

The Relationship of Local Environment, N-type, Spin State and Catalytic Functionality of Carbon-Hosted Fe^{II/III}-N₄ for the Conversion of CO₂ to CO

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Supporting Information

1. Corresponding energies details

To examine the thermodynamic stability of designed FeN₄C₅₆H₂₀, we computed the cohesive energy (E_{coh} , eV/atom) of all doped systems, following the definition:^{s1}

$$E_{coh} = [xE_{Fe} + yE_N + zE_C + nE_H - E_{doped}]/(x + y + z + n)$$

where E_{Fe} , E_N , E_C , E_H and E_{doped} represent the total energies of isolated Fe, N, C, H and designed catalyst, respectively, while x , y , z , n denote the number of corresponding atoms.

The formation energies were calculated to evaluate the doping difficulty in energy for all relevant doped systems in this work, based on the definition:^{s1}

$$E_f = E_{doped} - E_{defect-graphene} - x\mu_{Fe} - y\mu_N - z\mu_H$$

where the E_{doped} and $E_{defect-graphene}$ are the total energies of doped and carbon sheet without FeN₄H₂, respectively, μ_{Fe} , μ_N and μ_H are the chemical potentials of Fe, N and H, respectively. x and y are the number of corresponding atoms removed from the doped-carbon sheets. Specifically, chemical potentials of N and H are defined as total energy per atom in pristine free N₂ and H₂ molecule, respectively. And the chemical potential of Fe denotes the energy of Fe atom in the respective ground-state bulk phase. All the parameters of the formation energies are obtained by carrying out Material Studio DMol³ version 8.0.

The adsorption energy (E_{ad}) of the intermediates for CO₂RR is given by:^{s1,s2,s3}

$$E_{ad} = E_{*+adsorbate} - E^* - E_{adsorbate}$$

Where $E_{*+adsorbate}$, E^* and $E_{adsorbate}$ is the total electronic energy (non-ZPE corrected) of the adsorption system, the individual surface and adsorbate, respectively.

Material Studio DMol³ version 8.0^{s4,s5} was used here to perform all of the formation energy calculations. The generalized gradient approximation (GGA)^{S6,S7} with Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) functional^{s8} is employed as the exchange-correlation functional. We used a double-numeric

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quality basis set with polarization functions (DNP). The size of the DNP basis set is comparable to Gaussian 6-31G**, but DNP is more accurate than a Gaussian basis set of the same size.^{S9,S10} The convergence criteria included threshold values of 1×10^{-5} hartree, $0.002 \text{ hartree} \cdot \text{\AA}^{-1}$, and 0.005 \AA for energy, force, and displacement convergence, respectively, while the self-consistent-field density convergence threshold value was defined as 1×10^{-5} hartree.

Gibbs free energy correction

The equilibrium potential is -0.11 and -0.20 V for the reduction reaction of $\text{CO}_2 \rightarrow \text{CO}$ and $\text{CO}_2 \rightarrow \text{HCOOH}$, respectively.^{s11-s13} The two possible two-electron CO_2RR are:



The Gibbs free energies of total reactions are -0.22 and -0.40 eV for (S1) and (S2), respectively, based on the method used by Nørskov,^{s14} which are used to correct the overall free energy changes for two different reactions. Specifically, the Gibbs free energy change (ΔG) is corrected as $\Delta G(\text{CO}) = G(\text{CO}) + G(\text{H}_2\text{O}) - G(\text{CO}_2) - 2G(\text{H}^+ + \text{e}^-) = -0.22$ eV for the CO formation and $\Delta G(\text{HCOOH}) = G(\text{HCOOH}) - G(\text{CO}_2) - 2G(\text{H}^+ + \text{e}^-) = -0.40$ eV for the HCOOH formation.

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2. Tables

Table S1. DFT calculated energy of each system relative to the energy of its corresponding spin ground state (E_r)^a of the Fe^{II}N₄C/Fe^{III}N₄C catalysts at different spin states (S: Singlet, T: Triplet, Q: Quintet, D: Doublet, Qu: Quartet, Se: Sextet). And the adsorption energy (E_{ad}) of CO₂ and CO molecule on the surface of the Fe^{II}N₄C/Fe^{III}N₄C catalysts. All energy values are given in eV.

		Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _S	Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _T	Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _Q	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _D	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Qu}	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Se}
armchair	E_r	2.24	0.00	0.51	0.00	0.02	0.89
	E_f	-12.89	-14.02	-13.42	-4.49	-3.88	-2.47
	E_{coh}	1.59	1.61	1.61	1.48	1.48	1.47
	$E_{ad}(*CO_2)$	-0.92	-0.21	-0.25	-0.35	-0.20	-0.53
	$E_{ad}(*CO)$	-1.48	-1.41	-0.37	-0.31	-0.22	-0.57
	zigzag	E_r	1.83	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.06
E_f		-15.35	-16.25	-15.57	-6.72	-6.14	-4.86
E_{coh}		1.58	1.61	1.60	1.47	1.47	1.46
$E_{ad}(*CO_2)$		-0.93	-0.46	-0.35	-1.39	-0.43	-0.34
$E_{ad}(*CO)$		-1.58	-0.24	-0.26	-1.41	-0.45	-0.33
pyrrole		E_r	2.36	0.00	0.09	0.61	0.05
	E_f	-16.14	-17.39	-16.84	-6.88	-6.52	-5.56
	E_{coh}	1.47	1.50	1.50	1.32	1.33	1.33
	$E_{ad}(*CO_2)$	-1.09	-0.40	-0.51	-0.59	-0.58	-0.81
	$E_{ad}(*CO)$	-1.66	-1.03	-0.39	-0.92	-0.42	-0.37

^a $E_r = E_{system} - E_{ground}$

Note: To further examine the relative thermodynamic stability and evaluate the doping difficulty for all systems, we calculated the cohesive energies and formation energies, which are all listed in Table S1. Note that the ground states of these catalysts have highest formation energies and maximum cohesive energies, suggesting that the Fe-N₄ motif of the ground state is more easily embedded in the carbon matrix. The structural differences between Fe^{II/III}N₄C-a (z) and Fe^{II/III}N₄C-p mainly originate from the structural stability determined by the formation and cohesive energies. The formation

energies of Fe^{II/III}N₄C-p are significantly larger than these of Fe^{II/III}N₄C-a and Fe^{II/III}N₄C-z, indicating that pyrrole-type Fe-N₄ moiety could be most easily embedded in the interior of carbon nanoribbon. In contrast, the cohesion energies of Fe^{II/III}N₄C-p are lower than Fe^{II/III}N₄C-a and Fe^{II/III}N₄C-z, revealed that Fe^{II/III}N₄C-p has a weaker structural stability due to the structural particularity of the pentatomic ring of pyrrole structure with excessive electron density forcing the Fe ion out-of-plane.

