

San Jose, CA to become largest US city to ban natural gas

Katie Pyzyk | Sept. 19, 2019



Dive Brief:

- San Jose, CA Mayor Sam Liccardo and other city council members approved a [proposal](#) to prohibit natural gas infrastructure from being installed in many new residential buildings. The measure covers single family homes, accessory dwelling units and low-rise multi-family buildings.
- The ordinance would require all new multi-family buildings to have 70% electric vehicle (EV) capable parking spaces, at least 20% EV ready spaces and at least 10% EV supply equipment spaces.
- A final ordinance is expected to be approved in October, going into effect on January 1. The council's intention is to expand the ban to include more buildings, and it has requested check-ins from city staff over the next several months with recommendations for the expansion, a mayor's office spokesperson told Smart Cities Dive. They are also examining offsetting the cost of solar and battery storage installations in affordable housing.

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Dive Insight:

San Jose's ban comes just after Berkeley, CA passed a natural gas ban that will also take effect on January 1. San Jose is the largest city to advance this type of ordinance. It aims to reduce emissions from buildings, which are considered the largest emissions producers along with transportation.

[Other U.S. cities](#) also are pushing for greater building electrification to get away from fossil fuel use. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan proposed a [tax on heating oil providers](#) to help 3,000 homes transition from oil to electric heat. This spring, San Francisco Mayor London Breed [proposed a plan](#) to transition buildings over 50,000 square feet to 100% renewable energy by 2030. That occurred just after Chicago became the largest U.S. city to [commit](#) to 100% renewable energy use by 2035.

A number of climate and environmental advocacy groups, including the Sierra Club, are in favor of San Jose's move.

"As gas companies and their shady front groups continue to use sketchy tactics to hold communities back from realizing their clean energy realities, leaders in over 50 California cities are moving ahead on similar strategies to end their reliance on gas in their homes and businesses," said Matt Gough, senior campaign representative for the Sierra Club's My Generation campaign.

But opponents of natural gas bans warn that these moves could harm citizens because natural gas provides a lower priced, more efficient type of energy.

"We are saddened and disappointed that several city councils are considering action to ban the use of natural gas ... Unfortunately, across the country, there is a growing effort to move communities to a single source all-electric model, eliminating clean, resilient natural gas. These 'all eggs in one basket' policy proposals are shortsighted, untested and eliminate the ability for consumers to decide what is best for their families," said Dave Schryver, executive vice president of the American Public Gas Association, in a [statement](#).

San Jose leaders contend the ban will provide consumers cost savings in the long run, in addition to improving their health and the environment.

The natural gas ban advanced in part from [funding from the](#) Bloomberg Philanthropies' American Cities Climate Challenge, the mayor's office spokesperson said. It was the largest environmental grant San Jose had ever received. The Natural Resources Defense Council also worked with San Jose on its electrification plan.

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