



Berkeley, CA Bans Natural Gas From New Buildings

When natural gas burns, it produces only CO₂ and water and is the cleanest of any hydrocarbon fuel. The city of Berkeley wrongly believes that CO₂ is a pollutant gas and therefore harms the environment. □ TN Editor

The Berkeley, CA City Council [unanimously voted](#) this week to ban natural gas infrastructure in new low-rise residential buildings, beginning Jan 1, 2020. The legislation also requires that all new buildings in Berkeley be “electric-ready,” with proper panels and wiring conduits to support electric infrastructure.

The natural gas ban does not apply to new industrial or commercial buildings, as the California Energy Commission (CEC) has not yet proven that it is cost-effective or plausible to make such buildings all-electric. “We’re doing this on a rolling basis as the CEC finds these things to be effective,” said Councilwoman Kate Harrison, who sponsored the bill. The law also does not apply to renovations.

The bill received unanimous public support during the city council meeting, particularly in comments from PG&E and Sierra Club, and members of the community. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) also praised the move [in a statement](#), noting, “cities are leading

the way to a clean energy future, providing hope and optimism in the face of increasingly dire climate disruption.”

During a city council presentation called, “Meeting the Climate Challenge in New Buildings,” Harrison outlined the impact green buildings have on local climate efforts. She noted natural gas is responsible for 27% of Berkeley’s overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and 73% of the city’s building sector GHGs. The city is also under pressure from a statewide goal to reduce GHG emissions from building stock by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.

“Every new building that we build in Berkeley locks in greenhouse gases for 100-plus years,” she said, noting methane leaks and other obstacles can increase the problem.

Harrison assured costs of electrification will be favorable for the city in the long-term. In [a 2018 report](#), the Rocky Mountain Institute found, “electrification of space and water heating and air conditioning reduces the homeowner’s costs over the lifetime of the appliances when compared with performing the same functions with fossil fuels.” Harrison also said PG&E will have significant increases in gas prices by 2020, which will be offset to customers.

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