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Survey Finds Most Bend Voters Oppose Fees on Installing Natural Gas in New Homes

The city of Bend is considering fees on natural gas hookups and appliances in new residential construction designed to discourage natural gas use and encourage all-electric alternatives. Earlier this year, Ashland implemented a similar policy. A July 2025 survey conducted by DHM Research, and sponsored by Cascade Natural Gas, finds that most Bend voters oppose such fees. The following are key findings from the survey:

- **Bend voters oppose fees on the installation of natural gas hookups and appliances in new residential construction.** Similar fees proposed in other Oregon communities range from about \$375 to \$7,500 per residence, depending on the size of the home and the number of natural gas appliances. The survey found that 67% of Bend voters oppose charging such fees.
- **Opposition to the fees are not surprising, given that 76% of Bend voters have a positive impression of natural gas.** The percentage of Bend voters with positive impressions of natural gas is roughly similar to the percentage of voters with positive impressions of renewables such as solar (82%) and hydropower (79%). The 2025 survey findings, when taken together with findings from a similar survey in 2023, show that positivity toward natural gas has increased 7 points, from 69% in 2023 to 76% in 2025.
- **Bend voters oppose the fees due to concerns about energy reliability and housing affordability:** 86% believe fees that discourage the use of natural gas will reduce the energy reliability of homes, and 74% think such fees will make housing in Bend even less affordable.
- **Bend voters prefer modifications or alternatives to imposing such fees.** 78% agree that prior to imposing any fee, Bend should at minimum allow the local natural gas utility to complete their hybrid gas/electric heat pump system pilot to identify how these technologies can pair reliably during cold weather events. 70% agree that no fee should be established on new construction set aside for affordable housing. 73% agree that no fee should be imposed on installing hookups that provide renewable natural gas.
- **Bend voters continue to oppose policies that restrict natural gas, regardless of how they are framed.** Some elected leaders and advocates had previously floated proposals to ban natural gas. The survey tested two ways of describing these proposals: (1) banning natural gas in new homes and buildings and (2) requiring new homes and buildings to use only electricity for heating and cooking, sometimes called electrification. 66% of Bend voters opposed gas bans in 2023, and 71% oppose them in 2025. 70% of voters opposed electrification mandates in 2023, and 65% oppose them in 2025.
- **Bend voters see promise in renewable natural gas.** New technology allows greenhouse gas emissions produced at farms, wastewater treatment plants, and landfills to be captured and turned into renewable natural gas. Support for renewable natural gas remains high. 80% of Bend voters said they would support city council encouraging the use of renewable natural gas in 2023, with 80% supportive in 2025.

The findings are from two surveys conducted by DHM Research and sponsored by Cascade Natural Gas: a recent July 17-23, 2025 survey with 400 registered voters; and an earlier April 4-10, 2023 survey with 300 Bend voters. The margin for error for the 2025 survey, at 95% probability, is $\pm 4.9\%$; and for the 2023 survey, $\pm 5.7\%$.

DHM Research has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States for more than 40 years. The firm is nonpartisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making. Its clients include media, governmental agencies, environmental organizations, business associations, and corporations.