# FRONTRUNNER: CITY OF COTATI

# EMBRACING EARLY ADOPTION OF CALGREEN INTERVENING CYCLE EV CHARGING REQUIREMENTS

## OVERVIEW

The smallest incorporated city in Sonoma County, Cotati enjoys an ideal location just north of San Francisco. With a population of less than 8,000 residents, the city features a hexagonal downtown layout designated a California Historical Landmark, one of only two such designed communities in the United States. Long considered the "Hub" of Sonoma County, Cotati is surrounded by beautiful vistas of hills, vineyards, majestic oaks and redwoods and a long history rooted in agriculture and music. The annual Accordion Festival attracts visitors from across the state and beyond.

## FINDING MEANINGFUL PROGRESS TOWARD COMMUNITY GOALS

Cotati has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability, with sustainable resource use and environmental protection woven through the community’s General Plan, adopted in 2015. The City participated in the countywide Climate Action 2020 and Beyond Plan, completed in 2016, and adopted a Climate Emergency Resolution in 2019. In 2022, The City Council adopted a fossil fuel station ban similar to those enacted by other jurisdictions across Sonoma County, preventing the creation of new gas stations or expansions of existing gas stations within Cotati city limits. In October 2022, the City adopted the 2022 Building Code, including the Tier 1 voluntary measures in the Green Building Standards Code (known as “CALGreen”), which include higher standards than those of the  basic, mandatory Code relating to installation of electric vehicle charging. The goal of these ordinances is to reduce the potential toxic contamination related to gas stations and to reduce fossil fuel emissions by encouraging the use of electric vehicles and alternative forms of transportation. The 2022 Building Code is in effect 2023-2025.




**Laid out in the 1890s and covering less than two square miles, Cotati is one of only two towns nationwide (the other is Detroit) with a hexagon street pattern.**

As a natural next step, Council tasked City staff with developing a building electrification ordinance that would include a prohibition on natural gas infrastructure in most new construction. This work was ongoing when the **CRA v City of Berkeley** ruling was issued in April 2023. Notes Autumn Buss, Associate Planner for the City of Cotati, “fortunately, the policy development efforts had included incorporation of the newly emerging CALGreen Intervening Cycle EV charging provisions, which aligned well with the City’s focus on clean energy and transportation. In the aftermath of the **CRA** ruling, Council still wanted to proceed with measures that would not trigger legal challenges but would still advance the City’s commitment to achieving its climate and sustainability goals, and this sentiment was strongly supported by community stakeholders.”



**Cotati has strong roots in agriculture and music, with its annual Accordion Festival drawing visitors from across the state and beyond. (Photo courtesy of James Wirth Photography)**

The most significant changes to EV charging requirements in the CALGreen intervening cycle update are related to multifamily and hotel/motel building types, as illustrated in the figure below from the City of Cotati Staff Report.

**Multifamily, Hotel/Motel EV Charging**

| Size | Measure | CALGreen | CALGreen Voluntary | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Existing 2022 Code** | | Mandatory | Tier 1 | Tier 2 |
| **Small (<20 units)** | Level 2 EV Capable | 10% | | |
| | Low Power Level 2 Receptacles | 25% | 35% | 40% |
| **Large (> 20 units)** | Level 2 EV Capable | 10% | | |
| | Low Power Level 2 Receptacles | 25% | 35% | 40% |
| | Level 2 EVSE | 5% | 10% | 15% |
| **Proposed Intervening Code** | | Mandatory | Tier 1 | Tier 2 |
| **All sizes** | Low Power Level 2 Receptacles | 40% | 50% | 55% |
| | Level 2 EVSE | 15% | 15% | 20% |

**Proposed multifamily and hotel/motel standards to Intervening Cycle Green Building Code (CALGreen) in comparison to the existing 2022 Code EV charging standards. Cotati's existing Code includes the Tier 1 voluntary standards.**

While the CALGreen requirements were approved in early August 2023 by the state Building Standards Commission, the effective date is July 1, 2024. City staff conducted a public workshop and presented options to Council in late spring 2023. At that point, Council decided to adopt the new CALGreen Intervening Cycle Tier 1 EV charging requirements to provide the earliest point of adoption, more than a year before the state required the code update. The ordinance was adopted in late June with an effective date of July 27, 2023.

"The City's first hotel is under construction and will implement the newly adopted EV charging standards, and there are several multifamily residential projects proposed in which the new standards will significantly increase EV charging availability for residents," says Buss, "Due to a small staff size, ordinance development was conducted collaboratively between the Planning and Building divisions within the City's Community Development, and supported by Misti Bruceri and the Statewide Reach Codes Team, all of whom contributed to internal consensus as well as expertise for the implementation phase.

"We're pleased we were able to keep moving forward following the **CRA** ruling," says Buss, "we believe the adoption of the CALGreen EV charging requirements will provide the city with ongoing ways to achieve its climate goals while welcoming new development."

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## RESOURCES

City of Cotati documents are available here:

Final Ordinance 919

Staff Report final draft, June 6, 2023

## OTHER FRONTRUNNERS

City of San Rafael Pursues Collaboration in its Development and Adoption of a Flex Path Residential Reach Code City of San Luis Obispo City of Piedmont
Archives