

A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy

Vision

As the fifth-largest city in the state, Ann Arbor is built on a foundation of creativity, innovation, and education, as seen through the lens of valuing, and improving, the lives of all its residents. That, however, has not always been how the system has worked.

In 2020, when the City adopted a Living Carbon Neutrality Plan known as A²ZERO, aimed at achieving community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, it committed to assuring that the voices of its residents, particularly its frontline communities, be a key force in designing and implementing the process that brings us into a circular economy, the purpose of which is to let no person, thing, or place be treated as disposable.

Many of our residents have practiced in such a way for years; for others, it's a new concept.

To be successful, work to advance a circular economy requires the development of a “community engagement strategy” that uses an equitable and just communication system, enabling Ann Arborites to have their ideas and opinions heard and valued as we all work together for our future. The community advisors—the Resident Advisors—with whom we worked as part of the following analysis are helping make this possible. We thank them for their honesty, their care, and their willingness to dig deep.

Our belief is that the Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy as described in this report will have applications as a model for how to communicate, engage, and create in partnership on many projects, current and future.

Please join us in recognizing this first step in the process—a Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy elevating the needs and priorities of frontline populations while respecting their knowledge and experience, developed while doing just that.

Sarah Mason

Sarah Mason
Resource Recovery Manager
City of Ann Arbor, Dept. of Public Works

Missy Stults

Missy Stults
Sustainability and Innovations Director
City of Ann Arbor, Ofc. of Sustainability & Innovations

Acknowledgments

The A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy is the culmination of hard work and collaboration—on the part of both the city and the City. Without the support of the community, this work would not have been possible. Our Resident Advisors' willingness to be a reliable, truthful,

constant presence throughout the process made all the difference. They continued to show up because they were being heard, or on their way to being heard. As a result, leadership and staff from the Ann Arbor Department of Public Works and Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) worked with Ann Arbor Resident Advisors and community partners, resulting in the development of a strategy that says Ann Arbor values, and heeds, the voices of the people who are its community.

Many thanks to every voice who showed up at a variety of locations over time and listened to each other, recognizing that our goal was the same: to develop a strategy that could successfully engage the community in the conversation around the circular economy and, with that, enable it to help shape its future.

Resident Advisors:

Shannon Armstrong, Lindsay Calka, Veronica Contreras, Angela Davis, Mariah Henderson, Yusef Houamed, Husnu Kaplan, Diana McKnight-Morton, Kelly Moore, Rachel Mundus, Fadel Nabils, Fayiza Nabils, Aaron Palmer, Cassie Shamey, Eileen Spring, Elizabeth Tolrud

Project Team:

City of Ann Arbor—Hannah Loftis, Jennifer Petosky, Ryan Piatt
G.O. Williams & Associates—Noah Fye, Annaliese Jakimides, Alan Kennedy III, Carolyn Sagi, Guy O. Williams

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What the Project Team Did

The City of Ann Arbor undertook this project to guide resident engagement around the circular economy (CE). To accomplish this, they retained G.O. Williams & Associates, LLC, who worked with the City and generated this report of the process and outcomes. Included are recommendations for:

- Activities
- Events
- Engagement Techniques
- Messengers
- Timing

We identified and convened a group of 15 residents who met over a series of three face-to-face sessions. In this report we are providing a summary of the ideas stressed by the group in addition to the Team’s findings, operating principles, and recommendations for continued and progressive success. The Resident Advisors embraced the stated goal of the City to “effectively engage the community—*especially frontline communities*—in cocreating a citywide circular economy.” They put in their time and energy to share ideas on how best that vision can be achieved.

The engagement strategy includes:

- Key findings such as:

- The community’s definition of circularity
- Techniques to overcome barriers to participation
- Advice on how the City’s community engagement efforts on the circular economy can more effectively reach and deeply engage:
 - Frontline communities
 - The organizations that serve frontline communities
- Suggestions regarding strategies to initiate new community partnerships to listen more effectively to, learn from, and serve those frontline communities and the organizations that serve them.

In the process of engaging Resident Advisors to research and reflect on the CE, there were many insights into the process of resident engagement. Throughout this report, these insights are identified and discussed. For this reason, this project can also be used as an example for any future resident engagement efforts.

Timeline

December 2022	RFP/Consultant Selection
January 2023	Establish Team and Approach
February 2023	First Phase Interviews
March 2023	Second Phase Interviews
April 2023	Develop Materials Develop Invitation List
May 2023	Send Invitations Meeting 1
June 2023	Meeting 2 Meeting 3
July 2023	Develop Draft Refine Structure
August 2023	Final Draft Review Publish

Team Process

The Project Team met over several weeks to develop a work plan that aligned with the outcomes (activities, events, engagement techniques, messengers, and timing) expressed by the City in the consultant’s Scope of Work. We found it was essential to identify our operating principles at the beginning of our work. We encourage anyone undertaking a similar project to do the same.

For example, the Team committed to actively seek demographically diverse people for our Resident Advisors. We developed a plan to reach outside the circles of people who typically show up for, or are part of, City planning processes. We were also looking for people who could collectively share direct experience with aspects of the Ann Arbor circular economy as it operates today.

Steps we took to identify Resident Advisors included conducting multiple layers of interviews during which we asked people who had a direct connection with the A²ZERO program for names of people they knew, or had heard of, who might be willing to help. We then interviewed the people we found through that process, asking them the same question. Through this multilayered and iterated approach, we identified about 30 people to invite as Resident Advisors. Of that group, 15 participated in the three in-person sessions.

