

THE CHARGING STATION

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF A²ZERO AND
THE ANN ARBOR OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS



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EVENTS PREVIEW:

Holiday Neighborhood Swap
Day: Sat. Dec 9, 10 AM – 3 PM,
2145 Independence Blvd.

Multifamily Benchmarking
Workshop: Wed. Dec 13, 11 AM
– 12:15 PM, Virtual.

2024 Sustainability Forums:
Last Wednesday of Each Month,
January – May, 6 – 7:30 PM,
Location TBA

See more on page 7.



WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor’s Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI). In this issue of the Charging Station, OSI is delighted to share details about two new, innovative programs that will help increase capacity to do the work of equitable decarbonization and increased climate resiliency. If you are interested in learning more about any of the programs featured in this issue and how you can get involved, more detail can be found on our website:

www.a2gov.org/sustainability. As always, thank you for your interest in sustainability activities in Ann Arbor!

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Equity and justice are at the center of A²ZERO and staff in OSI are continuing to ground our work in these critical principles. In that light, we’d like to take a moment to honor the geographic and historic space we share. We acknowledge that the land the City of Ann Arbor occupies is the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe and Wyandot peoples. We further acknowledge that our city stands, like almost all property in the United States, on lands obtained, generally in unconscionable ways, from indigenous peoples. The taking of this land was formalized by the Treaty of Detroit in 1807. Knowing where we live, work, study, and recreate does not change the past, but a thorough understanding of the ongoing consequences of this past can empower us in our work to create a future that supports human flourishing and justice for all individuals.

HAVE YOU H.E.R.D.?

CITY OF ANN ARBOR'S NEW HOME ENERGY RATING DISCLOSURE PROGRAM LAUNCH

The City of Ann Arbor's [Home Energy Rating Disclosure](#) (HERD) ordinance goes into effect March 12, 2024. At that time, people purchasing a single-family home in Ann Arbor will be able to view a property's Home Energy Score (HES) when considering a purchase. The HES was developed by the Department of Energy and provides reliable information on the home's energy efficiency, projected energy costs, and greenhouse gas emissions/climate impact. The report will also include additional information on cost-effective energy improvement opportunities.

In support of the HERD ordinance launch, the Office of Sustainability and Innovation (OSI) will be offering subsidized Home Energy Score (HES) assessments to supplement the private market and help meet the anticipated demand. The City of Ann Arbor has hired two energy professionals to perform these assessments for Ann Arbor residents, Jerrell Wylie and Steve Christensen.

MEET STEVE

Steve Christensen, Energy Assessor, was introduced to green building principles in 2000 while constructing ENERGY STAR qualified homes as Materials and Logistics Coordinator for Habitat for Humanity-Detroit. In 2004, his focus shifted to improving the energy efficiency of existing homes in Detroit as an Energy Educator at the WARM Training Center. Over the next 19 years, Steve continued his green building work by serving as a program manager for a green building certification program, an energy auditor, trainer and quality control inspector for the Michigan Department of Energy, and Assistant Director of Weatherization for Wayne Metro Community Action Agency. Steve joined OSI to support implementation of the HERD Ordinance. In all these roles, Steve has always promoted the value of empowering the occupant with information to reduce energy usage and energy bills.

Contact Steve at schristensen@a2gov.org

Effective in March 2024, individuals selling their homes will be required to obtain a Home Energy Score, and that score will be published with the home listing. Scores will be accompanied by a report that provides clear information and guidance for improving the home's energy efficiency.

If you are an owner or renter of a single-family detached home or side-by-side townhome, you are welcome to contact Jerrell or Steve for information on having an HES generated for your home. Each HES is valid for 8 years or until any major

renovations or upgrades are made to the home. Learn more about Home Energy Scores and the Home Energy Rating Disclosure program [here](#).

MEET JERRELL

Homegrown in Detroit, Jerrell Wylie, Energy Analyst, will perform home energy assessments and front-face with community members, providing education and resources connecting residents to the City's A²ZERO goals and climate action. Jerrell has over six years of experience in the energy industry, including completing energy assessments in residential homes and small businesses. Jerrell has worked on the Energy Efficiency Assistance Program with DTE and the Helping Neighbors Program with Consumer's Energy, which help qualified low-income families receive a free home energy assessment, installation of free energy saving products, and education on reducing energy use in their homes for long-term savings.

Contact Jerrell at jwylie@a2gov.org



Steve (left) and Jerrell (right) in the field working out details for the HERD program launch.

AT THE CORPS OF WHAT WE DO

NEW ANN ARBOR CLIMATE CORPS BRINGS CAPACITY TO SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

This October, OSI welcomed the inaugural cohort of the Ann Arbor Climate Corps, a new AmeriCorps program that increases OSI's capacity to reach across a variety of sustainability initiatives identified in the A²ZERO Plan. AmeriCorps members will engage directly with residents throughout the city, helping them understand and access opportunities to improve comfort, enhance health and safety, reduce energy bills, and increase resilience while addressing the climate crisis. The team is already off to a great start as they learn about OSI's current projects and begin building their outreach strategy. AmeriCorps members will work closely with many OSI programs, including the 10,000 Trees initiative, the Circular Economy, Home Energy Rating Disclosures, Sustainable Food Systems, Climate Millage Rebates and Incentives, and the Bryant neighborhood community collaboration.



