Frequently Asked Questions

Ordinance 33-O-16
Building Energy and Water Use Benchmarking
Prepared on 10/1/16

This document was prepared by City staff to provide explanatory information on the proposed Building Energy and Water Use Benchmarking Ordinance. The ordinance is scheduled to be considered at the full City Council meeting on Monday, November 28, 2016.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking is the process of tracking the energy and water consumed, over time, of an existing building and comparing the results to similar buildings or an applicable standard. The goal of a benchmarking ordinance is to empower buildings to reduce their carbon footprint through improvements in energy and water efficiency.

2. What are the benefits of benchmarking?

Benchmarking has been proven to lower building energy usage and to reduce operating expenses. An EPA analysis of roughly 35,000 buildings utilizing the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager benchmarking tool showed a 7% average energy savings over three years, with the initial lowest-performing buildings making the greatest improvements.

3. Why is benchmarking important?

Existing buildings account for the largest single share of the community's greenhouse gas emissions and play a crucial role in the City's emissions reduction goals and its greater sustainability efforts.

4. Which buildings will be required to comply with the ordinance?

Buildings in Evanston 20,000-square-feet and greater in size. This includes apartment buildings, strip malls, schools, churches, hospitals, condominium buildings, etc. In addition, City-owned buildings 10,000-square-feet or greater in size are required to comply.

5. When are buildings required to comply?

Buildings will be required to comply based on their size. The largest buildings will be required to comply by June 30, 2017. Each successive group of buildings will be required to comply in subsequent years; see Table 1.

Table 1

First Reporting Deadline	Building Size (sq. ft.)	Building Type	Number of Buildings	Estimated Total Sq. Ft.
June 30, 2017	100,000+	Type 1	90	22,702,235
June 30, 2017	10,000+	City Buildings	15	2,437,489
June 30, 2018	99,999 - 50,000	Type 2	161	11,078,165
June 30, 2019	49,999 - 20,000	Type 3	435	14,199,514
Totals			**701**	**50,417,403**

6. How will buildings comply?

Covered buildings will be required to utilize Portfolio Manager, a free online tool administered by the U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR program. All municipalities with benchmarking ordinances use this online tool. Portfolio Manager is specifically designed to make it easy for buildings to enter data and create reports that can be shared internally or with the City. All the data require by the City will be shared through Portfolio Manager. Emailing spreadsheets will not be required.

7. Will buildings be required to make energy efficiency improvements?

No. The ordinance only requires buildings report their energy and water usage. The ordinance does not mandate that buildings reduce their greenhouse gas emissions or reduce their energy or water consumption. The process of a building owner tracking their building performance and comparing that performance to other similar buildings will allow the building owner to make informed decisions about whether and how to invest in any improvements.

7. How much time will it take?

The time required for the initial setup on Portfolio Manager depends on the size and type of building, but should not take more than 45 minutes after all the required information has been gathered. Once the account is set up, it only takes a few minutes to periodically enter the energy and water use data.

8. How is a building's square footage measured?

The ordinance refers to the definition of gross floor area (GFA) used by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager which reads, "The Gross Floor Area (GFA) is the total property square footage, measured between the principal exterior surfaces of the enclosing fixed walls of the building(s). This includes all areas inside the building(s) including supporting areas. GFA is not the same as rentable space, but rather includes all area inside the building(s).

Include in GFA: lobbies, tenant areas, common areas, meeting rooms, break rooms, atriums (count the base level only), restrooms, elevator shafts, stairwells, mechanical equipment areas, basements, storage rooms." Source: https://portfoliomanager.energystar.gov/pm/glossary#GrossFloorArea.

For example, a building measuring 50 feet by 90 feet with five stories and 15 residential units would be said to have a gross floor area of 22,500 square feet (50 x 90 = 4500, 4500 x 5 stories = 22,500).

9. Do buildings with multiple units have to report data for each unit individually?

No. The ordinance requires that buildings collect and report aggregated whole building energy and water usage. Data from individual units (residential or commercial) is not required and will not be tracked. The City will develop a process by which property representatives can request whole building utility usage from one of the utilities (ComEd, Nicor Gas and the City of Evanston). ComEd has had the ability to do this for any of its customers for years, Nicor has agreed to work with the City to develop a process, and the City has the ability to do this for many buildings already. Evanston water customers can learn more about how to get better water usage data by signing up for the City's free Neptune IQ Water Management software: http://www.cityofevanston.org/news/2015/03/city-of-evanston-launches-online-water-usage-management-tool-for-water-customers/.

10. Are condominiums covered by the ordinance?

Yes, condominiums buildings are covered by the ordinance. The definition can be a bit confusing (see section 4-22-3 of the ordinance) but condominiums represent a special case where each condo unit has their own separate PIN but are all part of one building. In this case, as with all covered buildings, the ordinance will require that property representatives report on the whole building energy usage, not by unit.

11. What will the City do with reported data?

The City will release periodic reports highlighting trends across different building types and will highlight buildings that are performing particularly well. The format of the report has not been finalized but may resemble the City of Chicago's data portal.

Data from individual buildings will not be made publically available until the second year that building is required to report. For example, a 150,000-square-foot building would be required to report their 2016 data by June 30, 2017. The City would not disclose that

building's individual 2016 data. The second year that the building reports data, June 30, 2018, the City will make individually attributable data publicly available. Note that not all data that buildings will enter into Portfolio Manager will be reported to the City. For example, the City will not ask for operational informational such as the number of full-time employees in the building.

12. What other cities have benchmarking ordinances?

More than a dozen cities nationwide have adopted mandatory benchmarking ordinances. The list includes Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Berkeley, Boulder, Kansas City, Austin, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Washington DC, New York City, Boston, and Cambridge.

Additional details on the ordinance development process and a link to the draft ordinance can be found at www.cityofevanston.org/benchmarking.

Please direct any questions or concerns to Kumar Jensen, Environmental Project Coordinator at kjensen@cityofevanston.org or 847-448-8199.