

San José Reach Code Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: Do all-electric buildings cost more?

A: In most cases, all-electric buildings are less costly to build. The service and piping for natural gas is an expense that is often ignored when comparing the cost of gas and electric equipment. An all-electric building starts without that expense, so even when electric equipment might be more expensive in some cases than its natural gas counterparts, that cost is offset by the gas infrastructure savings.

2. Q: Would the electric vehicle charging infrastructure requirements be the same for all building types?

A: The requirements can be tailored for different building types to respond to the different charging needs of home, work, and visiting usage patterns. It can also be tailored to different densities (e.g., high-rise vs low-rise multifamily) so that the requirement is appropriate for the situation.

3. Q: How would the reach code promote more solar PV installations in San José?

A: There are a number of options to further solar PV in non-residential new construction, since the 2019 CA building code will already further solar in residential new construction, including:

- Requiring solar readiness for all buildings, not just those required in Title 24
- Requiring solar installations on all buildings (where feasible) either as part of meeting Title 24 or in addition to Title 24
- Requiring greater efficiency, which will encourage the use of PV to meet efficiency requirements

4. Q: How would the reach code apply to building types that may have components that are more difficult to electrify, such as central water heating in high-rise multi-family?

A: The City is considering whether to propose different reach code options for these situations (high hot water loads like multi-family, commercial kitchens, etc.) that will encourage electrification, but will still be feasible for all projects.

5. Q: Would the reach code apply to existing buildings?

A: The reach code is meant for new construction. However, the development process is considering ways to reasonably expand applicability to some additions and/or alterations. This may be a direction that the reach code can go in the future.

6. Q: Would there be any incentives outside of the reach code to encourage electrification?

A: Several incentives for EV charging infrastructure and solar already exist. More incentives are expected to be offered, including for building electrification, within the next 1-2 years based on State funding priorities. The City will also evaluate incentive programs for future retrofit programs for existing buildings and electric vehicle charging infrastructure but incentives for new construction are not viewed as a priority at this time due to the lower construction costs for all-electric.

7. Q: How would the reach code impact affordable housing projects?

A: The reach code is structured so that an all-electric project would only need to meet Title 24, so these projects would be no more costly than without a reach code. Additionally, most projects are less costly to construct as all-electric buildings. Projects that choose to continue to use natural gas would be more efficient than they would be under Title 24, due to added efficiency requirements being considered for mixed fuel buildings, which would actually increase affordability for tenants as it would reduce monthly energy bills from a non-reach code project. In addition, a reach code around electric vehicle charging infrastructure would encourage EVs which can be operated at a lower cost than standard vehicles.

8. Q: How would the reach code impact the electric grid?

A: The reach code will result in some loads being shifted from the natural gas infrastructure to the electric grid. This may have a future impact on the capacity needs of the grid at some point in the future.