ELECTRIFY MENLO PARK COMPLETES FULL ELECTRIFICATION OF FIRST TWO HOMES IN BELLE HAVEN

Local program ramps up climate-safe, resilient homes in Bayside communities, plus green job training programs

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Menlo Park, CA - This month, two low-income households completed full electrification retrofits through Electrify Menlo Park, a collaborative public-private partnership between the local nonprofit Menlo Spark, BlocPower, contractors, and JobTrain. These homes now use clean electricity instead of gas for heating, cooling, and cooking. This results in reduced carbon emissions, which will help fight climate change while making the homes healthier and safer for occupants. This major milestone follows the launch of the Electrify Menlo Park initiative one year ago in June 2022.

Electrify Menlo Park's goal to decarbonize 10,000 homes by 2030, the first of its kind on the West Coast, combines affordability, green job creation, and equity measures to support the city's goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. Transitioning homes away from gas appliances to cleaner electric alternatives is a central component of Menlo Park's Climate Action Plan, with fossil fuel consumption in buildings accounting for 41 percent of Menlo Park's current greenhouse gas emissions.

Over the past year, the first two full electrification retrofits of single-family homes in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood were completed. This paves the way for a much larger program supported by $4.5 million in state funding, focusing on Belle Haven— a bayfront district chosen because of its vulnerability to climate change and past underinvestment. The program demonstrates an efficient and practical method for assisting homeowners, at all income levels, in installing electric vehicle charging, heat pumps for heating, air conditioning and water heating, electric appliances, and solar panels. The program also includes weatherization and health and safety measures. The retrofits will also significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is needed at a large scale to combat climate change.

In both homes, the retrofits included a heat pump, induction range, high-efficiency appliances, updated circuits for upgraded appliances, and other energy efficiency items. The retrofits cost between $18,000-25,000, including close to $5,000 in savings from rebates. Homeowners are expected to save hundreds of dollars per year in utility bills, and the retrofits will also improve indoor air quality, balance interior temperatures, and reduce stovetop cooking times. For both households, the costs of electrification were fully covered by Electrify Menlo Park.

“Electrifying my house was a great decision, both economically and environmentally,” said Patricia Harris, whose utility bills will be reduced by hundreds of dollars each year. “I want people in Belle Haven and beyond to know that making these changes to your home is possible and beneficial to families and communities.”

“Homeowners who participate in Electrify Menlo Park will have healthier homes with clean air, helping to scale a transition off fossil fuels to clean electricity throughout Menlo Park,” said Diane Bailey, Executive Director of Menlo Spark, the independent nonprofit partner of the program helping Menlo Park adopt a suite of measures by 2025 that are necessary to reach zero carbon by 2030. “This program will also chart a successful path for other communities to follow, making progress towards a carbon neutral future while advancing equity, economic vitality, and community health.”

California Senator Josh Becker, D-Peninsula, recognizes the significance of this milestone and highlights the importance of such initiatives. He said, "Electrify Menlo Park's commitment to electrifying homes is a shining example of the innovation and dedication needed to combat climate change. By embracing home decarbonization, we can build a cleaner, more sustainable future. I am happy to support these collaborative efforts with $4.5 million in State funding and look forward to informing the broader policy landscape of building decarbonization."

Federal, state, and local funding for electrification has increased in recent years and is set to increase even more in the second half of 2023. These funds reach homeowners via rebates and local funding programs like Electrify Menlo Park, which plans to scale up rapidly and electrify 10,000 homes by 2030. A community advisory board has been established to center the needs of Menlo Park communities as well as a job training program to create local jobs while addressing the shortage of labor required to scale the program.

“Local action to address the climate crisis is crucial, and as outlined in Menlo Park’s Climate Action Plan, we cannot meaningfully reduce our city’s climate pollution without electrifying homes and buildings,” said Menlo Park Mayor Jen Wolosin. “As we do so, we must bring everyone along, especially those in our historically underserved communities.”

“We are excited to showcase the practicality and effectiveness of home decarbonization,” said Angela Evans, Director of Electrify Menlo Park. “Through partnerships with local utility companies and the support of dedicated community members, we have successfully transformed two homes into models of sustainable living.”

“One large source of harmful emissions is natural gas consumption in homes, which not only fuels large-scale climate change, but can also impact people’s health and well-being. Removing burning gas from inside your home is beneficial, and now it’s easier and more accessible than ever," said Menlo Park Vice Mayor Cecilia Taylor. She notes that residents who are concerned about indoor air quality can access air sensors from the local nonprofit Climate Resilient Communities.

Building electrification in Menlo Park is creating equitable outcomes, not only for homeowners but for local workforces who through the program are gaining expertise and valuable experience in the rapidly-growing field of decarbonization.

"In Menlo Park, we are creating pathways to the emerging green jobs sector, training people to install efficient electrical appliances, and making communities healthier," said Barrie Hathaway, CEO of JobTrain. "JobTrain is committed to helping those most in need reclaim their lives from poverty and unemployment by preparing them for successful careers."

"The City of Menlo Park is a leader in responding to the climate challenge, and we are excited to continue delivering the benefits of building electrification in an accessible way,” said Roopak Kandasamy, General Manager - California, of BlocPower, a climate technology company whose software for analysis, leasing, project management, and monitoring of urban clean energy projects can create significant savings on energy bills.

Homeowners interested in learning more about retrofitting their homes should contact: ElectrifyMenloPark@gmail.com

About Menlo Spark:

Menlo Spark is a nonprofit initiative that collaborates with the city government, businesses, and residents to ensure the success of the community’s efforts on climate and sustainability-related issues. By helping to weave together the network of projects and initiatives in the city that may contribute to sustainability, Menlo Spark supports a more unified strategy for progress towards the ultimate goal of climate neutrality.

Attachments

- Electrify Menlo Park webpage
- Electrify Menlo Park Home Upgrade Summaries: Carlton Ave and Hollyburne Ave
- Home Tour Videos: Carlton Ave. Video and Hollyburne Ave. Video
- The Benefits of Electrification fact sheet
- Affordable & Equitable Electrification fact sheet
- Climate Resilient Communities webpage

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