At every session, Resident Advisors were provided a meal and received financial compensation for their time and transportation. This investment in the participants is essential to all community engagement work. Our Project Team also spent time clarifying what we believed the term “frontline community” meant for our purposes. We agreed we would focus on drawing representation from demographics such as:

- Those who have been historically politically marginalized
- Residents who live in neighborhoods identified in the Neighborhoods at Risk tool by Headwaters Economics <https://nar.headwaterseconomics.org/2600003000/explore/map>
- Those who may experience the most climate vulnerability

Additionally, we recognized that we wanted to do everything we could to generate a trusting relationship with the Resident Advisors. To that end, we have done our best to be specific and transparent about:

- Expectations for the participants and the Project Team
- Being responsive to all questions and comments
- Explaining how we would handle the information shared with us

We also adopted the Spectrum of Public Participation put forth by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) to clarify the level of influence they would have on the final report’s findings. We used the “Collaboration” level of impact (identified in yellow) as our reference point.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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A Just Transition to a Circular Economy

Circular economy (CE) is defined as “an economic system that returns to a culture of reclaiming products and materials rather than sending them to the landfill or incinerator. The purpose of such a system is to let no person, thing, or place be treated as disposable.” The City of Ann Arbor has committed to the ambitious and essential goal of achieving a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030. To help meet this goal, the City has adopted a Living Carbon Neutrality Plan, A²ZERO, that focuses on equity, resilience, and the transformation of systems that perpetuate inequality and extraction.

To understand and effectively use the A²ZERO plan, it's important to understand its critical components. A²ZERO involves a just transition as we change the way we use, reuse, and dispose of consumer goods and other material resources. The intent is to practice the value of all people, things, and places.

Equitable Engagement

Having meaningful and just engagement processes is critical to advancing equity. In 2021, the City launched a multi-department, staff-generated initiative to make recommendations for establishing equitable engagement in their [Achieving Equitable Engagement in Ann Arbor](#) report. Here are the main recommendations from the report:

Recommendation 1	Demonstrate that the City is committed to advancing equity
Recommendation 2	Provide both ample and targeted invitations to engagement opportunities
Recommendation 3	Develop community engagement plans with care
Recommendation 4	Make engagement events more accessible and attractive

The Project Team was guided by these recommendations and other content in this report. As we met with Resident Advisors, we saw many similar or identical recommendations. We encourage staff developing future projects to look to Achieving Equitable Engagement in Ann Arbor for additional information and guidance.

A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy

This A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy was undertaken and authored to provide guidance for engaging Ann Arbor residents on the CE. Care was taken to document the process taken by the Team, as this work can also be used as a model for future engagement strategies.

The full data collected from Resident Advisors are condensed in the main body of this report. Most sections also refer to a corresponding appendix, where the full data are provided. Any team using this report as a model for future engagement should carefully read and review both its body and appendices.

The following steps were taken in the process of producing the A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy:

- Identify/select Project Team

- Determine the operating principles by which the Team will function. Essential elements include:
 - **Honesty** with the community, recognizing that building trust, often damaged, is a constant process.
 - **Transparency**, including entering into community conversations without a predetermined conclusion.
 - **Valuing Resident Advisors**, which includes adequate compensation as well as using their language and ideas.
 - **Relinquish** the need to always be in charge.
 - Recognizing the City can be its best when it **listens** to and **values** the people who are the city.

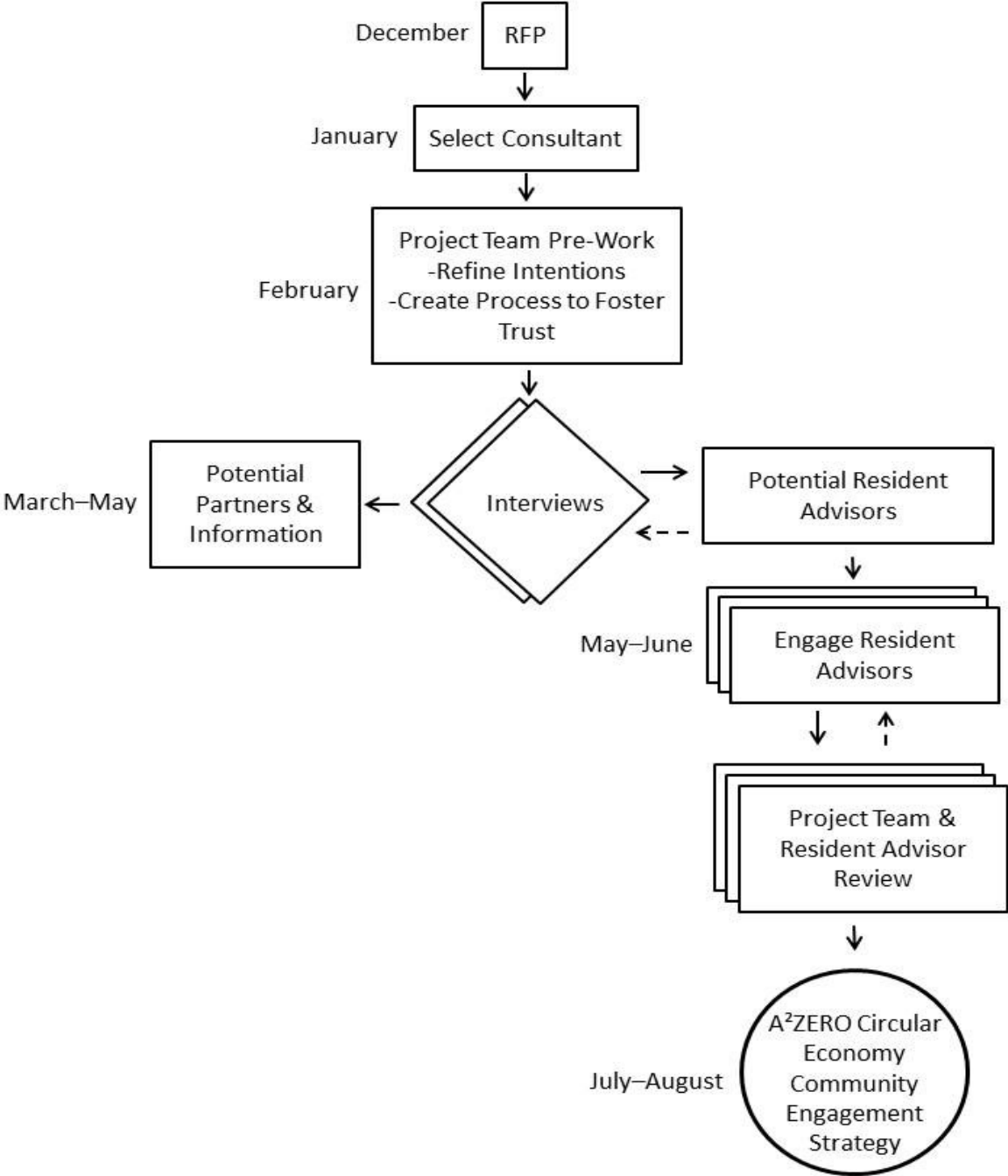
- Find people in the community—at this phase, Resident Advisors—which requires multiple explorations and techniques, remembering to:

