

FACT SHEET: PROPOSED BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION ORDINANCE

POLICY RATIONALE:

The term “building electrification” or “building decarbonization” refers to the process of phasing out gas infrastructure utilized for cooking and heating in buildings – which are powered by fossil fuels – and instead transitioning to the use of electricity – mainly powered by solar, wind and other sources of zero-carbon electricity.

The City of Riverside is currently the 12th largest City in California and the County seat to the third most populous County in California. There is a real opportunity for Riverside to lead the rest of the region, State, and Nation in implementing pragmatic and sensible climate policy. In addition, this branding will further efforts to leverage and establish a new green economy dynamic with Riverside at the forefront of green tech and climate innovation.

BENEFITS AND CO-BENEFITS:

To make a significant dent in our carbon emissions, proactive action is needed to transition the construction of new buildings away from fossil fuels. Without electrifying buildings and generating that electricity from renewable sources, neither California nor Riverside will reach its climate goal of being carbon neutral before 2045. While buildings today rely on a variety of different fuels, fossil fuels such as natural gas and propane are used to power furnaces, boilers, and water heaters. In the kitchen, fossil fuels are used to power stovetops and ovens. According to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, residential and commercial buildings account for 40% of carbon emissions nationwide, **gas appliances are responsible for over 50 million tons of GHG emissions annually.**¹

COST-EFFECTIVE FOR HOUSING: All-Electric buildings have been proven to be cost-effective for new construction for nearly all building types since most electric appliances have similar or lower operating costs compared to natural gas appliances. According to an Energy and Environmental Economics report commissioned by the California Energy Commission, **“building electrification is a lower-cost, lower-risk and longer-term strategy in comparison to “renewable natural gas”**²

MASSIVE PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFIT: Research from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health found that replacing all of California’s gas appliances with electric appliances **would prevent 900 cases of respiratory illnesses, lower health care costs by \$3.5 billion and save 350 lives every year.**³

CLEAN JOB CREATION AND JUST TRANSITION: Californians should not have to choose between economic prosperity and protecting our environment. A UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation Report about building decarbonization workforce needs and recommendations found that electrifying 100% of California’s existing and new buildings by 2045 **would create over 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs, even after accounting for losses in the fossil fuel industry.**⁴

¹ Environmental and Energy Study Institute – Buildings and Built Infrastructure

² E3 Report; “Future of Natural Gas in California”

³ UCLA Fielding School of Public Health; “Effects of Residential Gas Appliances on Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health in California”

⁴ UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation; “California Building Decarbonization: Workforce Needs and Recommendations”

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POLICY GOAL: Development of a comprehensive electrification ordinance that (1) requires by 2023 all new construction of three stories or less to be all electric, (2) that strengthens Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, and (3) that reasonably addresses and mitigates potential disruptions to the development and the job market.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE:

1. A local amendment to City Building Code (Title XX) and the California Building Standards Code to mandate that all-electric construction by 2023 to eliminate fossil fuel use in new low-rise projects, three stories or less.
2. An amendment to the building code and/or zoning code (Title 19) to strengthen and incentivize Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in new multi-family and mixed-use residential developments.
3. Actions to reasonably addresses and mitigate potential disruptions to the development and the job market.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

- **April 22, 2021** : Receive a presentation on supporting the City's goal of reaching carbon-neutrality by 2040 through an amendment to the Building Code and California Building Code (via a Reach Code) to establish all-electric requirements for new construction and provide direction regarding possible pathways for implementation.
- **April – September 2021:** Implement discovery, outreach, public education, and stakeholder engagement efforts, such as:
 - Formation of an informal standing Technical Advisory Committee made up of a diverse array of community stakeholders with the goal of informing the policy development process. The informal group will meet throughout the development of the ordinance and provide input on potential mitigation strategies.
 - Holding webinars, public meetings, and committee workshops to educate the public on the benefits and co-benefits of the transition to all-electric building.
- **October 2021:** Return ordinance framework informed to the committee for discussion and recommended forwarding to the City Council and Board of Public Utilities.
- **November:** Board of Public Utilities to hold meeting to provide input on the electrification ordinance framework and make recommendations to the City Council.
- **December 2021:** City Council to hold public hearing on electrification ordinance with recommendation for approval and forward of reach code to CEC.
- **January/February 2021:** California Energy Commission to post the reach code and accept comments for 60 days. At the regularly scheduled meeting closest to the end of the public comment period, the CEC will consider the reach code.