Table S2. DFT calculated energy of each system relative to its corresponding energy of spin ground state (E_r)^a of the COOH adsorbed on the surfaces of the Fe^{II/III}N₄C catalysts in different spin states (S: Singlet, T: Triplet, Q: Quintet, D: Doublet, Qu: Quartet, Se: Sextet, Sep: Septet). All energy values are given in eV. Short transverse lines (—) indicate the intermediate could not stably adsorb at this site. All the energies are gained at the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) calculation level.

	E_r (*COOH)				E_r (*COOH)		
	Fe site	N1 site	N2 site		Fe site	N1 site	N2 site
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _D -a	1.63	1.45	2.13	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _S -a	2.34	1.56	1.85
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu} -a	1.59	0.74	1.48	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _T -a	0.85	0.00	0.58
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se} -a	1.80	0.00	2.51	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _Q -a	1.32	0.32	0.89
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep} -a	1.69	0.38	0.00
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _D -z	1.48	0.00	1.65	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _S -z	3.34	1.51	3.75
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu} -z	1.67	0.04	0.98	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _T -z	1.56	0.00	2.35
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se} -z	1.20	0.98	2.28	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _Q -z	2.69	0.48	1.76
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep} -z	2.08	1.79	1.18
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _D -p	1.20	0.50	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _S -p	3.30	1.69	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu} -p	1.32	0.00	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _T -p	1.39	0.10	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se} -p	1.34	0.10	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _Q -p	1.49	0.00	—
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep} -p	1.28	0.26	—

Table S3. DFT calculated energy of each system relative to its corresponding energy of spin ground state (E_r)^a of the HCOO adsorbed on the surfaces of the Fe^{II/III}N₄C catalysts in different spin states (S: Singlet, T: Triplet, Q: Quintet, D: Doublet, Qu: Quartet, Se: Sextet, Sep: Septet). All energy values are given in eV. Short transverse lines (—) indicate the intermediate could not stably adsorb at this site. All the energies are gained at the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) calculation level.

	E_r (HCOO*)				E_r (HCOO*)		
	Fe site	N1 site	N2 site		Fe site	N1 site	N2 site
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{D-a}	0.97	2.41	2.80	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{S-a}	1.44	3.78	4.51
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu-a}	0.00	2.42	2.81	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{T-a}	0.52	2.34	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se-a}	0.05	1.63	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Q-a}	0.00	2.65	1.63
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep-a}	0.54	1.76	2.00
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{D-z}	1.06	1.54	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{S-z}	1.54	3.16	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu-z}	0.12	1.56	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{T-z}	0.00	1.40	2.12
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se-z}	0.00	2.53	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Q-z}	1.13	1.91	2.09
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep-z}	0.70	3.25	4.35
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{D-p}	2.60	1.40	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{S-p}	3.36	3.32	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Qu-p}	1.24	1.44	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{T-p}	1.38	1.58	—
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C _{Se-p}	0.00	1.54	—	Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Q-p}	1.44	1.72	—
				Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _{Sep-p}	0.00	2.43	—

Table S4. Relative energies (E_r , eV) of *H and the Gibbs free energy change of $^* + H^+ + e^- \rightarrow ^*H$ (ΔG^*_{H} , eV) on $Fe^{II}N_4C$ -a, $Fe^{II}N_4C$ -z, $Fe^{II}N_4C$ -p in four different sites. All the energies are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) calculation level.

	Spin states	E_r		ΔG	
		Fe-H	N-H	Fe-H	N-H
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{L-a}$	Doublet	1.65	0.77	-0.47	-1.34
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-a}$				0.65	-0.22
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-a}$	Quartet	1.87	0.79	0.61	-0.47
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-a}$				0.86	-0.22
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-a}$	Sextet	0.88	0	-0.05	-0.83
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{L-z}$	Doublet	2.24	0	1.57	-0.68
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-z}$				2.48	0.24
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-z}$	Quartet	0.80	0.03	1.62	0.85
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-z}$				1.82	1.05
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-z}$	Sextet	1.48	0.63	2.07	1.22
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{L-p}$	Doublet	1.95	0.04	-0.38	-2.28
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-p}$				0.78	-1.11
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{M-p}$	Quartet	2.07	0	1.64	-0.43
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-p}$				1.68	-0.38
$Fe^{II}N_4C_{H-p}$	Sextet	1.56	0.12	1.15	-0.29

Table S5. Relative energies (E_r , eV) of *H and the Gibbs free energy change of * + H⁺ + e⁻ → *H (ΔG^*_{H} , eV) on Fe^{III}N₄C-a, Fe^{III}N₄C-z, Fe^{III}N₄C-p in four different sites. All the energies are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) calculation level.

	Spin state	E_r		ΔG	
		E_r	E_r	Fe-H	N-H
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -a	Singlet	2.68	1.75	2.17	1.24
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -a	Triplet	0.91	0	0.38	-0.52
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -a				1.69	0.47
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -a	Quintet	1.46	0.24	0.39	-0.51
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -a				2.12	0.90
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -a	Septet	1.28	1.69	1.51	1.10
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -z	Singlet	2.35	2.00	2.78	2.43
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -z	Triplet	1.08	1.42	1.48	1.81
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -z				2.08	0.76
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -z	Quintet	1.32	0	1.51	1.84
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -z				2.42	1.09
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -z	Septet	0.96	1.15	1.41	1.22
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -p	Singlet	4.96	2.46	3.56	1.06
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _L -p	Triplet	2.57	0	1.45	-1.12
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -p				1.40	-0.76
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _M -p	Quintet	2.27	0.10	1.17	-1.40
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -p				1.38	-0.79
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C _H -p	Septet	2.33	0.25	1.88	-0.20

Table S6. The spin density on Fe for all the intermediates. Multiplicity is the whole system.

Intermediate	*	*COOH	*HCOO	*CO-H ₂ O	*COOH	*HCOO
Multiplicity	2	2	2	3	4	4
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-a	1.98	0.01	1.04	0.02	2.00	2.89
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-z	1.97	1.97	0.02	2.04	1.99	2.03
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-p	1.98	0.02	0.04	0.00	2.02	1.13
Intermediate	*	*COOH	*HCOO	*CO-H ₂ O		
Multiplicity	5	6	5	5		
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-a	3.09	3.83	2.93	2.04		
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-z	1.99	2.00	2.94	2.09		
Fe ^{II} N ₄ C-p	1.98	2.02	2.80	1.11		
Intermediate	*	*COOH	*HCOO	*CO-H ₂ O	*	*COOH
Multiplicity	2	3	3	2	4	5
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-a	1.97	2.02	1.97	0.02	2.00	2.00
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-z	1.97	1.98	2.96	0.00	1.98	2.03
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-p	0.00	2.01	1.17	-0.02	2.06	2.01
Intermediate	*HCOO	*CO-H ₂ O	*COOH	*CO-H ₂ O	*COOH	*HCOO
Multiplicity	5	4	6	6	7	7
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-a	2.88	0.03	3.11	2.04	3.86	2.88
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-z	2.07	2.05	3.12	2.22	2.04	2.88
Fe ^{III} N ₄ C-p	1.16	3.05	1.98	3.15	3.11	3.86

Note: The spin state of Fe is not consist with the multiplicity of the whole system. This may be attributed to the two possible factors. One is that the FeN₄C materials have good π -conjugate structures, which cause spin density delocalizes over the sheet. The other is that the unavoidable spin contamination for open-shell systems causes by the DFT calculations.

