



CITY OF MENLO PARK ADVANCES CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GOALS WITH NEW BUILDING AMENDMENTS

Menlo Park leads California cities with adoption of comprehensive building electrification reach code package

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2025

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Menlo Park, CA – Last week, after years of support and public education by the local environmental group, Menlo Spark, and many other environmental organizations, the Menlo Park City Council [voted 4-1 in favor of adopting three local building code amendments](#), otherwise known as Reach Codes. Menlo Park became one of the first cities in the nation to adopt this combination of standards as an approach to electrify existing buildings and phase out gas appliances. Despite recent California legislation restricting municipal adoption of Reach Codes for the next six years and a major backsliding on climate action at the federal level, Menlo Park shows how medium and small-sized cities can still take powerful action to meet their climate and environmental justice goals.

Reach Codes are additional policies adopted by cities to improve the state building code. These voluntary policies “reach” beyond the state’s base code to support the electrification of existing buildings, a major source of methane gas emissions in Menlo Park and across California. In Menlo Park, replacing methane gas appliances with electric appliances means replacing dirty gas energy that generates hazardous chemicals like nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide with 100% carbon-free clean energy that doesn't pollute our air.

The August 26th City Council meeting was the final hearing for the reach codes first approved by the council on August 12th. These approved codes went through two public engagement workshops for community feedback and were reviewed and recommended by the citizen-led Environmental Quality Commission.

“As a Menlo Park City Councilmember, I'm excited to support this package of energy- and climate-saving reforms. All the hard work by Menlo Spark, city staff, and a coalition of environmental organizations and residents has put Menlo Park at the cutting edge of environmental and climate policies in our country. This dedicated group of climate champions has done a great job of bringing together the information and community support needed to make this change happen and has helped our city make significant strides towards an ambitious

goal of climate neutrality by 2030. – **Jeff Schmidt, District 3 City Councilmember, Menlo Park**

“I am proud to support Menlo Park’s building code amendments to promote the sustainable future our community deserves. Our amendments encourage electrification and energy efficiency as residents upgrade their homes. This thoughtful approach saves our community from costly retrofits later and can be done with incentives available from the City and Peninsula Clean Energy.” – **Betsy Nash, Vice Mayor, Menlo Park**

“With the passage of these new policies, the City of Menlo Park has taken a meaningful leadership role in reducing air quality pollution inside and outside of city buildings. Chemicals released from burning methane gas, like nitrogen dioxides, have been scientifically linked to increases in asthma and other respiratory disease, cardiac disease, and other serious health problems, especially in young children. May other cities throughout California follow our lead to reduce climate pollution and protect public health for all.” – **Angela Evans, Program Director, Menlo Spark**

The three reach codes recommended by city staff and voted on by council include “pre-wiring,” air conditioning to heat pump, and “flex path.” “Pre-wiring” helps facilitate future electrification, and the “flex path” program requires manageable environmental upgrades for home remodels when total costs exceed \$100,000. Air conditioning to heat pump (AC2HP) requires, with exceptions, installing a heat pump that cools and heats using clean energy when an air conditioner needs replacing. This code is particularly significant because heat pumps are 3-4 times more efficient than traditional air conditioners, resulting in substantial savings for users. Recent 2025 studies by the [Rocky Mountain Institute](#) and [Peninsula Clean Energy](#) show that average residents and renters save \$20-\$30 monthly on utility bills after adopting heat pumps. These savings are even greater for residents enrolled in the state’s CARE/FERA programs, which offer deeper discounts on electric bills than on gas bills for income-qualifying households.

City staff and city council members worked to make these reach codes accessible and affordable for all residents by including key exceptions for people whom any of the requirements would prove a financial burden. However, the cost savings and health benefits resulting from these local building amendments apply to all.

As the federal government retreats from climate regulations, Menlo Park’s communities face increased risks from the consequences of greenhouse gas emissions. Among these are extreme heat, wildfires, and flooding. The adoption of these reach codes represents an action that cities across California and the nation can take to reduce these gas emissions and fill the gaps left by state and federal legislators to ensure a healthier Menlo Park.

“Menlo Spark supports the new policies enacted by the City of Menlo Park, and more broadly the upcoming plans by the Bay Area Air District to gradually phase out polluting, climate-destroying gas water heaters. The actions by the city and the air district support each other. The lungs we save are our own – and, the lungs of the planet.” – **Brian Schmidt, Executive Director, Menlo Spark**

About Menlo Spark:

Menlo Spark is a nonprofit initiative that collaborates with the city government, businesses, and residents to ensure the success of the community’s efforts on climate and sustainability-related issues. By helping to weave together the network of projects and initiatives in the city that may

contribute to sustainability, Menlo Spark supports a more unified strategy for progress towards the ultimate goal of climate neutrality.