

DEFINING BESO – Draft

In 2015, Berkeley transitioned from RECO, a Residential Energy Conservation Ordinance that had a specific list of measures that were mandatory upon the sale of a building, to BESO, a Building Energy Use Analysis that gives owners a score with suggested, but not mandatory, actions to lower their energy use. The BESO assessment tool was developed for the Department of Energy with the National Laboratories, including our own Lawrence Berkeley Lab. It contains a simple 10-level building energy score that ranges from a low of 1, indicating a building needing significant improvements, to 10, a building needing little improvement. This assessment is used nationally and is part of a DOE program and is necessarily broad and general. In the 9-counties of the Bay Area, StopWaste.org handles the program which involves outreach and mentoring of Cities with training of inspectors. Building a pool of inspectors who are able to assess buildings and make money on doing it is crucial. Many green initiatives have failed because people have not been able to develop a career with a sustainable income.

The goals of the BESO are to allow owners to get valuable information about their homes' energy use and make an informed decision as to whether to do upgrades. Moving forward may then require a more in-depth assessment, allowing owners to get rebates on their improvements. Long-term, these scores may be included as part of the sales information on buildings and allow them to command higher prices as a result of their higher scores.

The activity of assessment is essential to the reduction of greenhouse gases in buildings. How it is used and configured is important but still open to debate. BESO is a very general tool but it is within the purview of Berkeley or any other locality to make additions to its inspection. For instance, knowing that the greater electrification of buildings will be needed to reduce GHG, an assessment of the current condition and the future need could be included relatively easily. These decisions are entirely local and would not change to regional program.

Having a mandatory program is important to move more citizens forward and to allow the pool of certified professionals to grow. Including mandatory measures may build BESO's significance. A major improvement in efficacy would be to tie it to the SB350 so that owners know how they can participate in the States mandated climate goals.