



September 19, 2022

Mayor John J. Bauters,
Vice Mayor Ally Medina,
Councilmembers Donahue, Martinez, & Welch

City of Emeryville
1333 Park Avenue
Emeryville CA 94608

**RE: Item 12.1: exemption of certain business occupancies
and new restaurant construction**

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, & Councilmembers,

I am writing you today in support of the proposed exemption of certain business occupancies and new restaurant construction from the proposed 2023 building standards.

The California Restaurant Association includes hundreds of local restaurants, many of which are independent, chef-driven restaurants that are slowly re-establishing themselves after a tumultuous two years of Covid-19 restrictions, ordinances, and operational changes.

The use of natural gas- and fire specifically- has traditionally been a tool to facilitate the art of cooking for so many neighborhood restaurants.

The work of the Emeryville Council on the overarching issue of climate change and ways for the City to mitigate that are very much appreciated. Our interest is not to disrupt that work, but more to highlight the practical impacts of natural gas on the restaurant community.

The local restaurant community often leads on energy efficiency and environmental stewardship. Natural gas bans often have a unique- and negative impact- on restaurants. We believe that affordability and reliability should be at the core of energy policy- and have some general concern about becoming reliant on one sole source of energy in the future.

Restaurants that use natural gas do so for the practical aspects of this tool in their menu development. Preparation of a wide variety of cuisines and dishes prefer gas powered methods for the quality of the technique one gets from natural gas cooking. Many restaurants specialize in making products which require the use of specialized gas appliances to prepare flame-seared meats and charred vegetables.

Additionally, the impact of a natural gas ban on commercial space would, by definition, lead to a smaller population of commercial spaces with gas hookups. We fear the impacts of this limitation and remain concerned that a ban could create an increase in future rents and leases on existing properties as those properties with natural gas would

see a higher demand (from a shrinking commercial supply) from those interested in leasing commercial space designed for restaurants.

During discussions about natural gas and cooking, there is often significant focus and discussion (largely from non-restaurateurs) around technological innovation in cooking methods and cost. While it is true there may be some innovative cooking methods out there, not all restaurants are the same in terms of their culinary specialties. While going all-electric may work for some, it does not work for all restaurant types. A one-size-fits-all approach to energy policy and restaurants is misguided.

We want to remain a productive partner in these efforts and the larger issue. For these and other reasons, we ask that you continue your effort to exclude restaurants from any natural gas ban.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Sutton".

Matt Sutton
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs + Public Policy