3. Figures

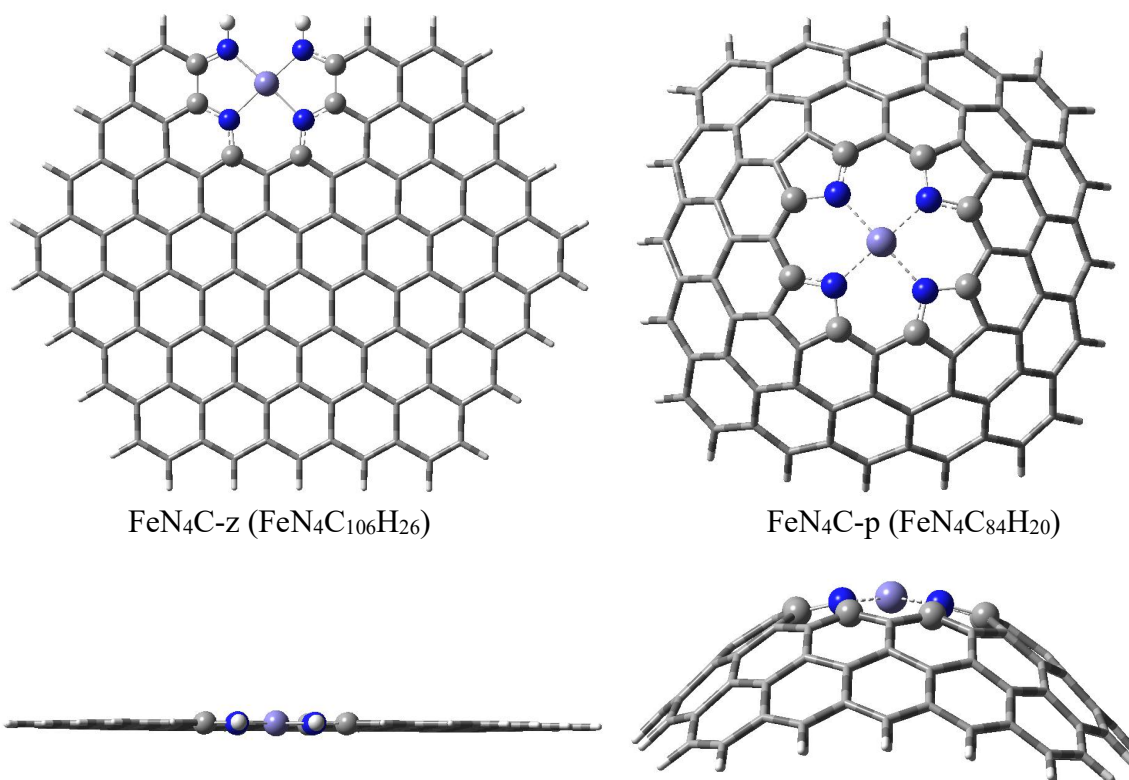


Figure S1. Top and side views of big FeN_4C models: pyridine-type zigzag-edge $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-z}$ (137 atoms) and pyrrole-type bulk $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-p}$ (109 atoms). Color code: C, gray; N, blue; Fe, purple; O, red; H, white.

Comparing with the small size of the $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-z}$ mode, the big size of $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-z}$ ($\text{FeN}_4\text{C}_{106}\text{H}_{26}$) still keep the square-planar geometry structure. However, the big $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-p}$ ($\text{FeN}_4\text{C}_{84}\text{H}_{20}$) mode also breaks the planer structure after the optimized calculations with the $\text{Fe}^{2+/3+}$ ion protruding from the plane

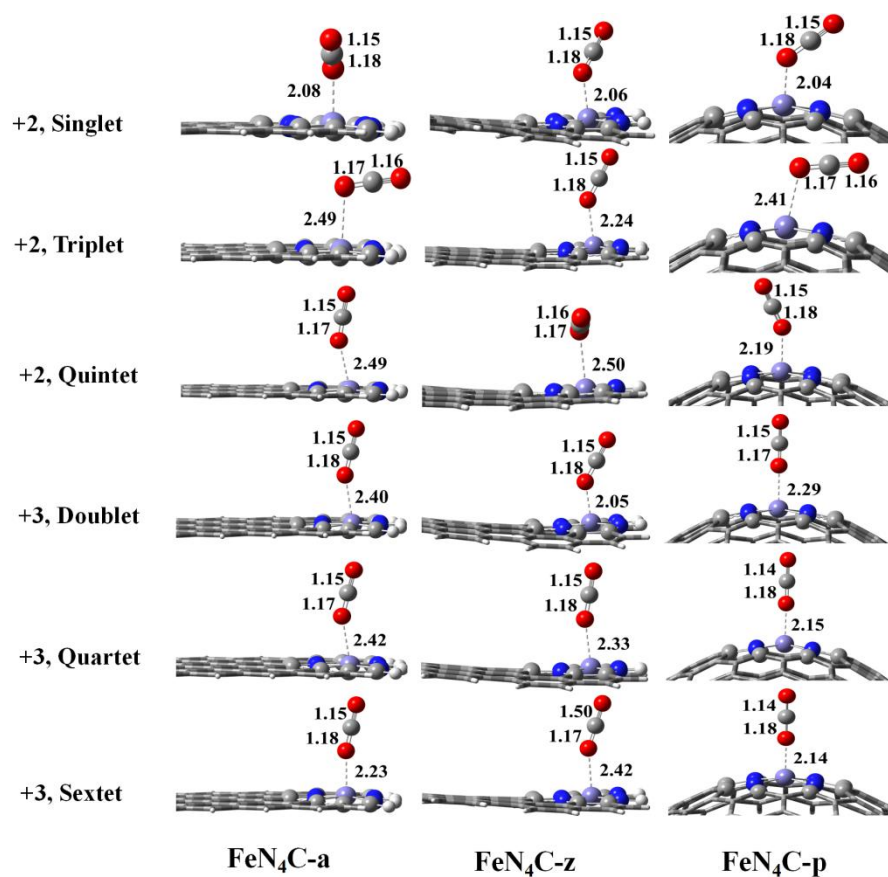


Figure S2. Adsorbed CO₂ configurations on singlet (Fe^{II}N₄C_S), triplet (Fe^{II}N₄C_T) and quintet (Fe^{II}N₄C_Q) spin state of Fe^{II}N₄C-a (z, p) catalyst and on doublet (Fe^{III}N₄C_D), quartet (Fe^{III}N₄C_{Qu}) and sextet (Fe^{III}N₄C_{Se}) spin state of Fe^{III}N₄C-a (z, p) catalyst. The bond lengths are given in Å.

