

October 22, 2025

Bend City Council
City of Bend
710 NW Wall Street
Bend, OR 97703

Subject: Business Community Perspective on Electrification Policy

Dear Mayor Kebler and Members of the Bend City Council,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development for Central Oregon, and the undersigned organizations, including business owners, our community's workers and individual residents of Bend, we appreciate the opportunity to share feedback and perspective regarding the City's upcoming electrification policy and Gas Appliance Tax discussion. We find ourselves across a broad range of perspectives and representing thousands of people and businesses.

Our coalition and community share the City's commitment to achieving meaningful progress toward community climate goals. At the same time, we believe that any energy policy must be carefully designed to balance environmental priorities with Bend's urgent challenges around housing affordability, energy reliability, and economic vitality. We believe that, although well-intentioned, the policies currently under discussion are unlikely to deliver impactful results and will place added pressure on our community's affordability challenges.

We urge the City Council to pursue a balanced, pragmatic approach that:

- Protects housing affordability.
- Encourages innovation and data-based solutions.
- Preserves energy choice and reliability.

Housing Affordability and Economic Vitality

Housing affordability remains the most pressing challenge for Bend's employers and workforce. A strong local economy depends on workers being able to live in the community they serve, yet this goal continues to move further out of reach.

- The median home price is above \$700,000.
- A family earning the area median income can afford only about \$400,000.

- The Housing Needs Analysis identifies demand for nearly 2,000 new homes each year, half affordable for households below 80% AMI.

Each additional tax, fee, mandate, or regulatory barrier to construction risks deepening this crisis. Any electrification policy must therefore be evaluated through the lens of its impact on affordability and the local economy. The City’s current electrification proposal demonstrably increases the cost of construction and is likely to increase the cost to ratepayers due to needed infrastructure improvements by our area’s utility providers.

Data-Driven Policy and Innovation

Effective climate policy should reflect Bend’s unique context. More than half of the City’s workforce commutes from outside city limits largely due to housing costs, creating significant transportation emissions. Addressing housing and transportation together with energy systems will yield greater climate benefits than focusing on energy regulation in isolation.

Innovation should be encouraged. Cascade Natural Gas, for example, is piloting dual-fuel heat pumps in Bend homes, technologies that offer a practical pathway to emission reductions without compromising affordability or reliability. Policies should champion, not preempt, such advancements and innovation.

Energy Choice and Reliability

Bend residents consistently express a strong preference for maintaining energy choice and reliable energy options¹:

- 67% of voters oppose fees on natural gas appliances in new homes.
- 86% believe such fees would reduce energy reliability.
- 80% support innovation in renewable natural gas.

These results show that our community supports climate action that is practical and balanced, one that upholds affordability, reliability, and consumer choice, especially given the current constrained power grid.

Our community remains committed to working collaboratively toward a sustainable future for Bend. We share the City’s values of a clean environment and reduced carbon emissions, but

¹ Research performed by DHM Research, July 17-23, 2025.

believe that sustainability must be achieved through balanced, data-driven approaches that do not worsen the region's economic challenges.

We respectfully request that City Council consider the Business Economic Development Advisory Board's (BEDAB) recent memo as well as the following recommendations:

- 1. Prioritize housing affordability by carefully assessing the financial cost impacts of electrification mandates.*
- 2. Direct staff toward data-driven, innovative solutions before enacting new regulatory or fee-based measures.*
- 3. Preserve energy choice and reliability while supporting renewable innovation.*

We urge you to listen to the workers and businesses, large and small, who are already leading energy initiatives and possess the wisdom and insights needed to ensure any local policy is data-driven, collaborative, and strengthens partnerships within our community rather than dividing us.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a constructive partner in developing policies that advance Bend's climate goals while ensuring affordability, reliability, and economic vitality for our community.

Sincerely,

Bend Chamber of Commerce
BBSI Central Oregon
Cascades East Association of REALTORS®
Central Oregon Builders Association
CiES, Inc.
CLS Fabrication, Inc
CoEnergy Propane
Deschutes County Farm Bureau
Economic Development for Central Oregon
Flexpack Corporation
Hayden Homes
Ladd Group, Cascade Hasson Sotheby's
International Real Estate

LiUNA-Oregon & S. Idaho District Council of
Laborers'
Multifamily NW
Northwest Gas Association
Oregon Hearth Patio Barbecue Association
Pacific Propane Gas Association
Powers of Automation
Schwabe
Zydeco Kitchen & Cocktails
Travis Davis, individual
John Merriman, individual
Kenneth Katzroff, individual
Brian Ladd, individual