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Can You Say Solar?

California to Require Solar Power for All New Construction Homes

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A longtime leader in the clean energy space, California is proving that rooftop solar power is moving beyond a niche market and becoming the norm, while posing the question, “Is the future about to get brighter for California homeowners?”

In a recent 5-0 vote by the state’s Energy Commission earlier this month, California has become the first U.S. state to approve plans to require newly built homes to include solar equipment. Perhaps we will see more “Solar City” style roofs that Elon Musk is building (where the roof material is literally solar), or perhaps we will see less balconies and rooftop decks as more surface area is necessitated for more traditional style solar tiles.

Whatever the outcome may be, one thing is for certain: Whether you live in The Huntington or Marquez Knolls, expect the landscape of roof tops for new construction homes to start looking different.

The new policy applies to single-family homes and multi-family units that are three stories or less. There are some exceptions for homes that don’t get enough sunlight. The policy is set to take effect Jan. 1, 2020.

The move is California’s latest step aimed at reaching



One vision of the future of solar

Photos courtesy of Tesla

renewable energy targets and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. California has set a goal of filling half of its electricity needs with renewable energy by 2030.

The state adds about 80,000 new homes a year, and the California Solar & Storage Association estimates that currently about 15,000 include solar power. The Energy Commission says that the average home system uses 2.5 kilowatts to four kilowatts of panels, so the additional 65,000 new systems would add as much as 260 megawatts of annual demand in the state—about the size of one large solar farm.

Regarding home ownership, some critics argue that the new solar requirements will add thousands of dollars to the cost of homes as developers pass the costs onto the homebuyer, exacerbating the shortage of affordable housing, which is one of California’s most pressing issues.

And while this notion is true, on average costing \$9,500 in upfront costs for a single-family home, state officials and clean-energy advocates say the extra \$9,500 cost to home buyers will be more than made up in lower energy bills.

The Energy Commission predicts that homeowners will save at least \$19,000 in energy costs over 30 years. But more specifically, based on a 30-year mortgage, buyers of new homes on average would see monthly mortgage payments rise by \$40, while their monthly utility bills would decline by \$80.

While the notion of rising home costs poses an ever-present threat to homebuyers in all markets, in California’s coastal communities like the Palisades and Malibu, researchers like Issi Romem, chief economist at BuildZoom, suggested that the sharp rise in housing costs is mostly driven by rising land costs and said this is due to lo-

cal zoning that limits how many homes can be built in highly sought-after neighborhoods.

So, while proponents of the bill are convinced that they can look buyers in the eye and ensure they will get their money back, and aside from helping the environment, the more macro sense of the policy should promote emerging technology across the board, while creating more jobs ... may just be the right time to invest in some solar.

Trevor Zien is a sales partner with the Marguleas Team that has sold over \$1 billion in properties and was selected by the WSJ as one of the top 60 agents in the country out of one million agents. Zien can be reached on his cell at 310-403-8763 or trevor@amalfiestates.com.

