

## Comment to the Building Electrification Subcommittee Presentation

Angelo De Giuli <angelo.g.degiuli@gmail.com>

Tue 8/13/2024 9:11 PM

To:Public Comment - EC <ECpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>

Cc:City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>

From: Angelo De Giuli -- 1816 Granger Avenue, Los Altos

To: City of Los Altos ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Cc: CITY COUNCIL

Comment to the Building Electrification Subcommittee Presentation

I have been a resident of Los Altos since 1999, and I deeply appreciate our town, with its proximity to the hills and temperate weather. However, I am increasingly alarmed by the trend of drier winters and hotter summers. Science clearly shows that this trend is driven by human activity, and if left unchecked, it will have dramatic impacts on our environment and quality of life here in Los Altos, as well as even more devastating effects in other parts of the world. Ultimately, this could threaten the survival of humanity.

CO2 and natural gas emissions from human activities are major drivers of these life-threatening changes, and in California, the building sector is a significant contributor to these emissions. For this reason, I strongly support the commission's focus on accelerating building electrification.

I have carefully reviewed the presentation. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting in person, so I am sending this letter to express my full agreement with the strategy and my wholehearted support for the recommendations. I hope this is just the first step and that in the future, the City of Los Altos will take even bolder actions to address the climate crisis and set a national example of what can and should be done. Los Altos is a wealthy and educated community; if we cannot lead the way, who can?

Sincerely,

Angelo De Giuli

## comments from Bob Mayo

Robert Mayo <bob.mayo@gmail.com>

Tue 8/13/2024 12:48 PM

To:Public Comment - EC <ECpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>;Gabriel Engeland <gengeland@losaltosca.gov>;City Council <council@losaltosca.gov>

Cc:Connie Miller <cmiller1119@gmail.com>

Dear Environmental Commission,

I have reviewed the meeting slides for this Wednesday's meeting of the Environmental Commission, including the **strategy for accelerating building electrification** in Los Altos. **I commend you** for producing a thoughtful strategy. Each of these actions support the other ones, so **I encourage you to adopt all of them, as a whole.**

Anecdotally, my experiences with both Quit Carbon and, to a small extent, Onsemble have been positive, making them strong choices in my view. Is it possible to choose more than one? Allowing two organizations to compete could be beneficial, offering Los Altos both an experienced home electrifier like Quit Carbon and an innovative, app-based water heater concierge like Onsemble. Also, rebates are a hassle for consumers, so vendors that can provide help with them should be preferred.

To supplement the actions shown in your presentation slides, Connie Miller, of GreenTown Los Altos, and I have developed a list of other actions the city could take if they wish. These are mostly drawn from other sources, shown in the references section at the end of this message, but they also include some ideas of our own. I hope you can review the list and consider these additional actions for Los Altos.

--Bob

Bob Mayo

# Building Electrification Options for Los Altos

## Ordinances & Policies

City ordinances can accelerate heat pump water heater adoption as well as other types of building electrification.

1. A Prewiring Ordinance. This requires electrical wiring to be added for future electric appliances when a house is remodeled. It does not prohibit the use of gas appliances. The city would need to decide on when the code is triggered; for example, if 30% or 50% of the house is remodeled, or if the room that contains a gas appliance is remodeled. Such an ordinance can stop short of requiring an electrical panel upgrade, for example by having the wires terminate in a stub in the panel. There are many options. For heat pump water heaters, allocate sufficient space for the larger space needed and as possible. Resources for cities: Tony Eulo at SVCE, prewiring ordinances at other cities, and also see the existing buildings section at [bayareareachcodes.org](http://bayareareachcodes.org)
2. Require air conditioning (AC) to heat pump conversions at time of AC unit replacement. This type of ordinance usually lets the furnace stay, so the ordinance requires very little of the homeowner other than an additional cost of \$1,000 to 2,000. In exchange, they get both cooling and heat, and the furnace can be set to kick on at very low temperatures if they wish. Contact SVCE for possible model ordinance or discussion.
3. Require the architect and homeowner to sign a disclosure when pulling a permit, that warns them of the hazards of natural gas pipes and appliances and that they are being phased out at the State level, and that assets installed today may be obsolete in the future.
4. Implement all building electrification measures listed in SVCE's "Permit Modernization and Building Decarbonization Policy Presentation". <https://tinyurl.com/ccl-svce-permit>

## Leadership

Cities can declare their positions and practice what they preach.

