



# County of Yolo

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## HOME ENERGY LABELING

Proposed Early Action to Implement Resolution No. 20-114 Related to the Climate Crisis

### PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action will create a mandatory Home Energy Score Program for homes listed for sale in the unincorporated area. Yolo County would require homeowners to complete a home energy assessment prior to listing a home for sale, which involves a trained technician assessing a home's energy use and assigning a score on a one to ten scale. This score motivates home buyers and sellers to improve the home's energy efficiency and increase the score by installing energy-efficient appliances or making other improvements. The County will work with partners to provide toolkits, checklists, information about rebates/incentives, and other recommendations to homeowners regarding options to improve home energy efficiency. The County would host webinars for real estate agents to educate them about the program and coordinate with local job training centers to train home energy assessment technicians. The County will also evaluate options to subsidize the cost of home energy assessments for low-income households and/or provide additional funding beyond state/federal rebates to increase the energy efficiency of homes for low-income households.

### BACKGROUND

The California Air Resources Board estimates residential and commercial buildings are responsible for 25% of greenhouse gas emissions in California. Therefore, improving the energy efficiency of existing residential buildings has become a priority for the state. Similar Home Energy Score Programs have been implemented in Berkeley, California and Portland, Oregon. While home energy labeling is mandatory at time of home listing in Portland and at time of sale in Berkeley, improving the home energy score is not mandatory. In Berkeley, the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) provides incentives to low scoring homes to implement energy efficiency measures and partners with Rising Sun, a job training program, to hire and train technicians. BayREN's Green Labeling Program has two offerings: 1) Regional Home Energy Sector Score (HEScore) that trains assessors to complete a HEScore and provides incentives for scores, and 2) continuing education and other opportunities for realtors, appraisers and lenders to increase their ability to understand, market, and evaluate energy efficient and green homes. The primary objective of the program is to establish integrated and aligned green labeling to increase awareness and transparency of residential energy information. In 2020, BayREN, through the Green Labeling program, provided single family homes with 1,626 Home Energy Scores and \$317,300 in incentives. In Berkeley, home energy assessment fees are paid by the seller. In Portland, assessment fees are paid by the utility.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING POLICIES**

The February 2021 *Yolo County Sustainability Plan* includes the following relevant strategies to support this project:

- Action ED 1.1. Support existing County outreach and awareness programs arounds stormwater quality, energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste
- Action ED 1.1. Work with indigenous groups, vulnerable populations, and community-based organizations in creating sustainability outreach and education programs
- Action AQ 2.2 Work with school districts, community colleges, and career technical education providers to develop a green workforce pipeline
- Action BU 2.1. Provide incentive programs to encourage electrification of existing homes

The 2011 *Yolo County Climate Action Plan* includes the following relevant strategies:

- Measure E-2: Reduce energy consumption in existing residential and non-residential units

## **BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED/VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

This action could benefit low-income households in disadvantaged communities by providing an incentive for homeowners to increase the energy efficiency of homes before placing the home on the market for sale. These energy efficiency improvements will in turn reduce ongoing energy and water costs for low-income households, therefore freeing up limited income for other household needs. To realize these benefits, the County needs to ensure low-income households who are selling their home have sufficient resources to pay for the energy audit required as part of the home energy labeling program, as well as sufficient funding to implement energy efficiency improvements. This program also could provide workforce training opportunities for residents of disadvantaged communities to conduct home energy audits.

## **GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION**

The amount of greenhouse gas emission reduction resulting from this proposal is unknown, although the California Air Resources Board estimates residential and commercial buildings are responsible for 25% of GHG emissions in California. Implementation of all components of Measure E-2 of the 2011 CAP was estimated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3% by 2030. This measure assumes that 20% of existing (2008) residential units and 10% of commercial buildings in the county would implement energy efficiency improvements that reduce energy consumption by 15%. The number of households that will benefit from this proposal in the unincorporated area is unknown but is likely small given only 20,000 people live in unincorporated Yolo County. However, the transformative nature of the project may encourage other jurisdictions to adopt the program. Yolo County will develop a mechanism to measure greenhouse gas emission reduction as part of this project.

## **CO-BENEFITS**

The program may create “green” jobs by creating training and employment opportunities for people working to assess and retrofit homes. This program also will improve climate resiliency, particularly by providing efficient cooling during heat waves.

## TRANSFORMATIVE/REPLICABLE ELEMENTS

If Yolo County successfully implements this program, Yolo County would be one of the first counties to require a Home Energy Score. This action could result in adoption of the program by other local jurisdictions in the area.

## DEGREE OF READINESS

Tools to implement this program, including a scoring portal and labeling, already exist and can be accessed for free on the [Department of Energy Website](#). Yolo County must adopt an ordinance to require home energy labeling in the unincorporated area.

## COSTS

Yolo County has not yet estimated the cost of developing this program.

## FUNDING

Yolo County will seek grants to implement this program (administration, incentives, and/or workforce development), but may also allocate General Fund or American Rescue Plan funds as part of the annual budget process.

## CONCERNS

This project could be seen as placing an unfair cost/burden on homeowners, especially low-income homeowners. If the County subsidizes the cost of home energy assessment and/or provide additional funding to supplement state/federal rebates, it may help address this concern.

## PARTNERS

Yolo County may collaborate with real estate agents, utility providers, local job training centers, and other units of local government, such as cities to implement this program. To secure funding the County may work with the U.S. Department of Energy and the California Energy Commission to secure funding to support the program.

## PERSONNEL

In the chart below, please list names, role, and contact information for all project leader(s) and project partners.

Name	Role (Lead or Partner)	Email	Phone
Kristen Wraithwall	Lead	kristen.wraithwall@yolocounty.org	530-666-8047