

THE CHARGING STATION

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



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ABOUT THE EDITOR



Azella Markgraf (she/her) is the Sustainability Coordinator for Food, and she supports sustainable food initiatives, including planning for the Ann Arbor Local Food Festival! Azella's work focuses on programs and initiatives that advance a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable community food system in Ann Arbor. Interested in learning more? Reach out at amarkgraf@a2gov.org.



Eleva Potter, Environmental Education and Engagement Coordinator with NAP, leads a foraged food cooking demonstration at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market during A²ZERO Week 2024.

WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI). Looking ahead to the upcoming [3rd Annual Local Food Festival on September 26th](#), this edition of the Charging Station celebrates Ann Arbor's unique local food culture, explores the crucial role of local food in building community resilience, and highlights how investing in local food systems can help create a more equitable and sustainable food future for all in Ann Arbor. 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.

DEEPLY ROOTED IN LOCAL FOOD

A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM WORTH CELEBRATING

Ann Arbor is a community rich in local food. Thriving agricultural and culinary communities make the city a hub for food-lovers and farm-to-table connoisseurs. While for some, local food may be an exciting dining experience, our local food system offers benefits that extend well beyond the dinner table. As our community grapples with the impacts of climate change, alongside other social and economic pressures, local food systems can foster community resilience, bolster economic vitality, and help promote a culture of sustainability.

As we look forward to the 3rd annual Ann Arbor Local Food Festival, let's explore the benefits of investing in a strong local food system here in Ann Arbor.

The Global Food System Today

The journey of food from farm to plate is often complex and largely unseen. This journey begins with soil, sunlight, and water on a farm, and progresses through a complex network of producers, processors, transporters, distributors, and retailers. This network, known as the food system, is shaped by various stakeholders including businesses, scientists, policy makers, and consumers.

Today's food system often relies on global supply chains, with food traveling an average of 1,500 miles before reaching our tables. This globalization of our food system is what enables us to enjoy diverse foods year-round, from avocados from Mexico to grapes from Chile and coffee from Kenya. However, reliance on global chains also makes communities vulnerable to disruptions caused by social, environmental, and political factors. Such disruptions can lead to food shortages and exacerbate food insecurity experienced throughout a community, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed weaknesses in global supply chains and highlighted disparities in food access, particularly among already marginalized communities.

Understanding the Role of Local Food

Local food systems can address these vulnerabilities in several ways, including increased economic prosperity, food security, environmental sustainability, and strengthened community bonds. By reducing reliance on lengthy supply chains, local food systems can better withstand disruptions caused by natural disasters, economic downturns, or global crises. Many local farms also promote ecological resilience by using organic or regenerative agricultural practices that protect soil health, water resources, and minimize chemical impacts.

In addition to these benefits, local food systems also contribute to overall community and economic prosperity. By shopping locally, consumers can directly support farmers and producers, ensuring they receive a fairer share of the consumer dollar. This fosters local entrepreneurship and job creation and strengthens the community's economy. Furthermore, local food systems can preserve cultural heritage by maintaining traditional crops and agricultural or culinary knowledge. Most importantly, they build community resilience by fostering social connectivity, enabling communities to adapt, collaborate, and thrive through shared commitment and mutual support.



Event attendees at the 2023 Ann Arbor Local Food Festival taste different varieties of locally grown apples.

DEEPLY ROOTED IN LOCAL FOOD

A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM WORTH CELEBRATING

Local Food in Ann Arbor & Washtenaw County

Ann Arbor boasts a vibrant local food community, spearheaded by a diverse group of local leaders and advocates – from farmers and chefs to engaged community members. This dynamic food scene is a key part of the city’s unique character and community pride. Michigan, the second most agriculturally diverse state in the U.S., benefits from the “[lake effect](#)” and fertile soils, making it a leader in growing a wide range of crops, including asparagus, dry beans, squash, blueberries, and tart cherries!

In Washtenaw County, a rich history of local food production and support has led to the growth of a burgeoning local food movement. With over [1,250 farms](#), many small-scale and family-run, [the area stands out](#) for its concentration of small, sustainable farms amidst a [global trend](#) towards industrial agriculture. This success can be attributed to community support for local, organic, and sustainable foods, and supportive policies from local governments, according to an article from [Second Wave Media](#).