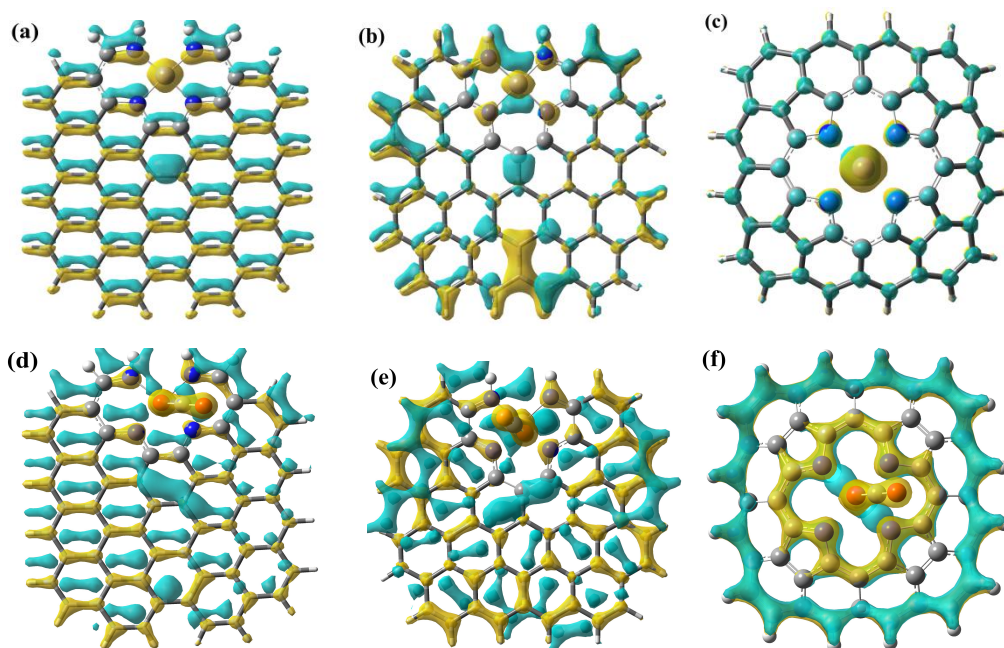


Figure S3. Electron density difference ($\Delta\rho$) for (a) FeN₄C-a, (b) FeN₄C-z, (c) FeN₄C-p and (d) FeN₄C-a-CO₂, (e) FeN₄C-z-CO₂, (f) FeN₄C-p-CO₂ with low spin state under +2 oxidation state, where $\Delta\rho = \rho_{(\text{slab+ads})} - \rho_{(\text{slab})} - \rho_{(\text{ads})}$. Yellow and cyan bubbles represent electron accumulation and depletion. Electron density difference analyses reveal that weak electron transfer takes place from the surrounding C-atoms to Fe for the FeN₄ embedded graphite (Figure S2 a-c) and partial electron transfer occurs from the FeN₄C sheet to the CO₂ moiety for the CO₂ binding FeN₄C systems (Figure S2 d-e), which is beneficial for the activation of CO₂.

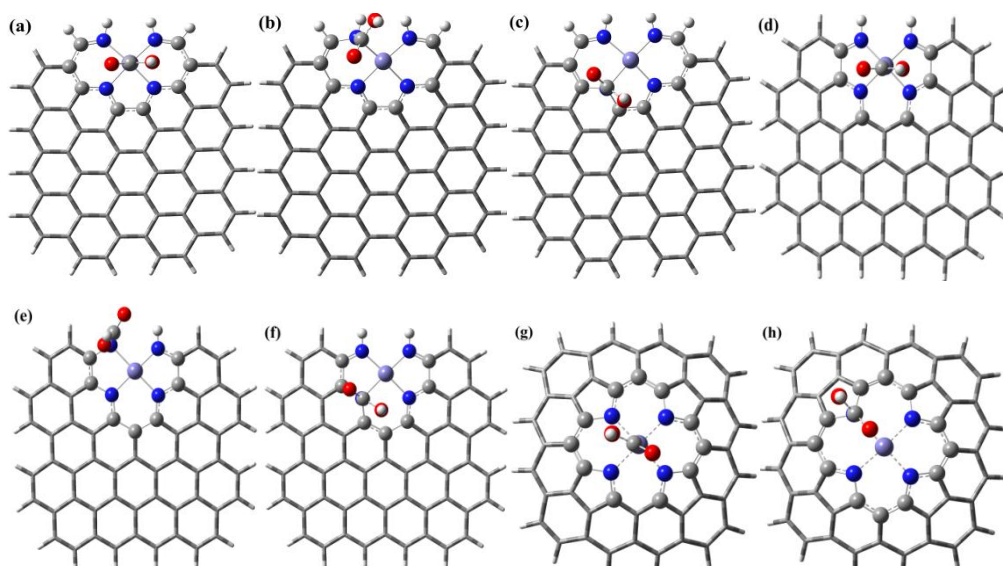


Figure S4. Adsorption configurations of the *COOH on (a-c) FeN₄C-a, (d-f) FeN₄C-z and (g-h) FeN₄C-p with different adsorption sites. Corresponding adsorption energies are summarized in the Table S2-S3.

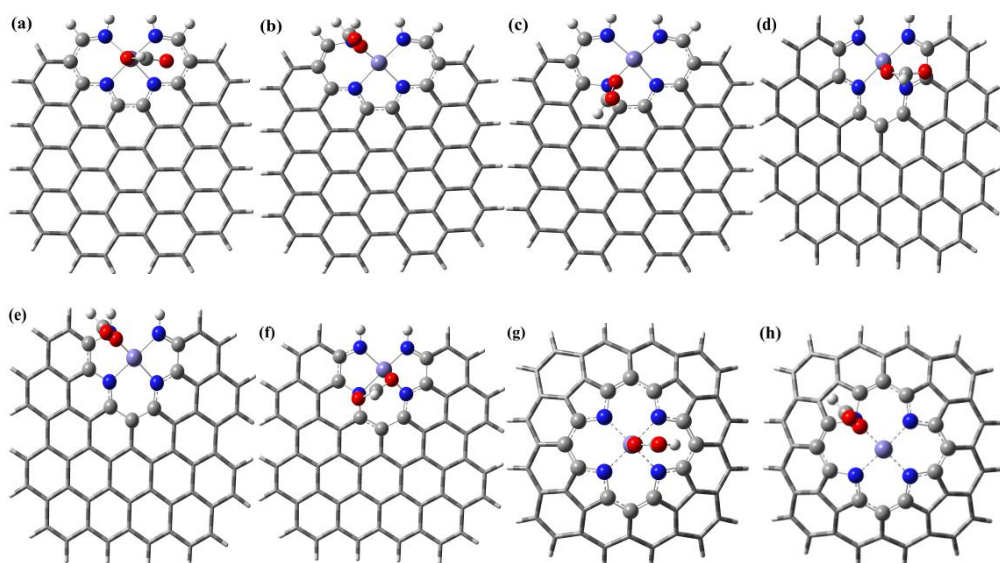


Figure S5. Adsorption configurations of the HCOO^* on (a-c) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-a}$, (d-f) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-z}$ and (g-h) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-p}$ with different adsorption sites. Corresponding adsorption energies are summarized in the Table S2-S3.

