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## New York Introduces Unified Solar Permit to Cut Solar Costs

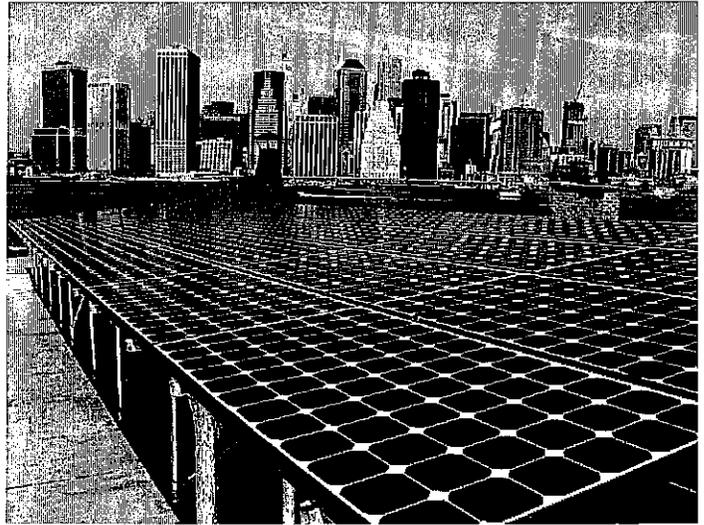
by Chris Meehan (/author/chris/) on 09/25/2013 (2013-09-25) in Photovoltaic Technology, Solar Cells, Solar Energy, Solar Panels, Solar Power, Solar Rebates

New York has introduced a new, standardized solar permitting process that municipalities across the state can adopt in an attempt to help reduce the soft costs of solar and increase the growth of the industry. New York may be the first state that offers a unified permitting process to its municipalities.

While the costs of photovoltaics (PV) have come down dramatically over the past few years as more manufacturers have entered and flooded the market with modules, the soft costs—permitting, inspection, lawyers, etc.—have largely remained static in much of the U.S. In turn, individual states, along with the Department of Energy (DOE), are looking for ways to reduce such costs. One of the best ways to do that is extend similar (and simpler) permitting processes (/news/permitting-processes-can-reduce-home-solar-costs-5-17-13/) over a large geographic area so that solar installers (/solar-power/tips-for-finding-the-right-installer/) don't have to know a myriad of different PV permitting processes and costs. New York, for instance, has about 1,550 municipalities each with their own solar permitting process—for now.

Other states across the nation are already developing a means of reducing permitting costs, like Colorado's Solar Friendly Communities (/news/lakewood-becomes-latest-community-to-achieve-solar-friendly-community-status/) or California's Southern California Rooftop Solar Challenge. Both of these programs are funded through the DOE's Rooftop Solar Challenge. Vermont takes another approach, where utility companies across the state are given just 10 days after a customer submits a proposal for a solar array (of 10 kilowatts or less) to voice any concerns regarding the proposed system.

New York's NYS Unified Solar Permit (<http://ny-sun.ny.gov/Local-Community-Tools>) is part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's NY-Sun initiative, which aims to quadruple the amount of solar capacity installed in New York in 2013, when compared to the amount added during 2011. The permit was designed through a partnership with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), New York Power Authority (NYPA) and City University of New York (CUNY).



The new unified permit was based on the permitting process designed by the Long Island Power Authority's (LIPA's) Long Island Unified Solar Permitting Initiative (LIUSPI) as well as the Solar America Board for Codes and Standards' national best practices.

"The unified solar permit is just one step Governor Cuomo is taking through the NY-Sun initiative to reduce the costs associated with solar installations beyond the actual module costs," said John Rhodes, president and CEO of NYSERDA. "This standardized permit is a win-win for everyone. Installers and municipalities can now share in a streamlined process."

NYPA president and CEO Gil Quiniones reiterated the enthusiasm. "The growth of the renewable energy market is a major priority of the governor and we look forward to additional steps, such as NYPA and NYSERDA's current push to streamline permitting for even larger commercial solar electric systems," Quiniones said.

Under the new unified solar permitting process in New York, municipalities that choose to participate are required to approve permits within 14 days of receiving them. While the statewide form doesn't set aside a price ceiling for the permit, the LIUSPI's solar permit fee was limited to \$50. To help municipalities across the state adopt the new unified solar permit, NYSERDA's Cleaner Greener Communities is offering up to \$5,000 to implementing towns and cities between now and September 2014—or until funds run out.

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