pollution and volatile energy prices.

Clean energy solutions provide some of the most cost-effective means by which new energy demand can be accommodated without having to build new, expensive, and polluting energy infrastructure. Research shows that almost all of the coming decade's grid needs can be met through a combination of clean energy solutions, including virtual power plants (VPPs). VPPs are collections of small-scale distributed energy resources - such as solar, storage, electric vehicles, and smart thermostats - that are aggregated and coordinated together to serve the needs of the wider grid system. Through coordinated aggregation, VPPs can provide many of the same grid services as a traditional power plant without the costs, resources, and several years needed to build such infrastructure. Con Edison must do much more to make VPPs a viable strategy for our grid to meet the moment.

New York City has the power to hold Con Edison accountable and ensure a Reliability Contingency Plan is put in place that reduces pollution and utility bills for our communities. Parallel to this effort, the City can also vocally challenge the problematic assumptions used by the state's grid system managers - namely utilities and NYISO - that hinder true reliability. Their planning processes undervalue the reliability that renewable energy systems offer, while overvaluing fossil fuel sources. This challenge can be put forth with the Governor's Office, state legislature, NYISO, and FERC.

Impact:
This Reliability Contingency Plan must modernize the local power grid to accommodate more renewable and resilient energy systems, while preventing expensive and polluting power generation to meet growing energy demand.

Action 2: In New York, local solar is compensated according to a complex formula known as the Value of Distributed Energy Resources (VDER). VDER calculates compensation for the energy that local solar projects produce based on how a given project impacts the grid and environment. In other words, the local solar economy rests on how VDER calculates compensation for solar energy. The PSC has two active proceedings aimed at refining how VDER is calculated, and those invested in disempowering the local solar economy have tried advocating for a VDER formula that yields lower overall values of compensation. This is especially important at a time when Federal clean energy incentives, which historically drove the clean energy economy, are ending.

For the past decade, the City has been an active participant in PSC proceedings aimed at reforming and refining solar compensation. We encourage the new administration to continue

this participation, joining advocates who demand a VDER structure that is fair, easy to understand, and expands local solar to Disadvantaged Communities.

Impact:
Reforming VDER to adequately compensate local solar yields an expanding local solar economy that can meet urgent needs around affordability, resiliency, and reduced pollution.

Looking Forward: Longer-Term Strategies for Energy Affordability

The above represent concrete actions that Mayor Mamdani can take in the short term to deliver on his vision of an affordable and resilient city. In addition, there are several longer-term programmatic and policy issues that we look forward to working on with this administration to ensure that the City's decarbonization journey is equitable and comprehensively addresses intersecting issues of economic and housing justice, tenants' rights, and criminal justice.

1. Public Solar NYC

There are several challenges to rooftop solar adoption in NYC, including upfront cost barriers and expensive roof upgrades needed for installation. This is particularly true for low-income homeowners, small businesses, and environmental justice communities. Former Comptroller Lander's proposed Public Solar NYC program sought to leverage innovative municipal financing structures to build 600 megawatts of rooftop solar on small- and mid-sized roofs, creating thousands of jobs in the process. While the cancellation of the federal Solar for All grants has temporarily derailed the deployment of Public Solar NYC, we encourage the Mayor and his team to find alternative funding mechanisms for this program and to continue to build out this creative, equitable solution to deploying high-barrier renewables and generating meaningful cost-savings to our most energy-burdened communities.

2. Multifamily Building Upgrades: Protecting Tenants and Climate

Multifamily buildings in NYC face significant barriers to upgrading and decarbonizing, including steep upfront costs, inflexible financing, complex long-term capital planning, and the need to address long-standing health and safety issues that directly affect tenants' quality of life. More funding—like the newly funded Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund Pilot—is urgently needed to subsidize health, safety, and deferred maintenance upgrades for both small and large multifamily buildings, making them electrification-ready and removing a major barrier to decarbonization. At the same time, the city must hold landlords accountable for basic habitability, including heat, cooling, and maintenance, and ensure strong tenant protections through tools like the newly reinstated Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants. We urge the Mayor to work with housing, climate justice, and tenant advocacy groups, city agencies, and housing providers to create ambitious and accessible programs that improve multifamily building

conditions and deliver a better quality of life for residents while helping them undertake a decarbonization journey.

3. Renewable Rikers

Rikers Island remains a moral stain on this City and is rife with human rights abuses. As part of the legally mandated plan to close its facilities for good, the Renewable Rikers plan (enacted by City law in 2021) maps out a vision for its transformation into a renewables hub and a vehicle for environmental justice. The previous administration missed all of its deadlines to transfer ownership of Rikers Island to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to facilitate the development of renewables in place of decrepit jails. While the Mamdani administration works to expedite the closure of Rikers and make up for lost time on shrinking the population, we urge it to also make these land transfers a priority as facilities go unused. The vision of the Renewable Rikers legislation is essential for NYC to meet its climate commitments.