

# The Register-Guard

## NEWS

# Eugene bans natural gas, other fossil fuel infrastructure in some new residential buildings



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Eugene has banned natural gas and other fossil fuel infrastructure in new homes, townhouses and other residential structures no taller than three stories.

City councilors voted 5-3 Monday night to pass an ordinance that will apply to building permit applications submitted on or after June 30, 2023. They've cited concerns about climate change and public health during several years of discussions about decarbonization and electrification.

The vote came after the council rejected a move to place the ordinance on the May ballot.

Councilor Emily Semple, who made the motion to approve the ordinance, said it was “time to pass this and not make any more to do about it and get on with the rest of the package and the other things we need to deal with.”

Other officials worried the move, which was not originally on the agenda for Monday night's special meeting, will lead to problems.

“I really hope this doesn't blow up in our faces, but I have a sneaking suspicion it will and set us backward instead of forward,” said Councilor Alan Zelenka, who made a failed motion to postpone the vote but ultimately supported the ordinance.

Councilor Mike Clark, who voted against the ordinance, said its passage will divide people more than they already are on the issue. Clark had pushed for putting the ban into a ballot measure after the proposed ordinance drew hours of testimony in a public hearing that went so long officials had to continue it to a second meeting.

Those in support framed their arguments around health and the community.

People opposing the ordinance focused on energy choice, security and pragmatism. They also argued the council should let residents decide through a ballot measure.

## What does the ordinance do?

The ordinance prohibits fossil fuel infrastructure in new low-rise residential buildings. It takes effect for building permits submitted on or after June 30, 2023.

It defines fossil fuel infrastructure as “natural gas piping, fuel oil piping, or other fossil fuel piping or conveyance system within a building, that connects a source of supply to a fossil-fuel burning appliance.”

Low-rise residential buildings are ones no taller than three stories with one or more permanent dwelling units, including:

- Detached one- and two-family houses

- Attached single family dwellings (townhouses)

- Manufactured homes

- Multi-family residential buildings

The ordinance would not include mixed-used buildings where there are both retail and residential uses.

It does not include existing low-rise residential buildings.

*This story will be updated.*

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