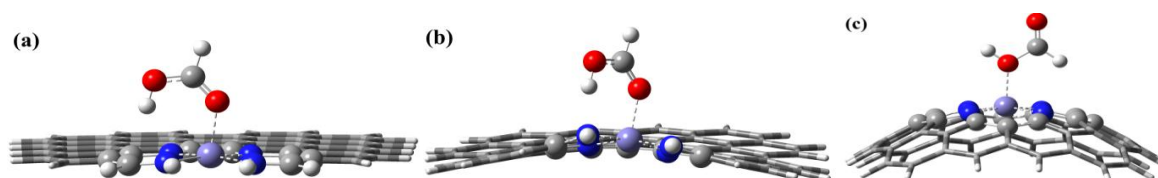


Figure S6. Adsorption configurations of the $^*\text{HCOOH}$ on (a) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-a}$, (b) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-z}$ and (c) $\text{FeN}_4\text{C-p}$ with different adsorption sites. Here, the structures of HCOOH adsorption on N1/N2 atoms are not stable. Corresponding adsorption energies are summarized in the Table S2.

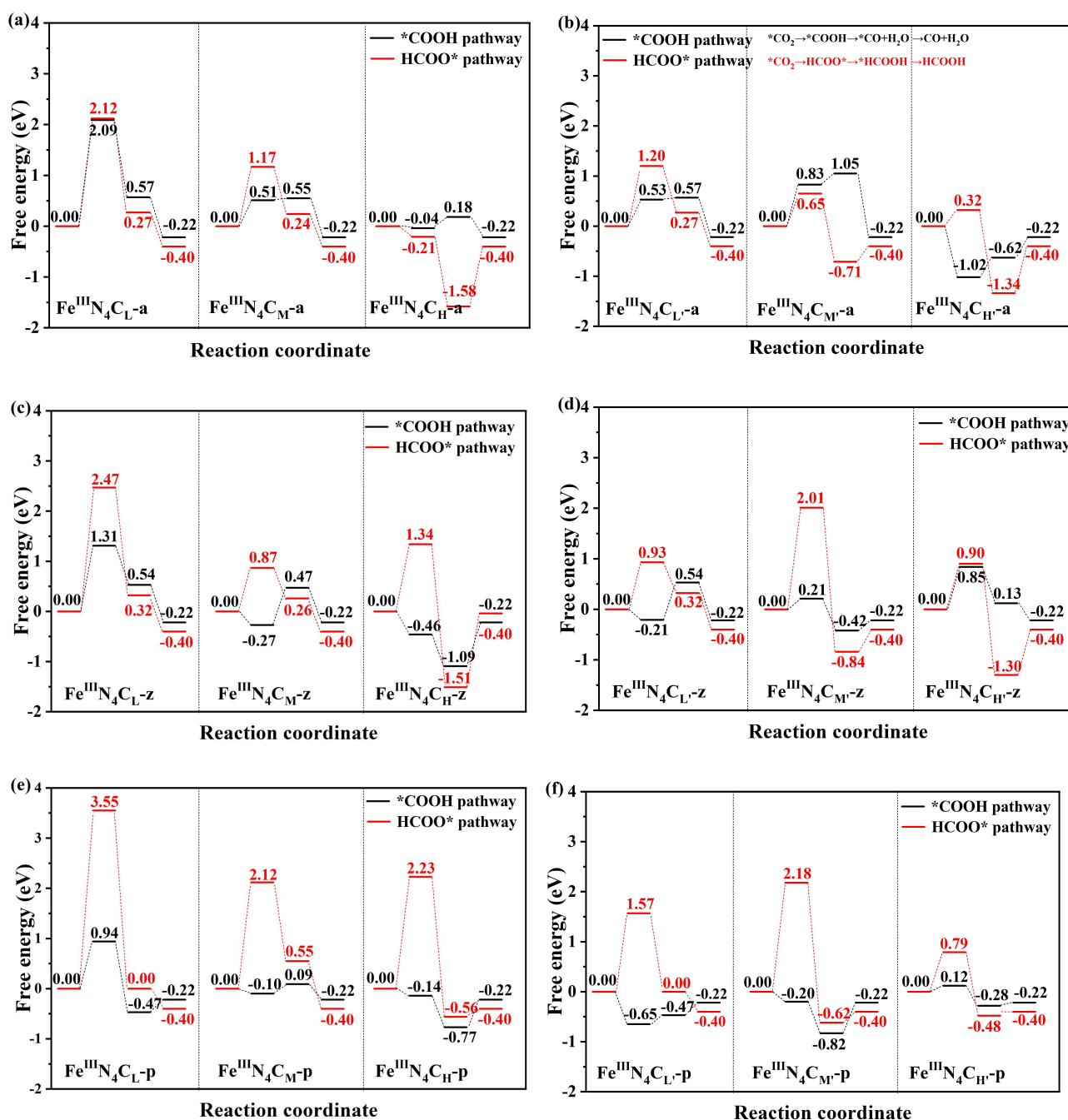


Figure S7. Gibbs free energy diagrams for CO₂RR toward CO and HCOOH products on spin-coupling (a) Fe^{III}N₄C-a, (c) Fe^{III}N₄C-z, (e) Fe^{III}N₄C-p and spin-uncoupling (b) Fe^{III}N₄C-a, (d) Fe^{III}N₄C-z, (f) Fe^{III}N₄C-p at 0 V vs RHE. The black and red line represent the CO₂ conversion through *COOH pathway and HCOO* pathway, respectively. The numbers on horizontal lines denote the energetic position of key intermediates. The changing multiplicities of Fe^{III}N₄C system in spin-coupling manner are 2-1-2 for the low spin, 4-3-2 for the medium spin, 6-5-4 for the high spin and the corresponding changing multiplicities in spin-uncoupling manner are 2-3-2 for the low spin, 4-5-4 for the medium spin, 6-7-6 for the high spin when the *CO₂ sequentially obtains two H atoms.