- Define what frontline community means to this project, and its purposes.
 - Drill down: Ask the known players, the surface layer, who they know, and then ask the next layer who they know, etc. Do not allow yourself to go the easiest route: business as usual, listening to the same voices.
 - Determine best ways and locations to reach and gather people.
- Develop questions and ideas based on the information needed to proceed. Be prepared to:
- Let them lead.
 - Change your mind.
 - Accept you may not always be the creator/holder of the best practice/idea.
- For a complete list of questions used in meetings with Resident Advisors, see Appendix A: Data Collection Questions/Methods.
- Present opportunities for Resident Advisors to engage on and around the CE, remembering to:
- Choose dates and times based on Resident Advisors’ feedback.
 - Provide food and compensation for time and transportation.
 - Assign separate Project Team members to facilitate and listen/document.
 - Listen to the community and take notes in their voices. Do not translate everything into City-speak (actually, try to avoid City-speak as much as possible).
- After every meeting with the 15 Resident Advisors, the Team:
- Created a document that reported the notes captured at the meeting.
 - Offered every member of the Project Team the opportunity to comment and make changes.
 - Shared the captured notes with Resident Advisors for feedback and changes.
 - Reflected on the lessons learned from each meeting.
 - Allowed the information learned to inform the questions used in subsequent meetings.
- In order to identify key information for the A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy:
- The Project Team came to consensus regarding the most important themes from the meetings.
 - This information was summarized and reported in the draft A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy.
 - Resident Advisors were given the opportunity to review the draft engagement strategy and recommend changes.
- As a result of this process, we now have:
- The ability to reach many sectors of the community.
 - Improved methods for communication.
 - Awareness of barriers to engagement and techniques to overcome the barriers.
 - A team of 15 outstanding Resident Advisors, who return more committed, energized, and engaged with each encounter.

Additional specific engagement techniques, obstacles, and strategies are included in subsequent sections of this report and in the Appendices. The process taken to engage Ann Arbor Resident

Advisors is summarized in Figure 1, A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy Process Flowchart.

Figure 1: A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy Process Flowchart



The Community's Definition of Circularity

Ann Arbor Resident Advisors reported that they regularly engage with the CE, but do not all use this term. They reported:

- Regarding recycling: "I've been doing this since before the city began doing it."
- Practices of the circular economy as resource management essential for daily living: "This is something I never thought about; thought it was just something I had to do [to survive]."

Resident Advisors used a variety of terms to refer to the CE, which included:

- Survive
- Healthy
- Redistribution of wealth
- Break apart big organizations
- Resilience
- Resale: e.g., "eBay has thrift store finds from all over the world."
- Reuse/recycling: e.g., papermaking: "... add some flower seeds too, making a recyclable flyer that can be posted around town explaining our endeavor. Recycled, the flyer will grow flowers!"

Resident Advisors identified the following ways they are engaging in the CE:

- Recycle/repurpose, e.g.:
 - Recycle discarded batteries from electric cars
 - Refurbish and reuse donated (household) items
 - Meet clients' needs for household items with donated items
 - Provide a free store for clients
 - Operate a 24-hour food pantry
 - Work to make their organization's community center carbon neutral
 - Host community pickups
- Sell items no longer needed through channels such as:
 - Yard sales
 - Friends on social media
 - Platforms such as Facebook Marketplace, NextDoor, Poshmark, craigslist, and Amazon
- Buy local produce, using, for example:
 - Farmer's market
 - Produce wagon
 - Argus
 - Community supported agriculture (CSA) box
- Rent tools, rather than purchase, e.g.:
 - Drill for car repair
 - Snake for plumbing
 - Sander for deck refinishing
 - Soil aerator for soil drainage (golf shoes from resale store were recommended, as well)
- Compost
 - Backyard compost was made to reduce waste
- Shop at bulk or refill stores, including:

- Costco
- Sam’s Club
- [Ypsilanti Food Co-Op](#)
- Cooperative housing (co-op) collectively buys food in bulk
- Forego a Purchase
 - This is done many times

Resident Advisors identified the following sustainable practices:

- Recycling
- Planting
- Gardening
- Cutting down on waste, including food waste
- Donating unused food
- Not using plastics
- Staying conscious about personal energy use
- Refurbishment and reuse of donated items
- Planning/participating in community swap events
- Working to make their organization’s community center carbon neutral
- Hosting community pickups
- Donating used household items for reuse/refurbishment
- Carefully managing restaurant inventory and waste to reduce environmental impact
- Returning to/revisiting older technology (e.g., push mower) to find the most sustainable practice

Barriers and Solutions

Resident Advisors identified several considerations that can limit their participation in the CE:

- Price and accessibility
 - Doing everything in the most sustainable way possible is sometimes less accessible because of cost. Food was discussed specifically, including the concern that local produce is more expensive than food grown on another continent.
 - Shopping at different stores where items are more affordable was offered as one solution. A concern about this practice was raised: Kroger is discontinuing their paper circulars, which has implications for those who do not have, or prefer not to use, electronic communication.
 - [Double Up Food Bucks](#) was offered as one supporting program for those who qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). According to their website, “When you use your Bridge Card, Double Up matches your fruit and vegetable purchases dollar for dollar, up to \$10 a day.”
- Time as an obstacle
 - A lack of time can create waste, as well-meaning people make easier, faster, and less sustainable choices. E.g., this is true when students move out of temporary housing. Resources that were suggested included furnished apartments, reducing the need for students to buy items.
- Regulations that prohibit sustainable practices
 - Some regulations prohibit practices like “dumpster diving,” though it yields excellent and sustainable goods.

