

June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022



Marin County Board of Supervisors  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 329  
San Rafael, CA 94903

*Via email: BOS@marincounty.org*

**Re: Support for a Model Building Electrification Ordinance and a Coordinated Effort by Marin County and its Towns, Cities and Agencies to Accelerate Building Electrification**

Dear Supervisors:

Marin Conservation League supports a robust coordinated effort by Marin County and its towns, cities, and agencies to accelerate building electrification. As the Marin County Grand Jury noted in its June 6, 2022 report, *Electrifying Marin's Buildings: A Countywide Approach*, "...[t]he timely reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from Marin County's building sector will require in-depth, comprehensive and coordinated planning." It's critical that Marin jurisdictions now enact a model ordinance that requires that all new buildings be all-electric, strongly incentivizes electric space and water heating in major renovations, and puts Marin firmly on track to accelerate electrification of existing buildings and eliminate installations of gas appliances altogether by 2035.

Why is this important? It will 1) reduce public health and safety risks, 2) avoid stranded assets and exposure to rising fossil fuel prices, and 3) combat climate change.

### **Reduce Public Health and Safety Risks**

Methane, a potent greenhouse gas (GHG) is the principal component of natural gas. It also poses numerous health and safety risks. Eliminating natural gas use in buildings reduces a major fire risk following earthquakes and removes a very dangerous combustion source for structure fires and explosions. Ending natural gas appliance use eliminates their release of toxic combustion byproducts into our homes and businesses that have long term health impacts, especially for children and the elderly. These toxic byproducts include carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon dioxide, formaldehyde, and fine particulate matter. Health impacts include much higher rates of asthma in children.

### **Avoid Stranded Assets and Exposure to Rising Fossil Fuel Prices**

Since underground gas piping installed today will last 30-50 years, this infrastructure will become obsolete well before the end of its useful life, representing a wasteful cost that will be passed on to ratepayers in our utility bills. Buildings typically last more than 50 years and if constructed with gas

175 N. Redwood Dr., Ste. 135, San Rafael, CA 94903 | 415.485.6257 |  
mcl@marinconservationleague.org

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infrastructure those buildings will need to be retrofitted as society moves to phase out natural gas. PG&E acknowledges that we are moving toward all-electric buildings and supports that shift, including phasing out current CPUC subsidies for gas lines and appliances in new residential construction.

All-electric new buildings, by avoiding the cost of installing exterior and interior gas piping, have lower capital costs than identical new buildings with both gas and electricity. They also will likely have lower energy costs, as prices for natural gas have risen sharply during the past year and are forecast to remain high in the future.

## Combat Climate Change

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report makes it clear that we must accelerate the reduction in our GHG emissions if we are to meet our climate goals. Approximately 25 percent of California's GHG emissions, and 34 percent of Marin emissions, come from the buildings in which we live and work. While the normal operation of gas appliances produces carbon dioxide, the methane in natural gas is a much more potent GHG than carbon dioxide and significant leakage of methane directly to the atmosphere occurs during its production, distribution, storage, and even its use inside our buildings. With this leakage, natural gas is nearly as dirty a fuel as coal.

## What Can Marin County Do?

1. Stop adding more natural gas infrastructure immediately by enacting an ordinance mandating that **new residential and commercial construction** be all-electric. Marin already is seeing applications for thousands of new units to address the affordable housing crisis and to meet our Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirements. A county ordinance should be a model for Marin's towns and cities, so we have uniform standards that are easier for the construction industry to understand and follow.
2. Enact ordinances countywide that require or strongly encourage a shift now from gas to electrical appliances during **significant building renovations**, as much of the construction in Marin takes the form of renovating existing structures. Space and hot water heaters have a useful life of 10-20 years and we must avoid locking in their emissions for that period of time. Because significant renovation projects frequently already involve upgrades to electrical panels and wiring, changing to electrical appliances as part of a renovation will not involve significant additional costs for those upgrades.
3. Complete a countywide Building Electrification Plan by July 1, 2023 to accelerate the electrification of our **existing buildings**, similar to a recommendation made by the recent Marin Civil Grand Jury report. A coalition of stakeholders collaborating on the plan should include: MCE Clean Energy, PG&E, local jurisdiction stakeholders, building societies, labor unions, and community/environmental advocacy groups. This plan should address single family and multi-family residences as well as commercial buildings, include strategies to

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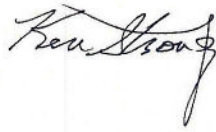
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make sure building electrification takes place in an equitable manner, and contain strong incentives to replace old gas space and water heaters with high efficiency heat pump space and water heaters, on or before completion of their life cycle.

Sincerely,



Robert Miller  
President  
MCL  
Chair, MCL Climate  
Working Group



Ken Strong  
MCL Member  
Climate Action Working Group



William Carney  
MCL Member  
Climate Action Working Group

cc: Brian Reyes, Sustainability Planner, Marin County Community Development Agency  
[breyes@marincounty.org](mailto:breyes@marincounty.org)  
Cory Bytof, Sustainability Program Manager, City of San Rafael  
[Cory.Bytof@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Cory.Bytof@cityofsanrafael.org)  
Gretchen Shubeck, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Novato [gschubeck@novato.org](mailto:gschubeck@novato.org)  
Sean Youra, Climate Action Coordinator [syoura@townoffairfax.org](mailto:syoura@townoffairfax.org)  
Dana Armanino, Sustainability Principal Planner, Marin County Community Development  
Agency [DArmanino@marincounty.org](mailto:DArmanino@marincounty.org)

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