Check out the article on [page 4](#) for a feature on how Ann Arbor’s Greenbelt program is revolutionizing agricultural land preservation and helping new farmers enter the scene.

Here in Ann Arbor, the 105-year-old [Ann Arbor Farmers Market](#) plays a crucial role, providing a venue for the sale of local agricultural products and fostering community connections. The market is one of the oldest in the country, and provides a lively space for neighbors to gather, share ideas and knowledge, and build relationships. It also addresses food insecurity through programs like [Double Up Food Bucks](#), which offers a dollar-for-dollar match on fruits and vegetables for those using a Michigan Bridge card, up to \$15 per day.

Additionally, [Argus Farm Stop](#), which this year celebrates its 10-year anniversary, has become a pillar of the Ann Arbor community. Argus is among the first of an up-and-coming local food retail model, [the farm stop](#). In this model, the store sells food on consignment from nearby farms. The farmers set their own prices and keep 70% of the revenue, compared to [the national average of 15%](#) going to growers who

sell to supermarkets. The farm stop model provides the daily convenience of the year-round grocery store, while bolstering local food and farm viability. To read more about the impacts of farm stops, [check out this article](#).

Alongside the rich local food retail offerings, the area is also home to several nonprofit organizations providing leadership in local and regional food system development, including [Food Gatherers](#), [Project Grow](#), [Growing Hope](#), [The Farm at Trinity Health](#), [Willow Run Acres](#), [We the People Opportunity Farm](#), and [Fair Food Network](#), among others. These organizations are working to transform our local food system by eliminating hunger, promoting justice and equity in the food system, encouraging food entrepreneurship, eliminating food waste, training new gardeners and farmers, and more.

Supporting local food systems is not just about how we eat – its about how we live and thrive together. It’s about recognizing the value of community-based agriculture, honoring the work of local farmers, and investing in a future where resilience, sustainability, and prosperity go hand in hand. Ann Arbor already has many of the ingredients that make a strong local food system. As we confront the interconnected challenges of climate change and social justice, it’s important for our community to continue investing in and supporting the local food system to ensure a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system for generations to come.



Produce tasting at the 2023 Ann Arbor Local Food Festival.

PROTECTING FARMLAND, SUPPORTING NEW FARMERS

THE ANN ARBOR GREENBELT PROGRAM'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO FARMLAND PRESERVATION

New and beginning farmers across the country face significant challenges in accessing affordable land. With farmland prices reaching record highs, many emerging farmers struggle to acquire land. According to a [2022 survey by the National Young Farmers Coalition](#), the lack of affordable farmland is the most pressing issue for new farmers, with the challenge being even more severe for farmers of color who face additional systemic barriers.

Preserving agricultural land and increasing its affordability for new farmers is paramount for maintaining food security and supporting environmental health. Farmland plays a [vital role](#) in sequestering carbon, protecting water quality, providing habitat for wildlife, and sustaining ecosystems. [The American Farmland Trust](#) projects that nearly 300 million acres of U.S. agricultural land will change hands by 2040 as aging farmers retire. Without proactive measures, much of this land could be lost to development, which could threaten both our food supply and the health of local ecosystems.

The City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program's Buy-Protect-Sell Initiative

To address and tackle land access challenges within Washtenaw County, [the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program](#) has introduced the Buy-Protect-Sell initiative (BPS). This program aims to connect land-insecure farmers to affordable farmland buying opportunities by offering conserved land at reduced prices.

This year, the Greenbelt completed its first parcel sale under the BPS initiative. Kristen Muehlhauser of [Raindance Organic Farm](#) was selected as the buyer of the south side of the farm, while Matt Demmon of [Feral Flora](#), as the buyer of the north side. Muehlhauser, who has managed her farm on leased land since 2018, will transition her operations to this new property over the next year. She expressed her gratitude, saying, "I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to steward this land for a lifetime... Now we have a farm to call home. That long-term commitment means we are able to invest our time, labor and funds in building healthy soil, in water lines, in pollinator plantings, in fruiting trees and perennial shrubs."