- Lack of infrastructure
 - A lack of necessary infrastructure can prevent full participation in the CE, e.g.:
 - It was difficult to find support to sharpen a push lawn mower.
 - University students discard items in excellent condition in part because the infrastructure to capture and repurpose these items is not in place.
 - Organizations (such as the University) have so much surplus food there is insufficient infrastructure to rescue it.
 - Participants suggested that some organizations will pick up donated items.
 - One participant, a trustee of a local college, said that when a student proposed a plan to put recycling bins on campus, the college adopted it, creating the needed infrastructure.
- Also discussed was the issue of food waste when buying bulk. The whole portion is not always finished before the food is considered inedible.

Barriers/Solutions to Successful Engagement

As with other barriers and solutions, the following was generated by Resident Advisors during the meetings developed and hosted by the Project Team. Please note that the following applies to all future projects and their community outreach.

Barriers	Solutions*
<p>Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to the fact that trust may be lacking between the City and residents. • Many residents doubt that the City can meet the goals it has set for itself for 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent with the intention to increase trust. • Messengers: Communicate messages through trusted community members or spokespeople. • Engagement spaces: Hosting by the City adds stiffness. Shared “safe spaces” should be considered as hosting locations. • Build grassroots efforts to offer ownership to residents. • Communicate ways in which 2030 goals will be met.
<p>Timing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of essential community leaders to attend planning meetings may impact engagement. • Communities often have preferred times of the day, week, month, or year to engage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold multiple engagement meetings. • Engage communities on their preferred schedule.
<p>Messaging</p> <p>Messaging can break down in a variety of ways, e.g., unclear, complicated, not age-appropriate, fails to reach essential members of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate in a variety of ways, with considerations that include simplicity, entertainment, variety of venues. • Build on the willingness of our Resident Advisors to be “ambassadors” for the work.
<p>Technology</p> <p>Some residents do not have computers or phones.</p>	<p>Use a wide variety of methods to communicate with residents.</p>
<p>Transportation</p> <p>Difficulty getting to meetings can be an impediment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose engagement spaces strategically to support easy transportation for frontline communities. • Transportation reimbursement may support participation.

*Solutions offer a summary of the related comments by Resident Advisors. Review corresponding components of the report, including Appendices, for additional information regarding these techniques.

Resident Advisors' Recommended Community Engagement Techniques (Summary)

The conversations with our Resident Advisors were robust, and the group was eager to share their experiences and ideas on how best for the City to proceed. This is a summary of highlights of their advice. For a complete list of Resident Advisors' responses, see Appendix B: Resident Advisors' Recommended Community Engagement Techniques.

- **Reach All Sectors of the Community**—This requires detailed planning and lots of time. Resident Advisors regularly recommended the need to “slow down.” Time spent on designing the outreach and allowing time for trust-building conversations are vital to the success of this and all aspects of a community engagement campaign.

Using a variety of communication methods is essential to reach everyone—e.g., some prefer digital communication and may discard print materials while others prefer not to use technology for communication or may lack access. Effective techniques include:

- Engaging in “safe space” where residents and University affiliates already frequent.
- Creating an approach that intentionally targets a variety of audiences—e.g., “If I share information at church, the older members of my community might not find out in any other way.”
- Making it fun.

- **Deep Engagement**—By this, we mean high-quality conversations that allow for careful “listening” by City staff and representatives of the City.
 - Messengers: Deliver messaging through trusted community partners or spokespeople.
 - Warm Market: A warm market is the group of people who you are close to, people who trust you (friends, family, neighbors, coworkers).
 - Trusted Organizations: Reach out through trusted community organizations, ideally, producing word-of-mouth snowball effect.
 - Community Members: People trust people they know. It feels more authentic if messages come from someone within your community.
 - Members of Religious Institutions, including religious leaders such as Rabbis, Imams, Pastors.
 - Incentivize participation: Pay attention to the exchange of value for participation.
 - Offer incentives for participation, e.g., credits to pay a water bill, hosting an event at a local restaurant, City Council recognition awards, punch card credits toward an incentive.
 - Restaurants/businesses may need a financial reason to participate.
 - Create branding for businesses to communicate their participation. Perhaps a QR code.
 - Be alert to timing opportunities through the year for reaching different groups.
 - Effective messaging techniques to consider:
 - Use language people understand. The idea of the CE may be unfamiliar, even to those who engage in it regularly.
 - Make it clear how the CE directly impacts them. Tailor the message to the specific audience. People with similar interests often have similar language, i.e., some people intersect in furniture, food, clothing, etc.

- Make sure opportunities to engage (such as electronic participation forums) are well organized. Make engagement and answering questions easy.
 - Employ social media to engage youth.
 - Make it cool: People often do not want to engage in something new. Make participation something people want to do.
 - Recognize the “brand” A²ZERO is not well known.
 - Make messaging more accessible through multilingual and multimode applications.
 - Make people feel a part of the team, Team Earth.
 - Make sure messages are age appropriate.
- Recommended Activities/Events—Many neighborhoods and segments of the community host regularly occurring events that may offer excellent opportunities for partnerships. Some examples are swap days, block parties, and concerts.

Key Findings from Resident Advisors

Following is the summary of key findings from the collective conversations with our Resident Advisors. Please note that as we documented the conversation, we not only captured what was said—as close to the exact words of the speaker as possible—but also the context in which it was said. For example, multiple people nodding and making sounds of agreement during the session was considered indication of support for a point of view. The Team was very attentive to all levels of communication to understand what matters the most to Resident Advisors.

In this section we share a pared-down list of ideas that were stressed by the Resident Advisors. For a complete list of Resident Advisors’ responses, see Appendix C: Key Findings from Resident Advisors.

