

Newton City Council Discusses Ordinance To Reduce Building Emissions

“A very important element of our climate action plan is to use less,” said Deborah Crossley, councilor-at-large for Ward 5. “We know that, in Newton, about 400 buildings account for 27 percent of Newton’s emissions. This represents an opportunity to reduce that.

Boston's Building Energy Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) requires owners of existing and new commercial and residential buildings over 35,000 square feet to report energy use and emissions to the city every five years. Despite high levels of compliance, however, the ordinance failed to reduce emissions in Boston. As a result, Boston passed an updated version of BERDO in September 2021 that requires buildings to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The updated ordinance sets mandatory milestones for achieving that goal, requiring buildings to reach a specified lower emission level every five years.

A Newton BERDO would be based on Boston BERDO, but tailored to Newton. Newton can use the lessons they learned and challenges they faced to speed up their own process. The commission will create a BERDO plan in Newton that will roll out in two phases. This will allow Newton to adjust the plan based on different factors, such as the size and type of buildings, timelines, fees, and enforcement of emission requirements.

The commission is leaning toward an ordinance on buildings over 20,000 square feet, though many other details still remain undecided. Even with mayoral approval, the commission wants City Council support before investing more time in the project.

The Newton City Council was supportive of the proposed Newton BERDO plan, as many council members already feel the city is falling behind.

(Resource: <https://www.bcheights.com/2022/03/24/newton-berdo-discussion/>)