

Ten Ways Your Community Can Go All-Electric

A Guide For Cities and Towns



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Forward-looking cities and towns across America are forging the path to all-electric buildings.

Electrifying the places we live and work is an important step on America's path to repower society with clean renewable energy. Burning fossil fuels in residential and commercial buildings causes [almost 30%](#) of our country's global warming emissions and research is increasingly showing that using fossil fuels in appliances like gas stoves can cause [dangerous](#) levels of indoor air pollution.

Switching to clean, efficient and all-electric technologies will bring about cleaner air and a more liveable climate. This guide can serve as a starting point for local elected officials and community members who want to join the movement for clean energy buildings and take steps to electrify the places they live, work, learn and spend time with loved ones.

Lead the Way on Electrification

1. Set ambitious goals. Electrifying every building in America is a bold vision, and bold visions require ambitious goals and plans to achieve them. These plans should include an understanding of the local energy mix, the health of existing energy systems and any fossil fuel infrastructure that is immediately in need of replacement or repair. Communities all across America should set big goals to transition their homes, businesses and other buildings to run entirely on clean electricity. [Ithaca, New York](#) recently voted to electrify every single one of its buildings by 2030. This bill is the first of its kind in the country.

2. Make public buildings all-electric. Cities and towns can lead the way by adopting clean, electric technologies for space heating and cooling, water heating and running appliances in public buildings. That is how decision-makers in [Ann Arbor, Michigan](#) are paving the way for broader building electrification. They have committed to electrifying all city facilities by 2030.

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Electrify New and Existing Buildings

3. Transition to all-electric new construction. Building codes are a powerful tool to incentivize or require new buildings to be all-electric. In many cases, new buildings with fully electric systems are already [cost-effective](#) compared to those with mixed fuel systems. In 2019, Berkeley, California became the [first](#) city in the United States to mandate that all new buildings be built all-electric. Since then, [over 50 and counting](#) cities and counties in California alone have followed Berkeley's lead.

4. Pass policies to promote the sale of electric appliances. It's not enough to just electrify new buildings. We also have to retrofit our millions of existing buildings so that they use energy efficiently and can run entirely on clean electricity. Policies that promote the sale of electric appliances can ease the transition for consumers, distributors, contractors and others. [Concord, Massachusetts](#) offers rebates for residents who want to install heat pumps and heat pump water heaters. The town also partners with a local energy consulting firm to provide free educational resources to customers choosing to install electric heat pumps.

5. Adopt comprehensive policies to retrofit existing buildings. Another way to promote retrofits for existing buildings is to implement comprehensive policies that tackle the issue on a larger scale. That can mean setting goals for all buildings to transition to electric power, establishing [stretch codes](#) or, for larger cities, setting a [building performance standard](#). The city of [Denver, Colorado](#) recently voted to adopt a building performance standard that drives the switch to electric appliances by requiring partial or full electrification of certain types of space and water heating equipment at the time of replacement.

Spread the Word

6. Engage the community. Some people haven't heard about the exciting benefits of clean, efficient technology like heat pumps and electric stoves. Additionally, many of us are frequently exposed to [pro-gas marketing](#) funded by the gas industry. If we want to electrify every building in America, we need to build support within our communities. Public engagement and education programs can be helpful tools to educate consumers about building electrification. The Burlington Electric Department in Vermont shares helpful [information](#) with consumers about the benefits of heat pumps and offers rebates for adopting them.

7. Work with contractors, developers, distributors, manufacturers and retailers. From manufacturing to distribution to sale, experts at all stages of the electrification process are in important positions to influence the adoption of electric appliances. Education and training programs can help increase awareness of electric technologies, encourage contractors and developers to install electric appliances and boost the number of retailers carrying them. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) offers over 20 building electrification [trainings](#) that local contractors can use to get familiar with skills like installing heat pumps or taking advantage of geothermal tax incentives. Promoting training programs offered by manufacturers is another way to support contractors.



Heat pump outside a home in Amherst, Massachusetts

Go Beyond City Hall

8. Speak up against efforts to block progress.

Some special interest groups like fossil fuel companies are actively working to slow the transition to all-electric buildings. Over the last two years, these groups have backed legislation in over 20 states to take away communities' freedom to go all-electric by preemptively banning any policies that limit gas use. Communities should have the right to choose cleaner forms of energy, and local leaders need to speak out against efforts to prevent progress on building electrification. This year, advocates in North Carolina successfully [blocked](#) one of these anti-electrification bills from passing in their state.

9. Support state and federal policy. Beyond leading locally, we can make even more progress on all-electric buildings when state and federal policies also boost building electrification. Setting goals around electrification and putting incentives and rebates into place, especially those that occur at the point of sale, will make it easier for Americans to switch to electric technologies. In 2019, Maine passed legislation that set a goal of installing 100,000 heat pumps by 2025. Throughout just one year, [over 27,000](#) heat pumps were installed across the state using rebate incentives provided by the Efficiency Maine Trust.

10. Advance energy efficiency initiatives. The key to maximizing the benefits of an all-electric building is to make sure it is using energy as efficiently as possible. That can be done [by](#) setting appliance efficiency standards, reducing energy waste through weatherization and installing smarter devices that can shift electricity use to times when energy is more widely available. These steps will make the job of switching from fossil fuel power to 100% renewable energy much easier. In the last year, [Rhode Island, Nevada, Oregon](#) and [more](#) states have passed new or updated appliance efficiency standards to ensure that our devices like computers and showerheads aren't using more energy than they need.

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