- Data Collection with Resident Advisors
 - Slow down to get broader engagement. Two hours (instead of 90 minutes) would allow everyone to speak. Be very specific about what is requested of the group. It wasn’t always clear when detailed input was requested.
 - Resident Advisors would be willing to do more homework.
 - Send questions ahead of time.
 - Offer post-session reflection questions.
 - Resident Advisors would like to review the “final product.”
- A²ZERO is not a well-known brand.
 - Efforts should intentionally increase knowledge of A²ZERO. Putting the A²ZERO logo on other things could be helpful—e.g., on recycling bins.
 - A²ZERO is also difficult to understand.
 - The abbreviation is too compact and is not easy to understand.
 - Older residents may not know what A² is.
- Trust: It is important to be sensitive to the fact that trust may be lacking between the City and residents. Be transparent, with the intention to increase trust—e.g., be aware of the City’s use of paternalistic language and the branding for A²ZERO.

Comments from the Consultants

As data were gathered, insights were captured to support future data collection processes. These insights are summarized below. In some cases, we made observations that came up also from the Resident Advisors. Where you see redundancy in this list, that most likely is the case.

- Data garnered from sessions are a direct result of the questions posed to participants during those sessions. The importance of crafting the questions asked cannot be overstated.
- Facilitation team roles and responsibilities can be very difficult to compartmentalize. However, offering team members the space to compartmentalize to focus on task provides the best opportunity to capture robust data.
- Multitiered approach to identifying Resident Advisors seemed to work well. This included interviewing community leaders, and asking each person, “Who else should we talk to?”
- Our initial thoughts on timeline were too short.
- Need to empower the community to do outreach.
- Continue to create personal connections to frontline communities, including Native Americans and faith-based communities.
- Engagement:
 - Slow down the process and get a broader perspective on the community. Without careful, considered attention, something critical to this important initiative will get missed or dropped. A reconvening to review the final product and receive feedback is recommended.
 - Ask more of the Resident Advisors. There was more time to do homework, and they expressed a willingness to do so.
 - Offer the questions that will be discussed each meeting prior to the meeting.
 - Send post-session reflection questions.
 - Much of what is being discussed would be well-suited for one-on-one conversations.
 - Follow-up calls would be beneficial.
 - Consider having “office hours” in the community for which we offer a gift card in exchange for a conversation.
 - Meeting time:
 - An increase in meeting time from 90 minutes to two hours would not make meetings inaccessible.
 - Breaks may not be necessary.
 - Meetings can begin as people eat. Initial time for food may not be needed.
 - Using technology to manage and organize ideas could offer additional value to information-sharing. [IdeaScale](#) is one option to present and vote on ideas electronically.

Conclusion

Without the open-hearted willingness of the 15 individuals who agreed to be Resident Advisors, working as partners with the Project Team, there would be no report and no A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy—certainly not one with the substance and usefulness we have here, one that reflects the desires and needs and reality of the communities of Ann Arbor.

And so, we’re closing with some of their words:

- “Slow down to get broader engagement. Especially as A²ZERO is really important.”

- “This is something I never thought about; thought it was just something I had to do [to survive].”
- “My community, the homeless or formerly homeless, is often left out of community engagement services... It’s important to make the individuals aware that they are valued in the community, and with that sense of value comes the opportunity for personal responsibility within the community who values them.”

Appendices

Appendix A: Data Collection Questions/Methods

Appendix B: Resident Advisors' Recommended Community Engagement Techniques

Appendix C: Key Findings from Resident Advisors

Appendix D: Additional Data

Appendix E: Demographic Data

Appendix A: Data Collection Questions/Methods

- New community partnerships
 - Questions used in interviews to identify invitees
 - I understand your organization is an A²ZERO Collaborator. Can you tell me a bit about the membership in your organization?
 - Can you tell me what you think the circular economy means to you? What do you think it means to your organization (if known)?
 - What role, if any, do you think your organization could play in helping engage individuals in codesigning the City’s circular economy strategy?
 - Who else should I speak with as we design our circular economy community engagement strategy?
 - What did I not ask you that I should have?
 - Organizations interviewed for this project
 - Phase 1 A²ZERO Ambassadors
 - Ann Arbor Housing Commission, Ann Arbor District Library, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Meals on Wheels, Community Action Network, Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, Live Zero Waste, Peace Neighborhood Center, Ann Arbor NAACP, Interfaith Council on Peace and Justice, Washtenaw Area Apartment Association, Equitable Engagement Committee/Housing Commission, House N2 Home, Citizens’ Climate Lobby—University of Michigan, Food Gatherers, Student Sustainability Coalition, Ground Cover News.
 - Phase 2 referred to us by A²ZERO Ambassadors:
- Questions used in Meeting 1
 - What does the circular economy mean to you and what words do you use to speak about it?
 - What CE knowledges and practices do you currently engage in or want to engage it? What forms of support do you need to do this?
 - What types of engagement approaches, including messages and messengers, would be the most meaningful so that you and your community can participate in cocreating a future CE action plan?
 - What barriers exist in executing the circular economy action plan? What techniques can overcome them?
- Questions used in Meeting 2
 - What types of engagement approaches, including messages and messengers, would be the most meaningful so that you and your community can participate in co-creating a future CE action plan?
 - What barriers exist in engagement for the CE action plan? What techniques can overcome them?
 - What kind of opportunities or initiatives would get people excited to contribute to our strategy?
- Questions used in Meeting 3
 - How do we reach all sectors of the community?
 - What is the best time of year to reach different groups (particularly students)?
 - How do we reach your community?
 - What messages will help the City activate engagement?
 - What would engagement ambassadors look like?

— Who is typically missed?

