



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

20-0145

Agenda Date: 2/27/2020

2020 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

CDD 20-04

TITLE Encourage Decarbonization Readiness During Electrical Upgrades

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Community Development Department

Support Departments: Office of the City Manager
Office of the City Attorney
Environmental Services Department

Sponsor: Board/Commission: Sustainability Commission

History: 1 year ago: N/A
2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What precipitated this Study?

The Sustainability Commission has identified an opportunity to increase ease of replacing gas appliances with electric appliances in existing buildings through early education and corresponding earlier upgrades in electrical systems. In existing buildings, replacing gas appliances with electric appliances may require the property owner to upgrade their existing electrical systems, including electrical panels, wiring, and conduits, which can be expensive and time-consuming. Educating property owners or incentivizing options for upgrading electrical systems at the point of remodeling, when they apply for building permits, may enable an easier switch to electrical appliances in the future.

What are the key elements of the Study?

This Study would evaluate what steps and resources the City would take to implement education, incentives, and policies to encourage the future electrification of gas appliances in existing residential or non-residential buildings. Study elements would include:

- Determining appropriate strategies and time points for educating owners on the benefits of switching to electrical appliances during building renovation or remodels,
- Examining policies to encourage the action of upsizing a building's electrical service panel during major upgrades to have sufficient size to accommodate a future all-electric building, and
- Identifying and consolidating information on available resources to facilitate ease of upgrades (e.g., logistical or design support) or incentives to offset costs (e.g., rebates).

Estimated years to complete study: 1 year

FISCAL IMPACT

Cost to Conduct Study

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate
Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs: \$0
Funding Source: N/A

Cost to Implement Study Results

Implementation costs would be determined as part of the Study.

EXPECTED CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OR COMMISSION PARTICIPATION

Council-Approved Work Plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Sustainability Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Drop. This policy issue does not merit discussion at the 2020 Study Issues Workshop.

The City recently adopted its updated climate action plan, called the Climate Action Playbook, which includes six major strategies needed to reduce GHG emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

With Strategy 2 (Decarbonizing Buildings), both existing and new buildings are addressed. Within this Strategy, Play 2.2 is to “Support electrification of existing buildings” and Move 2.C is to “Develop a program to accelerate the adoption of heat pump water heaters and space heaters.” Silicon Valley Clean Energy’s (SVCE) FutureFit pilot program currently offers rebates for upgrading to heat pump water heaters, including rebates for upgrading associated electrical systems. This pilot effort addresses the element of the proposed Study Issue focused on incentives.

Further, Strategy 5 of the Climate Action Playbook is Empowering our Community. Within it, Play 5.1 is to “Enhance community awareness and engagement” and Move 5.B is to “Evaluate opportunities for the City to provide online resources and tools for community and small business climate action (e.g., resource center for retrofit electrification, online tool or app to track individual carbon emissions).” In alignment with this Move, SVCE is developing a public-facing Customer Resource Center (CRC) that will allow customers to understand costs and benefits of newer all-electric technologies and to connect with vendors or installers for moving towards full electrification of existing buildings. Once the CRC is active, staff will evaluate how best to promote it as a resource, including at the One Stop Permit Center to prospective permit applicants. This addresses the element of the proposed Study Issue focused on education.

For these reasons, staff recommends dropping this Study Issue at this time. In addition, staff will consider whether a policy approach to encourage electrical upgrades for existing buildings may be appropriate as a Next Move in a subsequent CAP Game Plan.

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