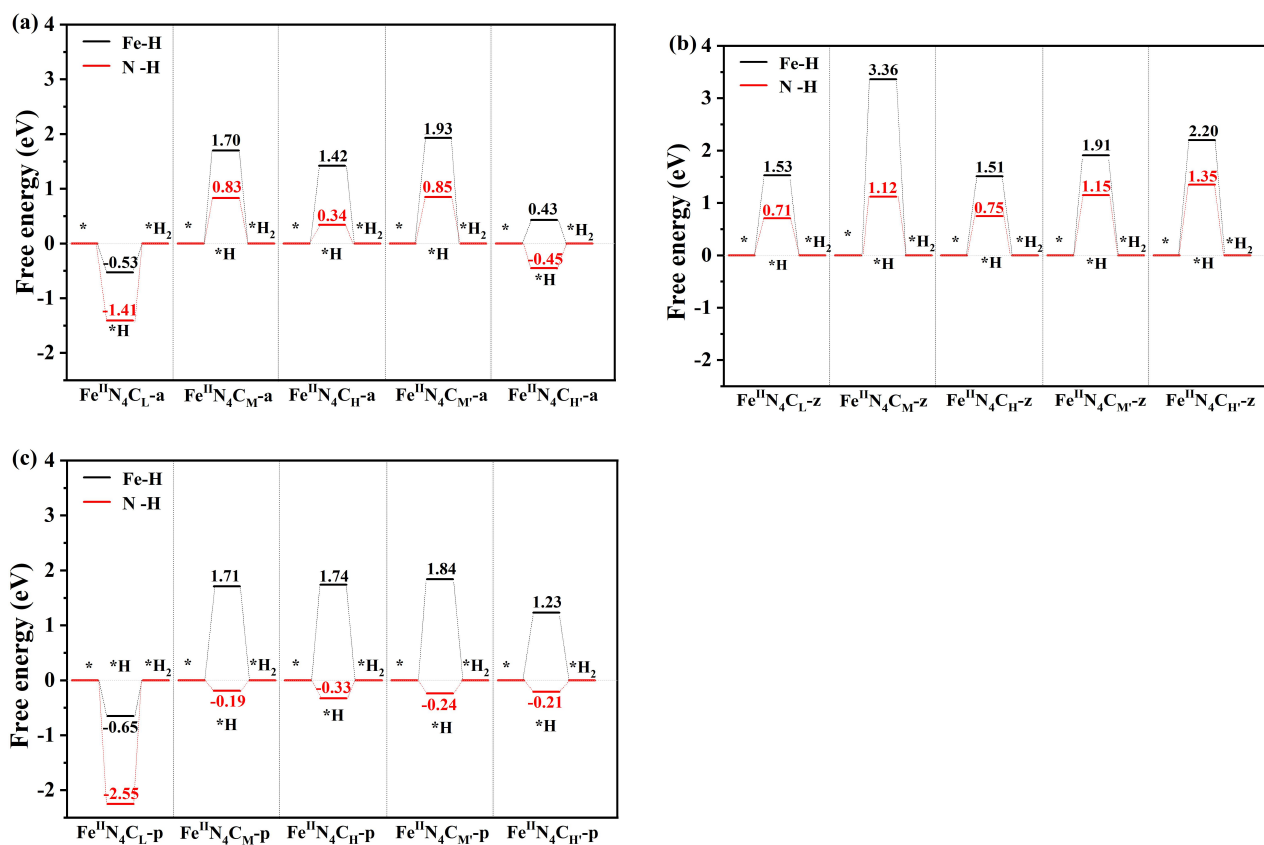


Figure S8. Gibbs free energy diagrams of the simulated HER at 0 V (vs. RHE): (a) Fe^{II}N₄C-a at the different spin states, (b) Fe^{II}N₄C-z at the different spin states, (c) Fe^{II}N₄C-p at the different spin states. The negative free energy values of *H on the N-site support the formation of the N-H bonds on the surfaces of Fe^{II}N₄C-a and Fe^{II}N₄C-p, which can serve as proton donors for the electrochemical reduction of CO₂.

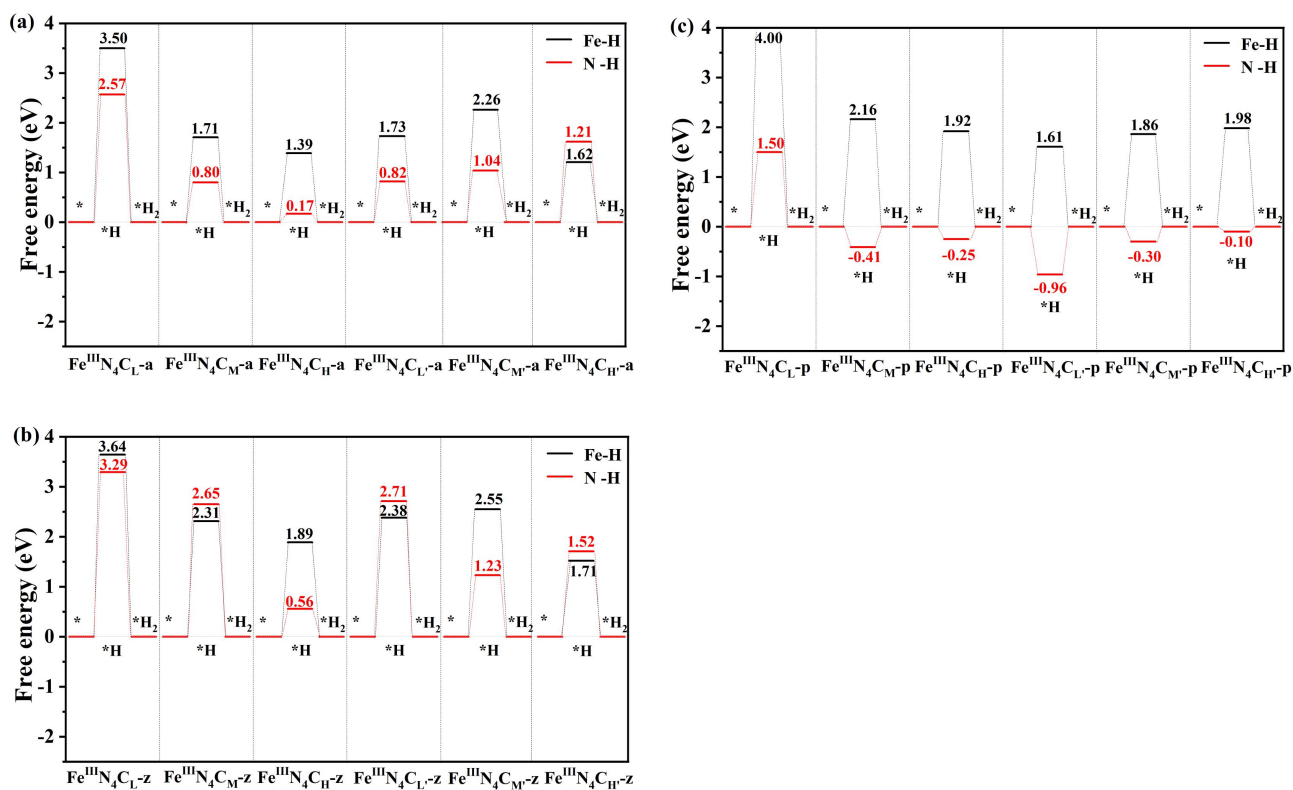


Figure S9. Gibbs free energy diagrams of the simulated HER at 0 V (vs. RHE): (a) Fe^{III}N₄C-a at the different spin states, (b) Fe^{III}N₄C-z at the different spin states and (c) Fe^{III}N₄C-p at the different spin states.