Appendix B: Resident Advisors' Recommended Community Engagement Techniques

- Reach all sectors of the community
Using a variety of communication methods is essential to reach everyone: e.g., some prefer digital communication and may discard print materials while others prefer not to use technology for communication or may lack access. Effective techniques include:
 - Deliver messaging through trusted community partners.
 - Engaging in “safe space” where residents and University affiliates already frequent could be used to support this partnership.
 - Newsletters of community organizations: e.g., Avalon newsletter.
 - Print media: e.g., Washtenaw Community College paper, Eastern Echo, Michigan Daily (recommendation to be very intentional and specific with communications)
 - Flyering
 - Chalking on campus sidewalks (and sidewalks in general) offers effective promotion.
 - Ann Arbor artist David Zinn might be a good partner, as he is very talented and has many followers.
 - Chalking on the U of M campus has many rules.
 - Those struggling with housing insecurity, and/or who engage with Groundcover News: The best way to reach this community is through paid focus groups in downtown locations, in-person casual surveying.
 - Those living in a community called Foxfire on the north side of Ann Arbor: Our community has an active email list that has a significant number of neighbors. Using that email list would be the best way to reach my community.
 - Intentionally involve art.
 - Each graduate program in the U of M College of Engineering has council. Delivering messages through these councils could be very effective. Also, investigating whether graduate student councils exist outside engineering might offer this option campus-wide.
 - Explicit collaboration between U of M and A²ZERO is needed.
 - Create an approach that intentionally targets a variety of audiences: e.g., “If I share information at church, the older members of my community might not find out in any other way.”
 - City of Ann Arbor probably has a list of emails from our property tax records. If there are no legal issues, the email addresses may be used to create neighborhood-specific (City-managed) email lists.
- Effective engagement techniques include:
 - Brainstorming: Invite community to brainstorm, rather than limit the ideas generated.
 - Make it fun: Make engagement entertaining and fun.
 - Make messaging about engagement accessible to all communities: e.g., provide messaging in multiple languages (including Spanish).
 - Make engagement convenient.
 - Have a conversation: Rather than just giving information, have a conversation.
 - Make it easy to get answers to questions, perhaps through office hours.
 - Vary event times: Offer events at different times of the day for different schedules.

- Friend and acquaintance contact: Being contacted by a close acquaintance, including family member or neighbor, is meaningful, e.g., contact by a neighbor resulted in success at swap events, which also drew participants from across Ann Arbor.
- Positive/apolitical: Keep messaging positive and apolitical.
- Storytelling: Communicate through inspiring stories. Make it clear how the initiative supports individuals.
- Deep Engagement
 - Make people feel involved and part of the team: Team Earth!
 - Incentivize Participation
 - Offer incentives for participation, e.g., credits to pay a water bill, hosting an event at a local restaurant, City Council recognition awards, punch card credits toward an incentive.
 - Restaurants/businesses may need a financial reason to participate.
 - Create branding for businesses to communicate their participation. Perhaps a QR code.
 - Include those who are typically missed:
 - Anyone without, or with frequent changes in, email, address, or phone number. Some of these individuals are homeless, but not all.
 - Those at shelters or in group homes are typically missed: “My community, the homeless or formerly homeless are often left out of community engagement services, ... It’s important to make the individuals aware that they are valued in the community, and with that sense of value comes the opportunity for personal responsibility within the community who values them.”
 - There may be a geographic divide: West Side (of Ann Arbor) residents may be more often engaged in CE efforts. Targeted attention should be made to engaging East Side and other geographic area residents.
 - University of Michigan students: The A²ZERO project is not currently well known on campus. Equitable University student engagement is also occasionally missed. For example, engaging students in leadership positions of sustainability organizations, with less emphasis on DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] or social justice organizations.
 - Those high school and younger are typically missed. They have the most at stake.
 - Single mothers
 - Working families
 - Food/service workers
 - Housing insecure-homeless people
 - Empower the housing insecure to engage their communities in this project: Those struggling with housing insecurity, and/or who engage with Groundcover News. Groundcover vendors could become street stewards of CE: the ambassador model.
 - Messengers: Deliver messaging through trusted community partners or spokespeople.
 - Warm market: A warm market is the group of people who you are close to, people who trust you. It includes friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers.
 - Trusted organizations: Reach out through trusted community organizations, e.g., religious institutions. Ideally, this would produce a snowball effect to communicate through word of mouth. Possible partner organizations/possible sites for engagement:
 - Avalon
 - Google
 - Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA)
 - [Neutral Zone](#) is a forum to reach youth.

- [Project Grow Incubator](#) facilitates organic community garden sites throughout Ann Arbor.
- [Zingerman's](#) is intentional about community membership. It might be a good partner.
- Including student organizations will naturally encourage many University students to participate. Student leadership catches on very quickly once a few student leaders start working on a project. Student organizations include:
 - Student Carbon Neutrality Network (SCANN) is a network of many sustainably minded organizations.
 - Student Sustainability Coalition (SSC) is an organization dedicated to promoting a sustainable campus culture.
- Festivals, including art festivals, are a great place to engage.
- Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).
- Organizations affiliated with interest areas identified by Resident Advisors.
- Community members: People trust people they know. It feels more authentic if messages come from someone within your community.
 - Find people from within each community to support the project as spokespeople. Offer them information to share/communicate, e.g., council members.
 - A formal ambassador could be beneficial.
 - Casual conversations: Target those who you know will repeat what you've mentioned on trust. These people might include family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors (warm market). People trust people they know.
- Influencers/early adopters: Leverage early adopters and influencers to deliver messaging. In Ann Arbor, young people are early adopters.
- Members of religious institutions: religious leaders such as Rabbis, Imams, Pastors. Also, members from within religious institutions.
- Graduate coordinators: These individuals can send out information to all graduate students within their program, and these communications are priority for students to read and review.
- Graduate student advisory committee: This is a college-wide committee. Messages can be dispersed to all departments in the College of Engineering.
- [Puentes](#): University of Michigan campus-wide Latinx graduate student organization.
- University of Michigan Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers ([SHPE](#)): [Facebook Page](#)
- Employers: Ask employers to engage employees or ask them how to do so. Perhaps offer an employee challenge.
- Children: Include the youth. Communicate messages through school, including curricula. Children are powerful forces for communicating messaging and making something "cool."
- Timing to reach different groups
 - Those struggling with housing insecurity, and/or who engage with Groundcover News: The best time to reach this community is wintertime. People congregate in similar spots (daytime warming centers) throughout the winter sheltering months (late November to April).
 - Those living in a community called Foxfire on the north side of Ann Arbor: The best time to reach this community may be weekends.
 - University: Campus planning is currently ongoing. (May/June 2023)
 - The process is moving very quickly.

