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2022 Indicators Report Focuses on Building Electrification

Sustainable San Mateo County's 26th annual [Indicators Report](#) explores the opportunities and complexities of building electrification, which is one of the most effective ways to address climate change. It presents case studies and helpful resources, analyzes the current state of electrification in San Mateo County, and discusses what's needed to accelerate the transition from gas to electricity without leaving vulnerable populations behind.

Experts at the recent Indicators Report Launch event held at Genentech praised San Mateo County for leading the way to a clean, carbon-free future, with 17 out of 20 cities limiting gas in new construction, as well as the county itself. Keynote speaker Panama Bartholemy, executive director of the Building Decarbonization Coalition, said, "The heart of the movement is right here." He stressed the need for more leaders to promote building electrification in order to cut carbon emissions. "You cannot address climate change without addressing natural gas in our buildings," he explained, noting that gas emissions from buildings account for one-fourth of all emissions in California.

The full Indicators Report, as well as a brochure and a video of the Indicators Report Launch event, can be accessed at tinyurl.com/ssmc2022ir.

Among the key findings of the report are:

- Gas appliances emit pollutants that have been linked to adverse health effects such as asthma and cardiovascular disease. A [recent Stanford study](#) found that methane leaks from gas stoves even when they are turned off.
- Underground gas lines are often old and vulnerable to rupture. The National Fire Protection Association estimates an average of 4,200 home structure fires in the U.S. are started due to the ignition of gas.
- Replacing furnaces with heat pumps that provide both heating and cooling benefits people in buildings without air conditioners and can save lives during heat waves. Today, nearly 60% of new homes nationwide are being built all-electric, and 40% have heat pumps. In California, just 5% of new single-family homes have heat pumps.
- [Peninsula Clean Energy](#) provides assurance that there will be enough clean electricity to support the transition to all-electric buildings and electric vehicles.
- All-electric homes are less expensive to build than their mixed-fuel counterparts. Electrifying existing homes can be cost effective when combined with solar, battery storage and available financing. However, technological challenges with battery storage, and the time imbalance between peak energy demand and renewable energy production, continue to present barriers to electrification.

- There is a lack of knowledge among both customers and contractors about the benefits of using electricity instead of gas. Customer education programs like The Switch Is On are helping to overcome these barriers in perception and change behaviors.
- Efforts to move away from natural gas use in buildings are gaining momentum in San Mateo County and across California. Many [incentives and rebates](#) are available to help people transition from gas to electricity and more are expected in the future from the Inflation Reduction Act and California's \$1.4 billion commitment to building decarbonization.
- More assistance is needed to make sure lower-income households are not left behind. As the pool of homes dependent on gas shrinks, those living in them will pay higher and higher costs to maintain the gas infrastructure.
- All-electric homes with solar power and battery storage can be protected from service interruptions.
- The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation estimates that building electrification in California alone will support more than 100,000 jobs – eight times as many jobs as would be lost in the gas sector as it is phased out.

The report lists rebates and financing opportunities for residential and commercial building owners, summarizes the progress made in jurisdictions in San Mateo County, discusses energy storage options, describes possible impacts on vulnerable populations and describes efforts to provide more skilled workers. It also offers best practices from other parts of the U.S. and overseas and provides a roadmap for accelerating electrification.

About the Indicators Report

Each year, Sustainable San Mateo County's Indicators Report does in-depth research on one aspect of sustainability performance in the county. This year's report takes a comprehensive look at Building Electrification.

About Sustainable San Mateo County

Founded in 1992, Sustainable San Mateo County is a nonprofit dedicated to realizing a vision of a sustainable future for everyone in the county. For more information, visit <https://sustainablesanmateo.org> or contact advocate@sustainablesanmateo.org.