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From: Jan Alderton <janetmalderton@gmail.com>
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Eugene Becomes First City In Oregon To Ban Natural Gas



By
[Joe Wachunas](#)

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“The power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.” — John Maynard Keynes

The city of Eugene, Oregon, is on the world’s radar for two reasons these days. First, it lived up to its nickname as “Tracktown USA” and became the first city in the US to host the World Athletics Championships (track and field’s biggest event besides the Olympics) this July.

Second, and perhaps more importantly to *CleanTechnica* readers, it became the first city in the state of Oregon to ban natural gas in new buildings.

Eugene City Council, after months of deliberation and while sweltering under another abnormal Northwest summer in the triple digits, voted 5-3 this Wednesday to do three things: 1) mandate that all new homes be constructed 100% electric by June 1, 2023 2) advance conversations to transition new commercial and industrial construction to require all electric 3) direct the City Manager to formalize Eugene's goal of electrifying all existing residential and commercial buildings by 2035.

Eugene's move follows the national, city-led movement to eliminate fossil gas from buildings. It all started a short 3 summers ago in 2019 when Berkley, California, voted to prohibit new gas infrastructure. Now 60 cities in California alone have followed suit. The movement has spread to the nation's largest city New York, and has been embraced by the State of Washington and cities like Denver.

Fighting against the idea of a decarbonized electric city powered by renewable energy (Eugene has some of the cleanest electricity in the nation with no fossil fuels) were the entrenched interests of gas giant NW Natural. The company took out full page ads in the Eugene Register Guard warning consumers about losing their "choice" in having fossil gas in their homes while raising gas rates by up to 25%, to pay for all this advertising (along with executive bonuses).

Getting banned is an existential threat for NW Natural whose business model relies entirely on the sale of methane (unlike some other investor-owned utilities that supply both electricity and gas). The company is promising hydrogen and renewable natural gas to decarbonize its molecules but both have enormous technical challenges and are currently in "pilot project phase" while electrified homes in Eugene run on 100% fossil fuel-free electricity today.



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No more of these bad boys in Eugene. Image courtesy of [Joe Wachunas](#)

As an unabashed electrification advocate who volunteers for the organization [Electrify Now](#), I want to thank the Eugene city council for giving us a small, rare piece of good news as much of the Northern Hemisphere bakes in a scary, 418 ppm climate oven. The council overcame the old adage which declares, "No city wants to be first," and set an example of how to decarbonize for the rest of Oregon, the Northwest and the nation to follow.

[Related: Breaking News! Oakland & Seattle Ban Natural Gas As Cities Continue To Lead On Electrification](#)