- It will be important to incorporate the CE into that plan, as the planning process is only done every 10 years.
- Graduate students, especially engineering graduate students: August, ahead of move-in, before school starts, and before regular campus messaging begins for the fall. In preparation for August participation, April messaging could be very helpful.
- University students: Between September and late October. This offers students time to settle into the new semester without waiting for busier midterm times.
- Availability of essential community leaders to attend planning meetings may impact engagement. The impact may be decreased by holding multiple engagement meetings.
- Other communities: Look to the work of other communities (such as Detroit) for examples of how to tackle this issue.
- Effective messaging techniques include:
 - Language: Use language people understand. The idea of the circular economy may be unfamiliar, even to those who engage in it regularly. “I don’t know if I can help with the CE. I don’t know about that.”
 - Tailor messaging: Make it clear how the CE directly impacts them. Tailor the message to the specific audience. People with similar interests often have similar language: i.e., some people intersect in furniture, food, clothing, etc.
 - Organization: Make sure opportunities to engage (such as electronic participation forums) are well organized. Make engagement and answering questions easy.
 - Employ social media to engage youth.
 - Make it cool: People often do not want to engage in something new. Make participation something people want to do.
 - A²ZERO is not well known.
 - Message(s) that will help the City activate engagement
 - Promote engagement through community activism.
 - Advertise the benefits of taking part in community engagement; building relationships while promoting inclusion through community activism (i.e., getting out there and being seen engaging is always seen as a positive stride toward including every member of our community.)
 - Community specific messages:
 - Those struggling with housing insecurity, and/or who engage with Groundcover News: Save money, save the planet.
 - Those living in a community called Foxfire on the north side of Ann Arbor includes marketing in public spaces.
 - Graduate students: Graduate students appreciate opportunities that do not require a large time or money commitments.
 - Messages that increase awareness of the A²ZERO program on campus, and in general.
 - Messaging that increases the accessibility of a complex term like “circular economy.” Community members may feel hesitant about the government or feel like large vocabulary words alienate them from the conversation. Emphasizing that the circular economy just puts a name to many sustainability actions that many people are already participating in may help increase engagement.
 - Make messaging more accessible
 - Instructive signage in multiple languages (Arabic, Spanish, English).

- Be very explicit in instruction. Makes the messages easier to follow and more accessible.
- Make people feel a part of the team, Team Earth.
- Carbon neutrality can be associated with CO². Wealth redistribution can be associated with the CE.
- Bold catches the eye.
- Simplicity: Make messaging and resources simple.
- Slogan: Create a slogan that is easily communicated. This could be put on merchandise such as clothing.
- Make sure messages are age-appropriate.
- Welcome students: Students can feel reluctant to participate, as they may perceive themselves as temporary residents. Ask them for participation and solutions.
- High school age and younger: Instill these values while children are in school. Young people
 - Can be bossy.
 - Have more at stake.
- Determine University and student involvement: Identify how students and the University of Michigan should be involved, and if these groups should have their input balanced by community members. The perception is that a City/University partnership could create benefit.
- Shared “safe space” where residents and University affiliates already frequent could be used to support this partnership. Matthaei Botanical Gardens was identified as one such space. Transportation to this location is one possible barrier.

Recommended Activities/Events/Organizations

- Special Events: Swap day, block party, concert, etc.
- Those struggling with housing insecurity, and/or who engage with Groundcover News: The best events or convenings for outreach in this community include Groundcover News vendor programs. We could host a workshop specific to that. Also, Pizza in the Park @ Liberty Plaza Fridays at 7 pm. In many homeless community spaces, it’s “show up—observe—build authenticity—then, and only then, do what you came to do.”
- Avalon Housing community events including:
 - Pancake breakfasts.
 - Summer BBQs (e.g., June, Allmendinger Park).
 - Holiday get-togethers.
- Those living in a community called Foxfire on the north side of Ann Arbor: This community does not have any specific neighborhood events but three A²ZERO Ambassadors organized a swap day which turned out to be a great way to socialize and exchange items with each other for reuse. We can potentially make this event a regular yearly event.
- Pull Over Prevention by The Mutual Aid Network of Ypsilanti: [Facebook Page](#) and [Monthly community resource festival](#) in Ypsilanti that helps people repair their cars. This can prevent traffic stops, and also supports car maintenance through mutual aid.
 - Good event to observe the CE in action.
 - Observe for several months.
 - Perhaps approach to participate after continued observation.
 - Meets again July.

- College of Engineering graduate orientation: This event sometimes invites student organizations to participate, and the A²ZERO program may be welcome.
- [Common Cycle](#): Weekly event to teach bicycle maintenance.
- [U of M Harvest Fest](#) through Sustainable Food Program and Campus Farm.
- [U of M Festifall](#): August.
- [Earthfest](#): September. All these specific dates useful here now?
- Dedicated event on campus to discuss the CE. This could occur as presentations to student groups, a more formal panel for students, or a more casual event on the University of Michigan Diag with speakers.

Local organizations that may be willing to collaborate on city-wide engagement:

- Ground Cover
- Neutral Zone
- Title Track Michigan
- My Brothers' Keeper
- Catherine Street Housing Project's Community Leadership Council
- African American Cultural & Historical Museum
- Black Washtenaw Humanities Collaboratory
- Artspace