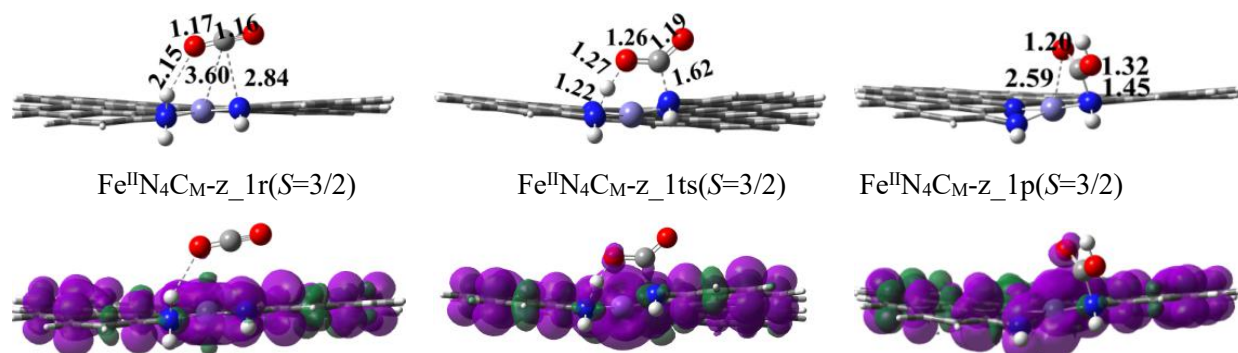


Figure S10. Structures for the reactant (Fe^{II}N₄C_M-z_1r), the transition state (Fe^{II}N₄C_M-z_1ts) and the product (Fe^{II}N₄C_M-z_1p) of the COOH formation with the corresponding distribution of spin density. All the structures are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) optimizations. The bond lengths are given in Å. The isosurface value of spin densities is 0.001 au.

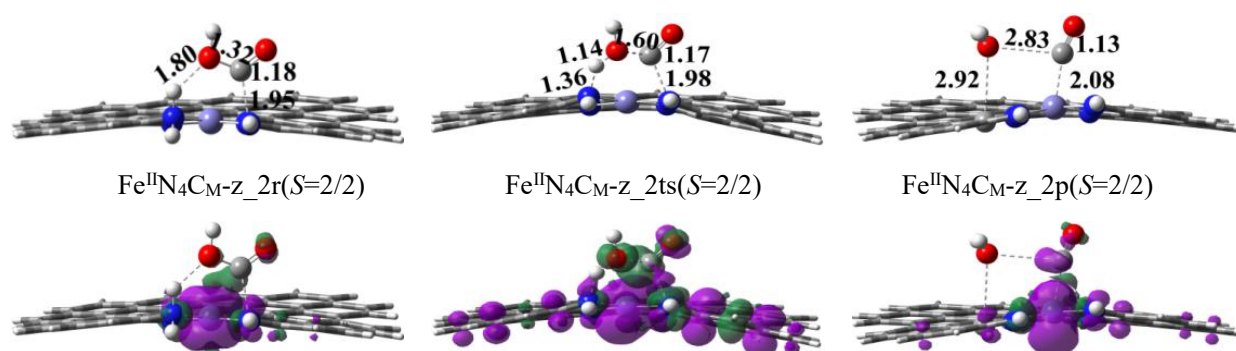


Figure S11. Structures for the reactant ($\text{Fe}^{\text{II}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-z}}\text{2r}$), the transition state ($\text{Fe}^{\text{II}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-z}}\text{2ts}$) and the product ($\text{Fe}^{\text{II}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-z}}\text{2p}$) of the CO formation with the corresponding distribution of spin density. All the structures are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) optimizations. The bond lengths are given in Å. The isosurface value of spin densities is 0.001 au.

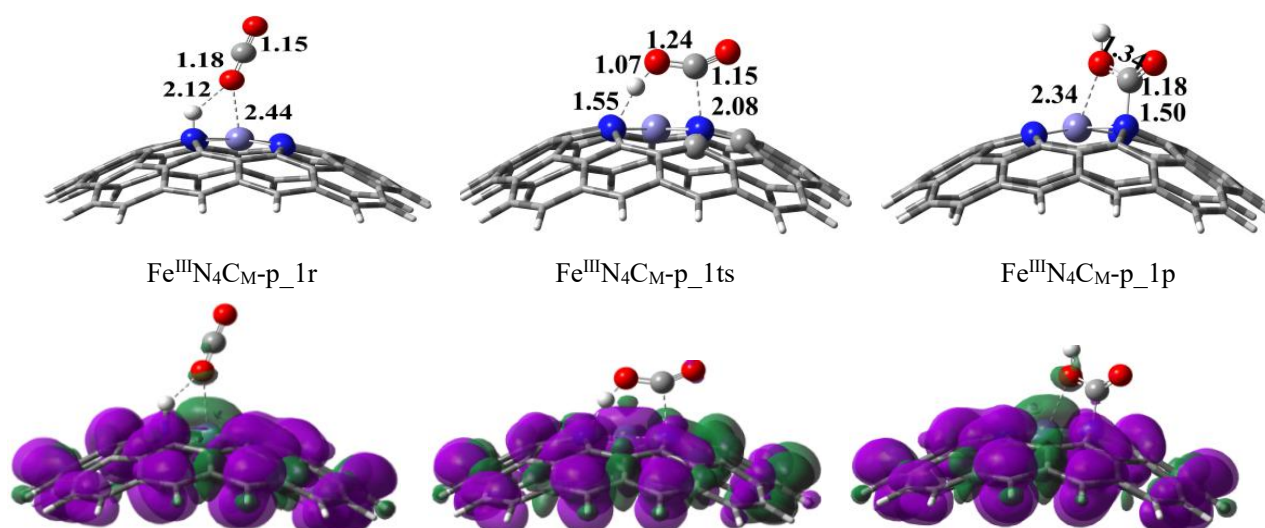


Figure S12. Structures for the reactant ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-p}}\text{1r}$), the transition state ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-p}}\text{1ts}$) and the product ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_{\text{M-p}}\text{1p}$) of the COOH formation with the corresponding distribution of spin density. All the structures are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) optimizations. The bond lengths are given in Å. The isosurface value of spin densities is 0.001 au.