Celebrating 30 Years of AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a Not a Moment. It's a Movement.

From September 2023 to September 2024, AmeriCorps is celebrating three decades of national service. If you're an AmeriCorps alum in the Ann Arbor community and would like to be notified of upcoming Alumni Celebration events, [share your contact info here](#).

About AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers.

Learn more at AmeriCorps.gov



Gearing up for a burn training with NAP!

Natural Areas Preservation (NAP) coordinates a portion of the members' service, collaborating with OSI to protect and improve natural areas in our park system. These areas improve Ann Arbor's resilience to climate change by increasing overall carbon sequestration and reducing the negative impacts increased temperatures and precipitation have on public and private property. The team has already been in the field enjoying the crisp autumnal weather helping NAP remove invasive buckthorn at Mary Beth Doyle Park. Members also participated in power-tools training at the Barton Nature Area, as well as completing trainings needed to assist NAP's proscribed burn crew.

AT THE CORPS OF WHAT WE DO

NEW ANN ARBOR CLIMATE CORPS BRINGS CAPACITY TO SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES



Maggie Halpern (left), program coordinator, in discussion with the Climate Corps members.

Many on the team are longtime members of the Ann Arbor community and several have recently moved to the area from both near (Ohio) and far (Washington State). The AmeriCorps members bring a wide breadth of knowledge and skills to this work, including planning and urban design, policy and data analysis, ecosystem conservation, paleoclimatology, environmental education programming, sustainable farming expertise, environmental justice advocacy, and even environmental comics design!



The Ann Arbor Climate Corps AmeriCorps team is nine members strong! Here they are at a NAP training day.

OSI is excited to host an AmeriCorps program because it allows us to increase our presence in the community while also providing valuable career exploration to future sustainability leaders. AmeriCorps is rooted in the goals of uniting and strengthening communities, positively impacting the lives of those we serve and those who serve, as well as being leaders in all sectors working for the betterment of communities across America. These goals resonate with OSI's work in pursuit of an equitable, just, and sustainable transition to carbon neutrality.



Maggie Halpern, Climate Corps Program Coordinator. Contact Maggie at mhalpern@a2gov.org.

Interested in having announcements posted in *The Charging Station*?
Contact Grace, Communications Coordinator at GFranke@a2gov.org



SHOPPING GUIDE

GREEN GIFTING IDEAS FROM OSI

During a season that is heavy with gift exchange, we hope you find these to be useful throughout the year!

THE GIFT OF THRIFTING

Find the perfect treasure for a friend. Better yet, give someone the gift of a day of thrifting together! It is also a great way to connect intergenerationally. See our [circular economy map](#) for a list of amazing thrift stores in our area!

THE GIFT OF LESS

Sometimes the best feeling in the world is making sure an item is being used and treasured, rather than stored in a closet or garage. Start a tradition of intentional re-gifting or offer to help someone donate items for re-sale or re-use.

THE GIFT OF FOOD

Ann Arbor is home to a wide variety of delicious eateries! Or head out to local shops to build a gift basket of delights. CSAs and gift cards are another great option for gifting that goes beyond the winter season.

THE GIFT OF REPAIR

Help a friend or family member with a repair of an item – be it a bike, a favorite lamp, or other treasure – there are many resources to assist! Even better, find a [community repair clinic](#) and go in together to learn repair and repurposing techniques.

THE GIFT OF PERSONAL CARE

Introduce friends and family to personal care products free of plastic packaging and made with ethically sourced ingredients.

THE GIFT OF TIME

Take a class, cook, craft, or just visit together. Go thrifting, stop in at a repair clinic, or volunteer at a local nonprofit together. Too busy right now? Present a coupon for redemption at a later date because so often, the greatest gift we can offer is time spent together.

THE GIFT OF WRAPPING

Make the wrapping part of the gift! An upcycled pillowcase, t-shirt, hand towel, tote, or a piece of fabric tied and decorated with upcycled or natural materials – these are just a few ideas for gift wrapping that is sustainable, beautiful, and fun.

THE GIFT OF SUPPORTING SOMEONE'S PASSION

Make a donation to a non-profit doing sustainable work on behalf of the community!



If you are looking for resources for any of these gifting ideas, please check out the [A²ZERO Community Collaborators webpage](#). This network of businesses, nonprofits, service agencies, and institutions prioritize sustainable practices in our community and support the A²ZERO strategies for a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030. You will find links on the page to connect with each Collaborator directly. By supporting them, you are supporting sustainability. Thank you!