Appendix C: Key Findings from Resident Advisors

- Data collection with Resident Advisors
 - Slow down to get broader engagement. Especially as A²ZERO “is really important.”
 - Increasing engagement sessions to two hours could be manageable. This would allow everyone to speak.
 - Sessions longer than two hours were perceived as being too long.
 - Sessions that are 90 minutes could be managed without a break.
 - Start sessions while people are eating.
 - Identifying the source of comments could be helpful for reviewers.
 - It wasn’t always clear when detailed input was requested.
 - Products such as [IdeaScale](#) could allow participants to:
 - Brainstorm ideas.
 - Vote to prioritize those ideas.
 - Differentiate between notes and minutes.
 - Resident Advisors would also be willing to do more homework.
 - Send questions ahead of time.
 - Offer post-session reflection questions.
 - Resident advisors would like to review the “final product.”
- Existing relationships support participation and influence: Provide invitations and/or information from a source trusted by a variety of target audiences.
- More attention should be paid to the less affluent members of the community. They are overrepresented among the community members who are “typically missed.”
- Communicate respectfully: e.g., have a conversation, brainstorm, use words people understand, and make it fun.
- Respect time investments: e.g., provide opportunities that are convenient, incentivized, and entertaining.
- Tailor invitations and engagement opportunities for target audiences: e.g., use a variety of communication/engagement modes and methods, including digital and nondigital options.
- Learn from the experiences of others, including Ann Arbor residents and other municipalities who have done similar work.
- Ann Arbor residents regularly engage with the Circular Economy (CE), but do not all use this term.
- A²ZERO is not well known.
 - Efforts should intentionally increase knowledge of A²ZERO. Putting the A²ZERO logo on other things could be helpful. For example, put the A²ZERO logo on recycling bins.
 - A²ZERO is also difficult to understand.
 - The abbreviation is too compact. It is not easy to understand.
 - Older residents may not know what A² is.
- Trust: It is important to be sensitive to the fact that trust may be lacking between the City and residents. It is important to be transparent with the intention to increase trust: e.g., with the City’s use of paternalistic language and the branding for A²ZERO.
- Shared Spaces: As the City is holding events, shared spaces should be considered as hosting locations. These are locations people are comfortable going and mingling. Matthaei Botanical Gardens is one such shared space.

- To the extent possible, hold back from meeting at locations affiliated with government or political spaces, such as city hall.
- Influencers and early adopters: It is important to work with people who already have an audience, and/or tend to be early on the curve of adopting new ideas.
- University engagement: Specific collaboration and coordinate efforts across the City of Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan are necessary and appropriate.
- Support exists for a CE project, as evidenced by organizations volunteering to host engagement activities.
- Question posed: Can community groups conduct meetings without staff present?

Appendix D: Additional Data

Data collected for the A²ZERO Circular Economy Community Engagement Strategy has vast implications for future planning and implementation phases of the Circular Economy Action Plan. Some data collected speak more specifically to, and/or have implications for, these future phases. These data are provided below.

Action Plan

- Resistance
 - There can be resistance on the part of those who are being educated/encouraged to participate in the circular economy. E.g., initial education done with a neighbor seemed unsuccessful. “May need to keep working with them.”
 - There is also some resistance to models that provide support for those who are struggling with food and/or housing insecurity. This may include not wanting people who are struggling nearby.
- Visitors to Ann Arbor: Investigate those who make waste in Ann Arbor, but do not live here. This could be done through a survey.

Plan Implementation

- Complicated messaging: Messaging that is unclear or complicated can make it difficult to follow or engage. Identify the top three things that can be done to support the CE.
- Educational signage: Offer educational signage in local businesses. That may be less imposing, may offer more exposure, and may be more accessible.
- Reducing food waste may not necessarily mean that rescued food is used for human consumption. When food is not suitable for humans, it can sometimes be captured to feed animals, e.g., salmon after spawning is sometimes captured for cat food.
- Curricula: Include climate change in the curricula to create the opportunity for messaging to adults. Make the ideas cool in the classroom, as “coolness comes in generations from the bottom up.”
- Send students messaging with information about options for donations in April. This is ahead of graduation and move-out timelines, so they can consider where to donate or sell items they no longer need.
- Convenience:
 - Behavior changes are more easily attained, and more lasting, when they are very convenient, e.g., apps for food delivery made getting a meal extremely convenient, and people still use those apps now that COVID restrictions have been relaxed.
 - Explain that engaging in sustainable behavior is more convenient (less exhausting) than being wasteful.
- Talk about waste: It is easy to talk about the ways you produce or dispose of waste. Ask community members what ways they are wasting. Ask what ways they cannot participate in the CE.
- Encourage businesses to do better. E.g., Reach out to retailers to encourage better materials for bags.
- Increase accessibility of paper recycling.
- Use restaurant food waste to make pet food in municipally run kibble factory. Returning citizens (parolees) could be hired and offered a share in the company, named “Nature’s Profit.”

Appendix E: Demographic Data

- 10 1. Do you live in Ann Arbor?
 - 2 a. Yes
 - 1 b. Yes, only temporarily as a university/college student
 - 1 c. No

- 11 2. Do you work in Ann Arbor?
 - 0 a. Yes, year-round
 - 1 b. Yes, seasonally
 - 1 c. No
 - 1 d. Retired
 - 0 e. Unemployed

- 0 3. What is your age?
 - 2 a. Under 18 years
 - 1 b. 18–24 years
 - 4 c. 25–29 years
 - 2 d. 30–39 years
 - 2 e. 40–49 years
 - 1 f. 50–59 years
 - 1 g. 60–69 years
 - 1 h. 70–79 years
 - 0 i. 80 and over

- 2 4. Which racial or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?
 - 0 a. African American or Black
 - 0 b. American Indian and Alaska Native
 - 1 c. Asian
 - 2 d. Hispanic/Latino/a/x
 - 0 e. Middle Eastern or Northern African
 - 7 f. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 g. White
 - 2 h. Two or more races/ethnicities

One Resident Advisor identified as both (e) Middle Eastern or Northern African and (h) Two or more races/ethnicities.

Demographic Data (cont.)

- 9 5. What is your gender identity?
4 a. Woman/girl
0 b. Man/boy
0 c. Transgender woman/girl
0 d. Transgender man/boy
0 e. Gender non-conforming or non-binary
0 f. Other identity not listed
- 2 6. Which sexual orientation do you identify with? Check all that apply.
1 a. Asexual
10 b. Bisexual
0 c. Heterosexual or straight
0 d. Homosexual or gay or lesbian
0 e. Pansexual
0 f. Queer
0 g. Same-gender loving
0 h. Other orientation not listed
- 6 7. Per the “Green Bottle Handout” what best describes your personal financial
7 experience?
0 a. A
7 b. B
0 c. C
- 6 8. What best describes your housing situation for your primary residence?
6 a. Own
0 b. Rent
0 c. University dormitory
0 d. Co-operative
0 e. Unhoused, chronic
0 f. Unhoused, temporary
1 g. House of Hospitality
1 h. Please share anything else that you want us to know.