MENLO SPARK *Climate Neutral for a Healthy, Prosperous Menlo Park*

Via email: tasmith@menlopark.org

Thomas Smith, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
City of Menlo Park
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Re: Request to consider Zero Carbon, All Electric Building Requirement for the 1350 Adams Court Development Proposal

Dear Mr. Smith,
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tarlton Properties 1350 Adams Court Development ("Adams Court") Proposal as the environmental impact review (EIR) process begins. I am writing to request a full exploration and consideration of all-electric and zero carbon heating, water heating, and energy-using equipment for the Adams Court proposal as a greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation strategy, and to conform with M-2 Zoning Code. New developments in Menlo Park should avoid incorporating fossil fuels for energy.

Menlo Spark is an independent nonprofit organization working with businesses, residents, and government partners towards a climate neutral Menlo Park by 2025. We appreciate the efforts of Tarlton Properties to date to support sustainability. This Adams Court Proposal notably contains commitments to environmental standards set forth in the 2016 General Plan Update and zoning. However, it is not clear how this proposal would comply with the 100 percent renewable energy standard for the M-2. Please ensure that the EIR contains a thorough analysis of 100 percent renewable and electric heating, water heating, and other energy-dependent equipment or appliances for the site.

We applaud the City for supporting numerous sustainability policies in the General Plan and Zoning update for the M-2, Bayfront area. The 100 Percent renewable energy requirement, in particular, is critical to the long-term sustainability, and social and economic vitality of Menlo Park for the following reasons.

- Avoiding fossil fuel use in new buildings is **essential for maintaining the city's climate, sustainability and healthy community commitments.**
- **All electric buildings that forgo fossil fuels in favor of renewable power save developers a substantial amount of money** in avoided gas meters, gas piping and lateral connections that often require significant trenching under roadways, permitting, and inspections.
- Clean, all electric buildings **pose no negative air quality impacts or direct safety hazards that are common with natural gas, which can leak, leading to explosions or fires.**

New reports are rolling out with greater frequency detailing the urgency of addressing climate change.[1] These national and international studies contain clear recommendations to accelerate a transition from fossil fuel use and advance all efforts to reduce climate pollution. One top priority that has emerged is to ensure that new buildings are designed to use renewable, zero carbon energy, instead of relying on fossil fuels like natural gas for heating.

Natural gas, a fossil fuel, is the second largest source of GHG emissions behind transportation in Menlo Park, contributing one third of total citywide emissions. Our electricity from the power grid is currently 85 percent carbon free and soon to be entirely carbon free. This means that replacing natural gas in buildings (commonly used for heating and cooking) with all electric designs is the single most impactful climate mitigation step that can be taken in Menlo Park and throughout Silicon Valley.

Although natural gas was once considered an alternative fuel, much of it now comes from "fracking." It has also been found to have exceptionally high carbon emissions when the lifecycle of the fuel including leaks are considered. Natural gas also poses direct safety hazards with leaks that can lead to explosions or fires. For example, gas use in homes is responsible for thousands of fires and dozens of deaths each year.[2] It can cause health impacts inside buildings that are not well ventilated, particularly from the carbon monoxide produced by burning gas indoors, which leads to hundreds more deaths every year.

Many cities have begun exploring policies to replace natural gas in buildings due to the climate, health, and safety impacts. Menlo Spark has commissioned a detailed report on how large commercial developments can go carbon free with standard all electric designs that save money and create more comfortable spaces. We will distribute this resource soon. In the meantime, we respectfully request that the scoping for the Adams Court EIR include a full evaluation of GHG impacts and potential mitigations strategies, including all-electric, zero carbon building design.

We look forward to working with you to guide future development to make Menlo Park a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant community, staying on track with our climate goals. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Diane Bailey, Executive Director, Menlo Spark
diane@menlospark.org

[1] For example, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018). *Global Warming of 1.5° C: An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*. Retrieved from IPCC: https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf

[2] For more precise statistics, see the USDN Report "Methane Math": https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/methane-math_natural-gas-report_final.pdf