

Report to City Council from CEC – Energy Score Opt-Out

To: Columbia City Council

From: Climate and Environment Commission

Date: October 18, 2021

Subject: Increasing Accessibility of Home Energy Score information for Columbia

The Climate and Environment Commission recommends that the Columbia City Council direct the city staff to implement with all haste a change to the availability of energy scores for residences that participate in the Home Performance with Energy Star (HPwES) program offered by Columbia Water and Light, provided it is found to be consistent with Federal and State laws by City of Columbia legal counsel. Today, this information is private unless the property owner opts-in to make the information public.

Establishing publicly available home energy efficiency scores is critical to enabling the local market economy for rentals and house sales to further the goals of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from buildings. There are around 4,000 homes in Columbia that have received a Home Energy Score that are not publicly available. Qualifying properties include single family homes and some duplexes and condominiums.

Implementing an opt-out process for these scores instead of an opt-in process would increase the availability of these data to be used in property purchase and rental transactions. The availability of this information will increase the likelihood that buyers and renters will consider the information and create a market demand for energy efficient housing. Further implementing this change will help residents understand which homes are truly affordable for them both in terms of property costs, rent or mortgage, and in utility costs.

Creating a market demand for energy efficient housing, publicly available energy efficiency scores and continued availability of the Home Performance with Energy Star program will help achieve the following CAAP actions and goals:

H-1.1.1 Promote and offer incentives for improving residential energy efficiency during retrofit projects that exceed existing building energy code requirements. For example, using higher performance insulation materials in order to meet the new construction energy code standards.

H-1.1.4 Develop and test energy performance rating/labeling program for homes listed for sales or upon rental license renewal (Priority for 2020 and 2021)

H -1.5.1 Incentivize switching space and water heating from fossil fuel based to electric heat pumps

Reduce communitywide greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) 35% by 2035, 80% by 2050 and 100% by 2060 from 2015 baseline year GHG inventory.

Therefore, we request the City Council

1. Support city staff's development and implementation, with urgency, of an "opt-out" process for future home performance energy scores
2. Support City staff's development and implementation, with urgency, of a notification and "opt-out" process for existing scores that are currently private to make this information available.

Sincerely,

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Carolyn Amparan, Chair, Climate and Environment Commission