

## An Open Letter to the Eugene Community

# NATURAL GAS BANS ARE NOT THE WAY FORWARD:

## Too much at stake. Too many unintended consequences.

We are representatives of a diverse set of stakeholders, including thousands of fellow Eugene residents who wake up each day to sweat the details on home ownership, home building and making sure you have the energy you need. While we come from different perspectives, we share a principled approach to thoughtful carbon reduction policies and believe in housing policies that ensure affordability, reliability and resiliency in the long run for the people we serve and represent.

That's why we're coming together today to call your attention to something that's as disappointing as it is surprising – a Eugene City Council work session on April 13 that could result in prohibiting natural gas and renewable natural gas in new homes and businesses.

It's disappointing because too many Eugene City Councilors have skipped the step of examining whether banning new gas hookups to homes and businesses is effective policy – instead, they're asking how to change the city code so a ban doesn't violate state law. So far, we haven't seen metrics or any study of consequences. We would expect a thoughtful policy analysis with carbon emissions reports, an affordability analysis for construction and operating costs, or at least an economic impact report. So far, the City has done none of this.

And that's just the disappointing part.

The surprising part is that no one is asking you about your experience, opinion and needs on energy choice. In a city where we pride ourselves on the democratic process, the Eugene Council is opting to move forward without any meaningful community outreach. It appears the City isn't even considering the resiliency needs of your home when the power is out. And they're spending resources on gas bans at a time when there are many other serious and pressing issues affecting our community.

For example, Eugene is in a deep housing affordability crisis; our state is ranked in the bottom 10% of markets nationwide, and people are struggling every day to stay in their homes or find new homes they can afford. A 2021 report from Home Innovation Research Labs estimates additional costs of all-electric new construction could add up to \$11,800 per home, depending on climate zone. Eliminating natural gas in new construction would drive

up housing costs and negatively impact an already critical lack of housing inventory – disproportionately affecting Eugene's low-income residents. These are unintended consequences we simply can't afford.

As professionals in the housing sector and building trades, we know that reliability and resiliency challenges for Eugene residents and businesses are a real problem if we are forced to rely only on electricity. Many gas appliances work when the power is out – that's part of the reason why people choose them. Our electric grid, while relatively clean, has its own challenges – from open transmission lines running through wildfire territory to not having enough hydropower to support energy needs at a time when we're all also being asked to switch to electric cars.

What's more, the Eugene City Council is considering a gas ban when for many businesses – think restaurants, breweries, manufacturers – natural gas is absolutely essential to operate at all. Block new natural gas hookups and some businesses will simply decide not to start or grow here. These are the kinds of unintended consequences that conversations and appropriate economic studies will uncover, and yet this work has not been done.

We believe in carbon-reduction planning that ensures affordability, equity and resiliency – and the way we see it, the natural gas system plays a key role. Reducing emissions is a commitment we are proud to share and we'd like the City to work in collaboration with us. We know that just as electric wires can carry renewables, so can the gas system, and these renewables are becoming more cost effective and widespread as the market grows. Together, we can encourage innovations like more renewable natural gas, renewable hydrogen, hybrid heating and more.

Finally, for the many of you who have already shared your concerns about forced electrification with us, there is an opportunity to share your perspectives with the Eugene City Council. Consider joining the conversation at [mayorcouncilandcitymanager@eugene-or.gov](mailto:mayorcouncilandcitymanager@eugene-or.gov) and encourage the Councilors to rethink this proposal that will impact us all. Tell them climate change is here, and decarbonization, affordability and economic prosperity are too important for proposals that limit energy choices for our residents and potential solutions for our region.



**Jeff McGillivray**

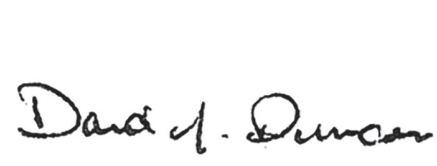
Business agent/organizer for the plumbers, steamfitters and HVAC/R professionals at UA Local Union 290

Secretary treasurer of the Lane Coos Curry Douglas Building Trades Council



**Danielle Bivens**

President, Home Builders Association of Lane County



**David Duncan**

2022 Eugene REALTOR® President



*This open letter is produced as a collaboration with UA Local Union 290, Home Builders Association of Lane County, Eugene REALTORS® and NW Natural. Not paid for by customers.*

