FRONTRUNNER: CITY OF SANTA CRUZ

ADVANCING CLIMATE AND HEALTH & SAFETY GOALS VIA ELECTRIFICATION

OVERVIEW

Santa Cruz, a city of 65,000 residents nestled between the redwood forests of the Coast range and the Pacific Ocean, embodies a rich and varied history. Since the 1700s, the city has grown to become the county seat, home of UC Santa Cruz, birthplace of Californian surfing, and a world-famous city for beach culture. The city also boasts a strong commitment to sustainability and climate action.

THE PATH TO ELECTRIFICATION

In 2018, the Santa Cruz City Council adopted a Climate Emergency Resolution, followed by adoption of a Green New Deal resolution in 2019, aiming to accelerate action on aggressive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions throughout the city. In support of these resolutions, in the fall of 2019, City Council directed staff to explore options for building electrification policies and return with options for City Council to consider.

Staff conducted an extensive series of community outreach events, including workshops for the general community, developer roundtables, a city council study session, and coffee talks with trades professionals, vendors, designers, and builders. After compiling input from stakeholders and research on approaches, staff presented City Council with two options in February 2020. Option A proposed a prohibition on natural gas infrastructure in all new construction except for specific exemptions as part of the City’s municipal health and safety code. Option B focused on adding reach code provisions to the City’s Building Energy Code mandating electric-preferred infrastructure. After exploring the cost-effectiveness of each option as well as the projected emissions reductions from each approach, the City Council determined that a natural gas prohibition in new construction offered more potential to produce greater results for the City.



The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk has been in continuous operation since 1907 and is home to two National Historic Landmarks – the 1911 Looff Carousel and 1924 Giant Dipper wooden roller coaster. The entire property is also a State Historic Landmark.

On April 14, 2020, the Santa Cruz City Council approved the ordinance, prohibiting natural gas infrastructure in all newly constructed buildings with five exemptions:

- Buildings that serve the public interest
- Buildings in which the permit applicant establishes that it is not physically feasible to construct the building without Natural Gas Infrastructure
- Restaurants, where the scope of the exemption extends to the preparation of food only, not HVAC, or water heating appliances
- Facility employing industrial process heat, certified by affidavit of either a Registered Design Professional or a Licensed Mechanical or Electrical Contractor. The scope of the exemption extends to process equipment only, not HVAC or water heating appliances
- Detached newly constructed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ≤ 750 ft^2 on a parcel with an existing residential structure with existing natural gas infrastructure

Buildings that earn exemption are still required to pre-wire for future electric upgrades.

The City collaborated with a range of resources and organizations throughout the ordinance development and adoption process, including colleagues from other jurisdictions implementing electrification ordinances and natural gas infrastructure prohibitions, the statewide reach codes team, consultants and other experts in cost-effectiveness and valuation research and the City's Community Choice Energy agency, Monterey Bay Community Power (now known as Central Coast Community Energy or 3CE).



The City has a strong commitment to sustainability and climate action, having adopted a climate emergency resolution in 2018.

Facilitating the Transition to Electrification

To ease the transition, the ordinance provides for staggered effective dates. For projects involving design permits, the effective date was July 1, 2020 while the effective date for all other project permits was 120 days later.

In addition, 3CE is supporting this transition by offering all-electric building grants to incentivize developers to build new, all-electric multi-unit dwellings.

“The City is collaborating with a range of partners to ensure successful implementation of the natural gas infrastructure prohibition ordinance,” notes Kurt Hurley, Green Building Specialist for the City of Santa Cruz. “This includes close collaboration with project teams offering guidance and grid-friendly best practices for all-electric design as well as continuing outreach and educational efforts more generally.”

RESOURCES

City of Santa Cruz documents are available here:

Ordinance: https://localenergycodes.com/download/435/local_government_adoption_ordinance/fieldList/Santa%20Cruz%202019%20-%20Ordinance%202020-06.PDF

Staff Report: https://localenergycodes.com/download/435/local_government_adoption_staff_report/fieldList/SantaCruz-Staff-2020-03-24.pdf

Greenhouse Gas Reduction through Building Electrification & Building Electrification Resources:

https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/planning-and-community-development/long-range-policy-planning/ordinance-policy-updates

OTHER FRONTRUNNERS

City of San Rafael Pursues Collaboration in its Development and Adoption of a Flex Path Residential Reach Code City of Cotati City of San Luis Obispo

Archives