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Contact: Sheena Thiruselvan | st@urbangreencouncil.org | 212.514.9385 x 121

FIRST LOOK: EXPLORING EQUITABLE ELECTRIFICATION

Urban Green Council finds Environmental Justice Areas have exciting early building electrification opportunity but could also see earliest grid constraints

New York (November 16, 2022)— In last year’s [Grid Ready report](#), Urban Green Council found that building electrification poses no near-term risk to New York City’s electric grid, and that winter power demand can grow by 42 percent before exceeding summer peak demand. Now, we’ve expanded our analysis to see how electrification could impact the grid in Environmental Justice Areas.

What we found:

- The 15 NYC grid areas that may see the fastest electrification of heat and hot water systems and the earliest grid constraints are primarily Environmental Justice Areas.
- Many Environmental Justice Areas are dominated by smaller buildings that are easier to electrify, but are served by lower capacity power infrastructure.
- Heat pumps and other building upgrades can bring health, comfort and resilience benefits to New Yorkers who are disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Many building electrification policies and programs are designed to ensure that resources reach vulnerable communities, and future grid planning, community engagement and policy initiatives should reinforce this priority.

As part of NYC’s ongoing work to address environmental justice, the city published an online map of Environmental Justice Areas that meet the criteria for low-income or minority communities. In a new online interactive format, we compared this map with our *Grid Ready* modeling, which found that dense residential neighborhoods outside Manhattan could see early electrification and will likely be the first to see winter electricity demand exceed summer. We found significant overlap between Environmental Justice Areas and those grid areas that could become constrained first.

But the good news is that this building electrification won’t drive winter grid constraints any time soon—we likely have a decade or more to plan.

“Urban Green is using data-driven analysis to help chart the path to equitable electrification,” **said John Mandyck, CEO of Urban Green.** “We can start today, with time to plan for the grid we need to ensure heat pumps improve resident health and make communities more resilient.”

“Urban Green’s latest research and analysis can help ensure we integrate equity into electrification planning,” **said Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN.** “ALIGN has long worked to advance equitable environmental progress and it’s crucial that we bring the benefits of electrification to environmental justice communities.”

“Technologies that move buildings off fossil fuels and onto electricity for heating are critical to New York’s clean energy future, with especially pronounced benefits for environmental justice communities,” **said Vicki Kuo, Con Edison’s Senior Vice President for Customer Energy Solutions.** “Con Edison is committed to a clean energy transition that supports all New Yorkers, while maintaining high levels of reliability and affordability. We commend Urban Green Council for their continued efforts to decarbonize New York City’s buildings, and we remain focused on our goals to support electrification upgrades in 150,000 buildings by 2030 and the installation of 400,000 electric vehicle chargers across our service area by 2035.”

Our analysis includes interactive graphs that explore the health and resilience benefits of electrification, but also spotlight the need for safeguards to ensure an equitable transition to heat pumps. And we provide resources for advocates and others interested in how equitable electrification efforts are playing out across New York State.

The transition away from fossil fuel-based heating and hot water will take multiple decades and will evolve across a wide range of neighborhoods, building types and ownership structures. It’s important that electrification benefit disadvantaged New Yorkers, who are more vulnerable to climate impacts, suffer worse air quality and spend a higher portion of their income on utility bills.

To explore the full analysis, visit urbangreencouncil.org/equitable-electrification.

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Urban Green Council’s mission is to decarbonize buildings for healthy and resilient communities.

We focus on buildings because they account for two-thirds of citywide carbon emissions. We **convene** stakeholders to seek consensus; we **research** solutions that drive change locally and globally; we **advocate** for cutting-edge policy; and we **educate** a broad range of industry professionals. www.urbangreencouncil.org