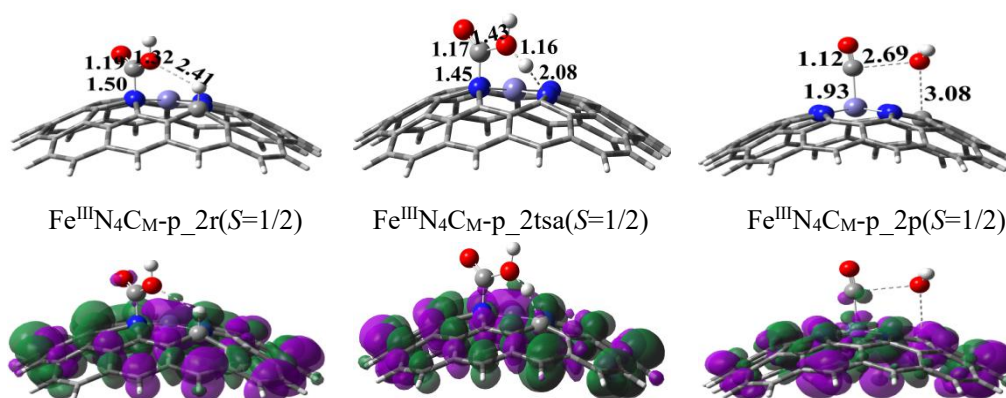
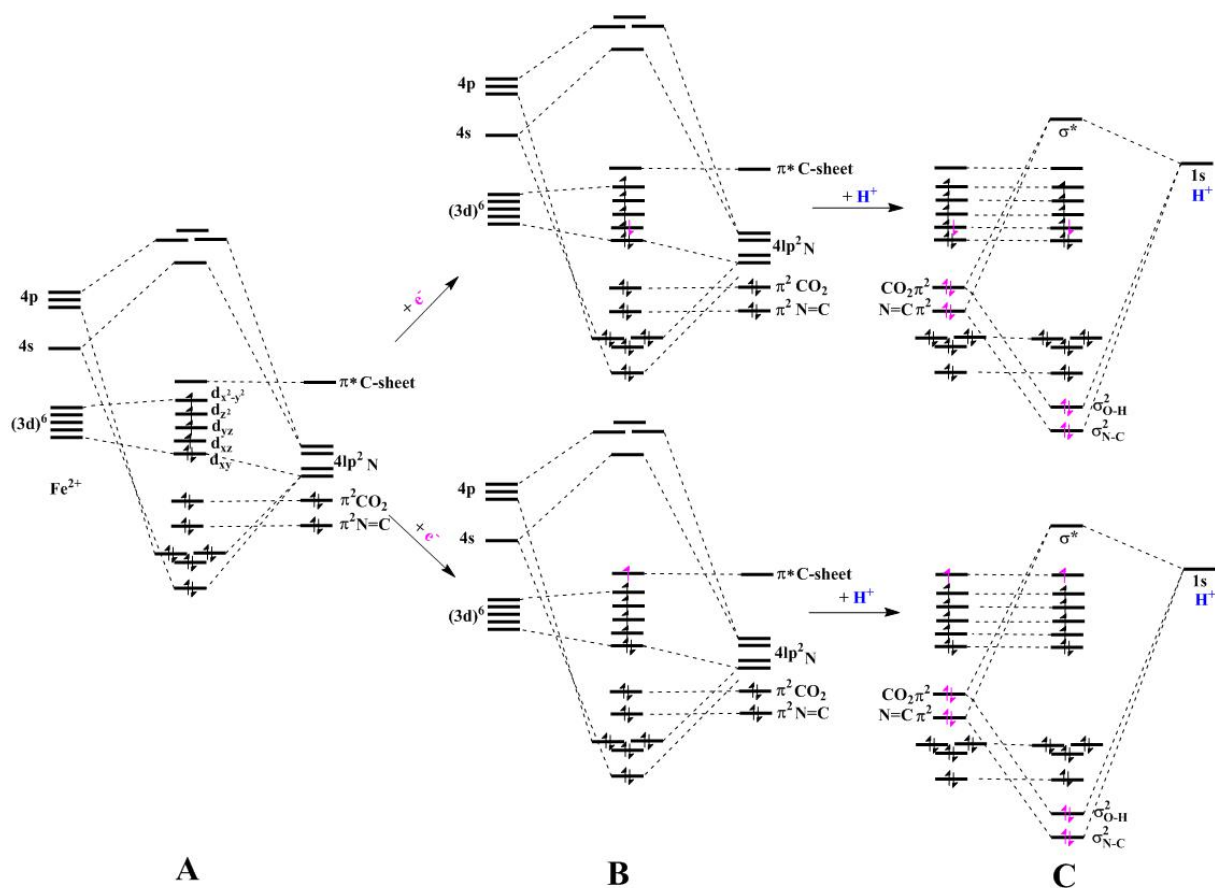


Figure S13. Structures for the reactant ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_M\text{-p_2r}$), the transition state ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_M\text{-p_2ts}$) and the product ($\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_M\text{-p_2p}$) of the CO formation with the corresponding distribution of spin density. All the structures are gained through the M06-2X/6-31G(d,p) optimizations. The bond lengths are given in Å. The isosurface value of spin densities is 0.001 au.

When the COOH moiety is further reduced to CO and H_2O , our DFT calculations revealed that the N–H can not serve as the proton donor for the pyrrole-type $\text{Fe}^{\text{III}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_M\text{-p}$. Therefore, we considered the ambient C–H to act as a proton donor since the C atoms around the Fe- N_4 moiety can stably absorb hydrogen atoms.



Scheme S1. Diagrams of molecular orbital energy levels for the formation of $\text{Fe}^{\text{II}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_H\text{-a}$ (**A**), the possible molecular orbital for $\text{Fe}^{\text{II}}\text{N}_4\text{C}_H\text{-a}$ gaining an electron (**B**) and the protonation of the CO_2 O_1 -site (**C**). The coplanar FeN_4 and C-sheet causes the energy of π^* of C-sheet to be nearly equal to the d -orbitals of Fe^{2+} , which may accept an electron, as shown in **B**. The protonation of a O-atom of CO_2 accompanies ET from the electrode sheet to CO_2 , which is achieved by breaking a π bond of CO_2 to form the new O-H σ bond and breaking planar $\text{N}=\text{C}$ π bond to produce a new N-C σ bond, as shown in **C**.