



Development Services

NEWS RELEASE

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City of Palo Alto Approves New Energy Reach Code Ordinance in support of Zero Net Energy

On May 2nd, the Palo Alto City Council unanimously approved a new local amendment to the California Energy Code. This new Zero Net Energy ready ordinance will improve the energy efficiency of all new buildings in Palo Alto and is targeting to become effective January 1th, 2017.

The ordinance outlines local amendments to the 2016 California Energy Code, Title 24, Chapter 6. The Energy Code addresses requirements related to energy efficiency and Zero Net Energy readiness. These ordinances will impact new single family, multi-family and non-residential projects in Palo Alto.

“This new Energy Reach Code aligns with Palo Alto's commitment to sustainability, zero net energy, and carbon reduction” said Development Services Director Peter Pirnejad. “We look forward to implementing this policy in support of a zero net energy future.”

The minimum State Code requirements associated with each project are dependent upon the presence or absence of solar photovoltaic systems. Under the 2016 California Energy Code, if a residential applicant chooses to install a photovoltaic system, the project can use a portion of the solar power as a “PV credit” to offset the efficiency requirements for minimum state compliance. The “PV credit” is a fixed value equal to approximately 20% of the total compliance margin for single family and approximately 12% for multi-family projects. The state code offers no “PV credit” for commercial projects.

Palo Alto’s amendment to the State’s Energy code essentially offers two pathways for developers building new single, multi-family, and commercial building to comply with the “reach” Code. For single family projects that opt not to install PV, the project must exceed Title 24 baseline code by 10%. If they chose to install PV, the project must exceed minimum state code by 20% but can use PV towards meeting the requirement. For multi-family, projects without PV must exceed code by 10% and those with PV must exceed code by 12% and can offset the efficiency with PV. Commercial projects also have two pathways to comply with the Reach code. These projects can either exceed minimum state code by 10% or install a minimum 5KW PV system and meet state code.

“We’re moving forward in energy efficiency on the leading edge, while being cost-effective at the same time,” said Mayor Pat Burt during the May 2nd City Council meeting, “I think those are great dual achievements, and that’s the most important model because frankly we could do great things if money

didn't matter, but it does and to show that we can have these achievements and be cost efficient is what really makes it something that can be leveraged and modeled elsewhere.”

This ordinance was created in collaboration between the Development Services department, the Utilities department, the Office of Sustainability, and the Palo Alto Green Building Advisory Group (GBAG), under the direction of City Council. The Palo Alto GBAG is comprised of City officials, architects, contractors, engineers, green building professionals, energy modelers, and environmentalists. The GBAG participated in a 6 month vetting effort to identify the appropriate direction for these requirements.

For more information about the changes, the supporting documentation and cost effectiveness study please follow this [link](#). To support the design and construction community in the adoption of the new regulations, the Development Services department will be rolling out training and outreach during Fall 2016.

Edward Mazria, founder and CEO of Architecture 2030, attended and supported the new energy reach code ordinance. Mr. Mazria is a world renowned expert in the area of energy efficiency and carbon reduction in the built environment. He was one of the keynote speakers for “Buildings Day” at the COP 21 conference in Paris in December 2015. Mr. Mazria shared the collective vision of the COP 21 conference in Paris with City Council. He affirmed the leadership role of Palo Alto and the importance of this energy reach code in the global context of carbon reduction.

“By committing to a citywide 80% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2030, and adopting one of the most advanced building energy reach codes in the country, Palo Alto established itself as a leader among municipalities transitioning to a zero carbon future” said Mr. Mazria.

The new Energy Reach Code will act as an incremental step in meeting the State’s Zero Net Energy goals set for 2020 for new residential projects and 2030 for non-residential projects. The ordinance contains compliance pathways that support projects that either include or don’t include a solar photovoltaic system. This flexible framework provides project teams with options for compliance rather than a rigid set of rules for achieving the desired outcome.

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