The traditional [Japanese technique for wrapping packages using furoshiki](#) is a sustainable practice that is fun and beautiful.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Julie Roth, the Energy Manager for OSI, has been recognized by Crain's as a notable energy leader in our community for her work and efforts in creating the Ann Arbor Solarize program. This program is centered around gathering residents and their neighbors together to learn about residential solar and provides an opportunity for them to participate in a bulk-buy. To date, there have been nearly 600 roof-top solar installations, which is a testament to her hard work and dedication. Please join us in congratulating Julie in receiving this award!

A²ZERO Ambassadors Application Now Open!

The A²ZERO Ambassador Program provides an opportunity for interested individuals to dive deeply into pathways for advancing local sustainability initiatives, resilience, and carbon neutrality. To learn more about the program and apply to join our 6th Ambassador cohort, please visit [A²ZERO Ambassadors \(a2gov.org\)](https://a2gov.org). Applications open until February 14th at 5 PM.

Thinking about getting solar?

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to purchase solar panels for your home, now is the perfect time to get started! [Ann Arbor Solarize](#), our community bulk-buy solar program, is recruiting residents for groups kicking off in January. Solarize brings together neighbors and friends, along with participating solar installers, to learn about residential solar and bulk purchasing options. If you are interested in joining a group or considering hosting your own group, contact Joe Lange at JLange@a2gov.org.

Launch of Geothermal Advisory Services Request for Proposals

The Office of Sustainability and Innovations recently released an RFP for Geothermal Advisory Services to assist in investigating the feasibility of expanding geothermal adoption, inclusive of district geothermal, in Ann Arbor. For more information and to share with potentially interested bidders, see RFP 23-65 located on the [City's Procurement website](#).

EGLE announces funding available for small businesses to implement pollution prevention and sustainability projects identified during environmental assessments

A total of \$100,000 is available for projects that meet the scope of work requirements in the [Request for Proposals](#) (RFP). A minimum 25 percent match of the total requested grant funds is required of all applicants. Generally, the grants awarded are from \$10,000 to \$25,000. Applications will be accepted until all funds are committed, or **March 3, 2024**, whichever comes first. More information is [available online](#) and [interested folk can apply online](#). For questions, please [reach out to Rebecca DeGrazia](#).

OSI Wins U.S. EPA Government to Government Grant

Ann Arbor was recently awarded a [U.S. EPA Government to Government grant](#) to advance local and regional resilience initiatives. This award will help advance resilience hubs in the City and throughout the County and help support the creation of a regional resilience network. More details about the initiative coming soon.

Reduce your carbon footprint with plant-forward food choices

On average, food comprises 10 - 30% of a household's carbon footprint. VegMichigan has a variety of free programs tailored to businesses or community groups interested in learning how best to bring climate-friendly meals into workspaces or personal practices. Interested in hosting a 30-Day Plant-Based Pledge – including a free starter bag of plant-based food items – or investigating options for “plant-first” menus? Learn more at vegmichigan.org or contact the VegMichigan team directly to get started: Katie Johnson Katie@VegMichigan.org and Kim Korona Kim@VegMichigan.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Utility Pole Chargers

The City is delighted to share that we recently unveiled the State of Michigan's first two utility-pole mounted electric vehicle chargers. [Check out this great video about the unveiling](#), or head to 407 N. Ingalls Street or 808 E Kingsley to see one of the chargers in action.

The Bryant Community Center is Going Carbon Neutral

Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, the City in collaboration with Community Action Network is planning to transition the Bryant Community Center into a fully carbon neutral building. The grant funds will also help turn the site into a living, learning laboratory of what it means to transition a home to carbon neutrality.

Updated Composting Policies – the City of Ann Arbor is launching updated composting policies on January 1, 2024. *There is no change to policies concerning food and yard waste.* Rather, this change relates to manufactured items (such as compostable cups, flatware, plates) and you can click [here](#) for more details. For general information about composting in the City of Ann Arbor, please head over to a2gov.org/compost. Please direct any questions to Jenny Petoskey, Solid Waste Outreach & Compliance Specialist at jpetoskey@a2gov.org.

Bryant Video

Thanks to the McKnight Foundation, we are delighted to share a new video about our work to make the Bryant neighborhood the nation's first carbon neutral neighborhood. [Check out the video here!](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Holiday Neighborhood Swap Day

Saturday, December 9th | 10 AM – 3 PM | the Church of the Good Shephard (2145 Independence Blvd.)
Coming just in time for the holidays, you can give your unwanted items a new home instead of sending them to the landfill – or find that item you've been looking for, without having to buy it.

Multifamily Benchmarking Workshop

Wednesday, December 13th | 11 AM – 12:15 PM | Virtual
Get a start on meeting the City of Ann Arbor's Benchmarking requirement for parcels with more than 20,000 SF of building area. Registration required. Contact Jan Culbertson at jculbertson@2030districts.org for details.

2024 Sustainability Forums

Last Wednesday of Each Month, January - May | 6 – 7:30 PM | Ann Arbor District Library, Downtown
OSI is bringing the Sustainability Series back in 2024 for another season at the Ann Arbor District Library! Join us in person or online. Please hold the dates! Next month's Charging Station will include a list of session topics and registration links. We look forward to engaging and sharing with you!

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events.

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