



WASHINGTON REALTORS®

September 16, 2021

Washington State Building Code Council
c/o Stoyan Bumbaov, Managing Director
WA state Building Code Council
Dept. of Enterprise Services
1500 Jefferson Avenue S.E.
P.O. Box 41449
Olympia, Washington 98504-1449

RE: Washington State Commercial Energy Code

Dear Mr. Bumbaov,

Washington REALTORS® represents thousands of residential and commercial real estate professionals, their clients, and those affiliated with the real estate industry. We are committed to the principles of sustainability and energy conservation and work to create economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable communities. That said, we cannot support some of the amendments proposed to the 2021 Commercial Energy Code.

We are opposed to and ask the Council not to adopt the following three amendments into the 2021 Washington State Commercial Energy Code:

- 21-GP1-103 requiring electric heat pumps for new construction and retrofits for space heating instead of natural gas;
- 21-GP1-136 requiring electric heat pumps for water heating purposes;
- 21-GP1-179 requiring the installation of an electric receptacles whenever a natural gas appliance is installed in multi-family housing construction.

We believe these proposals are premature and need further study. Moreover, we're unaware if the Technical Advisory Committee reviewed scenarios for different building types and ages to determine the impact, feasibility, and cost to implement these amendments. This analysis is critical for determining the downstream effects such as rent increases to tenants.

Additionally, the amendments should strongly consider the reliability of our electrical grid in light of converting buildings to electricity, the addition of electric vehicle charging stations, etc. The



WASHINGTON REALTORS®

local utilities and the State Utilities and Transportation Commission are currently evaluating the impact to load, reliability, and cost to consumers of increased electrical demand on the grid. The electrical grid is necessary infrastructure to communities, businesses, and residents, and brownouts or blackouts would be devastating. Grid capacity must be a factor in evaluating amendments to the energy code.

Early this year, the House Environment & Energy Committee took testimony on HB 1084 that proposed net zero fossil fuel energy use by 2031. As part of the bill, the State Dept. of Commerce was required to develop and implement a strategic plan to accomplish this target, identify barriers, and how to overcome them. The plan would then inform the Code (the SBCC). Though the bill did not make it out of committee you can imagine our surprise that the three proposed amendments are included in the proposed Energy Code. We believe this circumvents the legislative process and limits stakeholder input.

Even the state's 2021 Energy Strategy released in January noted under the building sector portion of the Strategy a list of several actions to be taken. It was clearly noted in the document that these actions required additional analyses and information to be gathered and considered as the state moves forward to net zero fossil fuel greenhouse gas emissions for residential and commercial buildings.

Finally, the global pandemic has negatively impacted many residential and commercial tenants and owners. Washington's housing crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic with people behind in rent and building owners, particularly small building owners, hit hardest.

For all these reasons Washington REALTORS® requests the above cited three amendments not be adopted in this version of the state energy code.

Sincerely,
Washington REALTORS®

Nathan Gorton
Government Affairs Director

Mary Hull-Drury
Commercial Government Affairs Director