Demmon, who has operated Feral Flora on leased land since 2018, will use the north parcel to grow native perennials and prairie species for seed production. He aims to produce 500 pounds of native seeds annually, enough for 50 acres of prairie plantings each year. He stated, "I intend to put these practices to work on the Nollar Road property... I care deeply about the health of the land and all life that might utilize it, far into the future."

Since its inception in 2003, the Greenbelt Program has preserved over 7,600 acres of land. Most of this has been achieved through conservation easements on private properties, which restrict land use to agricultural, recreational, or conservation purposes.

The introduction of the Buy-Protect-Sell initiative marks a significant step in addressing the critical challenge of land access faced by new and beginning farmers. As the landscape of American agriculture shifts and pressures on new farmers intensify, initiatives like BPS are essential for ensuring that emerging farmers can secure the land they need to thrive.

Have questions about Ann Arbor's Greenbelt Program, please contact Rosie Pahl-Donaldson, Land Acquisition Specialist by emailing greenbelt@a2gov.org, or by phone 734.794.6627 x43483.

THE THIRD ANNUAL LOCAL FOOD FESTIVAL

COMING TO THE ANN ARBOR FARMER'S MARKET SEPTEMBER 26

Join The City of Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations, Argus Farm Stop, and the Ann Arbor Farmers Market at the 3rd annual Ann Arbor Local Food Festival! The Local Food Festival is a community celebration of Michigan food & farming. Immerse yourself in Ann Arbor's dynamic local food community with a live chef demonstration with Chef Allison Anastasio of the Newton of Ypsilanti, local food sampling, a cookbook exchange, and games and crafts for attendees of all ages. Food trucks & vendors will be on site with locally sourced meals available for purchase. Plus, enter for a chance to win prizes from local food businesses! The Local Food Festival is free to attend. For more information, please visit a2gov.org/localfoodfest.



LOCAL FOOD FESTIVAL

A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF THE LOCAL HARVEST!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 • 5:00 - 8:00 PM

ANN ARBOR FARMERS MARKET
315 DETROIT STREET, ANN ARBOR, MI

- GOOD EATS
- LIVE MUSIC
- CHEF DEMONSTRATION
- COOKBOOK SWAP
- LOCAL FOOD SAMPLING
- VENDORS & EXHIBITORS
- FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN!

Visit a2gov.org/localfoodfest or scan the QR code to learn more!



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COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

THE HUNGRY LOCAVORE

The Hungry Locavore is a hyper-local food project designed to benefit the local community, local businesses and our environment. Their mission is to connect Hungry Locavore customers to fresh, clean and wholesome food via a weekly curated box of seasonal veggies and tasty prepared dishes from local farms and kitchens. They offer a foodie adventure, with a glass window into local food systems via a fun and educational weekly newsletter that accompanies each box. They're passionate about regenerative agriculture, removing fossil fuel miles from food, building community, creating a circular economy and connecting neighbors to sustainable and healthy local food.

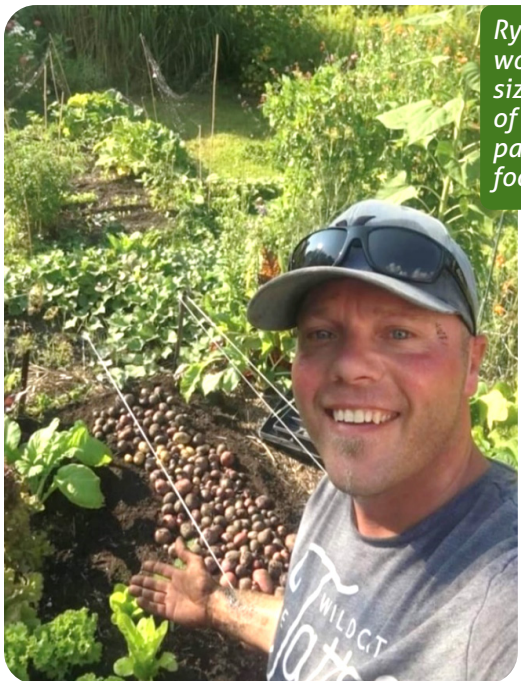
To learn more about the Hungry Locavore and stay connected with their work, visit [their website](#), [their Facebook](#), and [their Instagram](#).



A recent weekly box from The Hungry Locavore, featuring a vibrant collection of local products from area farms & food producers.



