



SIERRA CLUB

Connecticut Chapter
P.O. Box 270595
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127
connecticut.sierraclub.org

September 16, 2024

Dear distinguished members of the Windham Town Council,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 30,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, we write in support of the proposed ordinance to require a transition from gas to renewable energy electricity in new construction and major renovations in Windham.

Our region's overreliance on fossil fuels is harming our climate, our health and our pocketbooks. Transitioning away from fossil fuels to clean, renewable alternatives is critical to address the climate crisis, the high cost of energy and the public health impacts of fossil fuel pollution.

The climate crisis has hit our state hard as we've experienced flooding, storms, smog and massive weather events that cost billions of dollars. Recent extreme weather events like these are a stark warning of the escalating dangers linked to our dependence on fossil fuels. HVAC equipment and water heaters are responsible for 30% of greenhouse gas emissions in Connecticut.

Burning gas, oil, and propane in buildings also generates 23% of Connecticut's total NOx emissions, roughly eight times more than all of the state's power plants combined.¹ Gas appliances fill our homes with many of the same pollutants as car exhaust – carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and even formaldehyde.² The air we breathe indoors – where we spend 90% of our time – is often more polluted than outdoor air due to fossil fuel combustion. Health impacts from gas stoves include aggravated respiratory symptoms and higher susceptibility to lung infections, a 42% increased risk of children developing asthma symptoms, and IQ and learning deficits in children.³

Fossil fuels are no longer required or beneficial in new homes. RMI reports that it is cost competitive to build and operate all-electric buildings in our region.⁴ Combustion-free buildings also avoid costly construction of gas infrastructure.

The Inflation Reduction Act includes tax credits and rebates along with formula-based and competitive grants to support the transition proposed in this ordinance. IRA tax credits begin at 30% of the costs of clean energy investments, and can be even higher with adders for low-income residents. They can also be coupled with local, state and federal funding and clean energy programs.

For all these reasons, we urge the Windham Town Council to support the proposed ordinance to require a transition from gas to renewable energy electricity in new construction and major renovations.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Samantha Dynowski, State Director
Sierra Club Connecticut

¹ https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Connecticut%27s%20Hidden%20Pollution%20Problem_4.pdf

² <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2020/5/7/21247602/gas-stove-cooking-indoor-air-pollution-health-risks>

³ <https://rmi.org/insight/gas-stoves-pollution-health/>

⁴ <https://rmi.org/insight/the-economics-of-electrifying-buildings-residential-new-construction/>