# Calif. city requires solar on all new homes, businesses

**Anne C. Mulkern, Environment & Energy Publishing, 4-28-16**

All new homes and businesses in Santa Monica, Calif., must have solar power, its City Council voted this week.

The panel Tuesday approved the ordinance, which takes effect 30 days after the vote.

The ordinance will be the third solar mandate in the country, with all three cities requiring it located in California. Lancaster, in Los Angeles County, headed by a GOP mayor, was the first in the nation to mandate solar followed by Sebastopol in Sonoma County in 2013. San Francisco recently adopted a solar mandate, but it won't take force until January 2017.

"In Santa Monica we are moving away from buildings powered by fossil fuels in favor of clean and cost-effective solar energy," Dean Kubani, Santa Monica's sustainability manager, said in a statement. "This is not only the smart thing to do, it is also imperative if we are to protect our kids and grandkids from the worst effects of climate change."

Under the rule, new single-family homes must install a solar electric photovoltaic (PV) system with a minimum total wattage of 1.5 watts per square foot. For example, a 2,000-square-foot home must have a 3-kilowatt system.

Multifamily dwellings, nonresidential buildings, hotels and motels must add a PV system with at least 2 watts per square foot of building footprint. Under that policy, a four-story, 10,000-square-foot building needs a 20-kW system.

The requirement was estimated to increase upfront construction costs by 2.8 percent on average for a single-family home, while reducing long-term electricity costs 65 percent, the city said. For commercial buildings, the initial cost will rise 0.75 percent with an 11 percent energy savings.

"Santa Monica is entering summer in the midst of transformational developments to improve our great city," said Mayor Tony Vazquez. "Covering our new buildings with renewable energy helps us address the challenge of climate change while ensuring Santa Monica builds cost-effective, resilient properties that maintain value."