5. Demonstrate leadership by joining Rewiring America's Local Government Leaders for Electrification and taking their pledge. <https://www.rewiringamerica.org/local-gov-leaders-for-electrification>
6. Strengthen the Climate Action Plan by adding building electrification goals and funding programs to meet those goals.
7. Support SVCE's efforts, including by having the city's board representative vote in favor of building electrification programs.
8. Convert municipal buildings to be electric. Show preparation for the BAAQMD ruling by replacing all smaller city-owned gas water heaters, those under 75,000 BTU or 80 gallons, with heat pump water heaters. Maximize exposure with signage and possibly tours or events.
9. Work with other cities to introduce a state bill allowing individual cities to tax natural gas at a different rate than electricity. CCL folks will suggest the two fuels should each be taxed according to their carbon intensity.

## Permitting

Eliminate barriers to adoption to encourage behavior without mandates.

10. Modernize and streamline permitting. Allow instant online permitting of heat pump water heaters without plan review, and with automatic approval. There's SVCE money for modernizing permitting, and they have a list of specific actions a city can take. Optimize permitting even for the most difficult case: emergency replacement of a gas water heater with a heat pump water heater, using a gas loaner for 6 weeks while electrical and other work is done.
11. Reduce or eliminate permitting fees for heat pump water heaters. (see Half Moon Bay) This is not necessarily lost revenue, as most current gas water heater replacements do not pull a permit.
12. Ensure that building inspectors aren't unintentionally adding additional requirements on top of the manufacturer's specifications. Make sure building inspectors understand the new 120V shared-circuit models, as well understand that there is a wide variation of space requirements for models, including some designed to require little space.
13. Record in the permit system the type of water heater installed (gas, propane, resistance, heat pump).
14. Provide a method of inspection more streamlined than a typical inspection.
15. Hand out a gas disclosure booklet with all permits.

## Outreach

Creating awareness and educating homeowners is a key to increasing building electrification.

16. Change the name of the EV Fair to Electrification Fair, expanding its scope.
17. Use posters, mailers, point-of-sale displays, newsletters, and the city website to promote heat pump water heaters.
18. Help contractors advertise. Create a venue. Ex: Electrification Fair, pilot co-marketing with top vendors who serve Los Altos.
19. Sponsor a block-level outreach trial, as a setup for upcoming neighborhood decarbonization programs. Goal would be to fine-tune programs to get as many residents as possible, in that particular block, to adopt electric appliances. Track some sort of metric and learn over time.

## Water Heater Programs

20. Support community-based non-profits with marketing dollars for heat pump water heater campaigns.
21. Support community-based non-profits by endorsing their efforts. City endorsement builds trust, making community-based heat pump water heater campaigns more successful.
22. Offer city rebates for heat pump water heaters.
23. Sponsor showrooms for showing off heat pump water heaters, including the ability to listen to them to assess sound levels. Might be part of a city building. Can be done in conjunction with GTLA.

## References

- SVCE Permit Modernization and Building Decarbonization Policy Presentation: <https://tinyurl.com/ccl-svce-permit>
- Code Red: Preparing Cities and Counties for BAAQMD Zero Emissions Rules: <https://acterra.org/advocacy/code-red/>
- SPUR: A toolbox for transitioning to zero-pollution heating equipment: <https://www.spur.org/publications/policy-brief/2024-05-01/fossil-free-heat>