The Hungry Locavore is a family-run operation! Here, owner Ryan Poe and his children staff an informational table at a recent community event while spreading the word about the project.



Ryan also has years of experience working on farms of differing sizes. His first-hand knowledge of local food systems fuels his passion for supporting our local food community.



Each box from The Hungry Locavore contains an assortment of fresh, sustainably grown food products from a variety of farms & food businesses. The seasonal boxes are just one way this local food project builds community around local food.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Special thank you to OSI's Summer Interns and ReDirect Fellows! This summer, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations was joined by Sarra Bridges, Claire Briglio, James Burnham, Jason Krick, Mobin Mazloomian, Sarah Ramsey, Tara-Sky Woodward, and Anna Wysocki. Through their hard work they helped develop, enhance, and evolve OSI programs and initiatives. We're incredibly grateful for the time, energy, and dedication they brought to climate action in Ann Arbor.

Host a Home Energy Savings Event at Your Club or Place of Worship. The Ann Arbor Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby now offers the free presentation, [Home Efficiency & Electrification. Save Money & Save the Planet](#), to groups interested in reducing the carbon footprint of a home, including details about the many federal and local subsidies available. There are tips for both homeowners and renters. [Learn more about this program here.](#)

Applications for the City of Ann Arbor's Commercial EV Charger Program are now live! With the goal of increasing the availability of publicly accessible EV chargers, the Commercial EV Charger Program provides an opportunity for commercial and multifamily property owners in Ann Arbor to receive up to four FREE level 2 EV chargers. To learn more about the program and view our application, visit osi.a2gov.org/evchargerprogram.

The Home Energy Advisor is no longer on a waitlist! The waitlist has been exhausted and the portal is now open to sign up to receive your free, custom home decarbonization plan. Learn more and sign up at a2zerohea.org.

Announcing our new Home Energy Rebate dashboard. This real-time dashboard helps residents quickly see the status of the local Ann Arbor rebate program, including seeing what rebates are still available and which are exhausted, to help residents feel more confident with initiating their sustainability-focused project. View at [osi.a2gov.org/rebates!](https://osi.a2gov.org/rebates)

Newly formed Move Out Ann Arbor (MOAA) Coalition collects unwanted materials for reuse during recent University of Michigan student move-out: During its inaugural year, the newly formed MOAA coalition, including representatives from the University of Michigan, local non-profits, haulers, and the city, successfully diverted approximately 34 tons of material from local landfills during the recent University of Michigan student move out season. [To learn more, read their full report.](#)

5MW of Solar...and Growing! From a twinkle in the eye a few years ago to one of the cornerstone programs in the Sustainability Office, Solarize has helped over 690 households install solar – equating to \$2.3 million in upfront cost savings. To learn more about Solarize or whether solar is a good option for you, please see www.a2gov.org/solar.

New State bill enables sustainability activities at HOAs! The Michigan legislature passed and Governor Whitmer has signed new legislation that prohibits Homeowners Associations (HOAs) from limiting access to on-site solar as well as heat pumps, clotheslines and other energy efficiency measures. [OSI has published a model energy policy template for HOAs](#), and residents living in HOAs who would like to learn more about how [the Solarize program](#) might help their communities can contact Connor Dailey at cdailey@a2gov.org.

City Releases RFP for Phase II Study. The City just released [a request for proposal for a Phase II Municipalization study](#). All responses are due by October 11, 2024.

SEMCOG Announces Call for Climate Ambassadors. To support the development of the Southeast Michigan Healthy Climate Plan, SEMCOG is seeking Climate Ambassadors to help conduct inclusive and equitable engagement across Southeast Michigan. [Click here to apply.](#)

\$1 Million Grant From the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. City Council voted 10-0 Aug. 19 to accept and appropriate the federal funds for several projects aimed at understanding, enhancing and expanding Ann Arbor's tree canopy. [Read more about the grant and what this work could look like here.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

City Releases Request for Information on Sustainable Energy Utility Support Services. [This RFI can be found on the city's procurement website](#) with all responses due by September 20, 2024 at 4PM.

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Award. Ann Arbor was awarded \$2.8 Million to expand equitable access to public EV charging. Learn more about electric vehicles in Ann Arbor at a2gov.org/EVs.

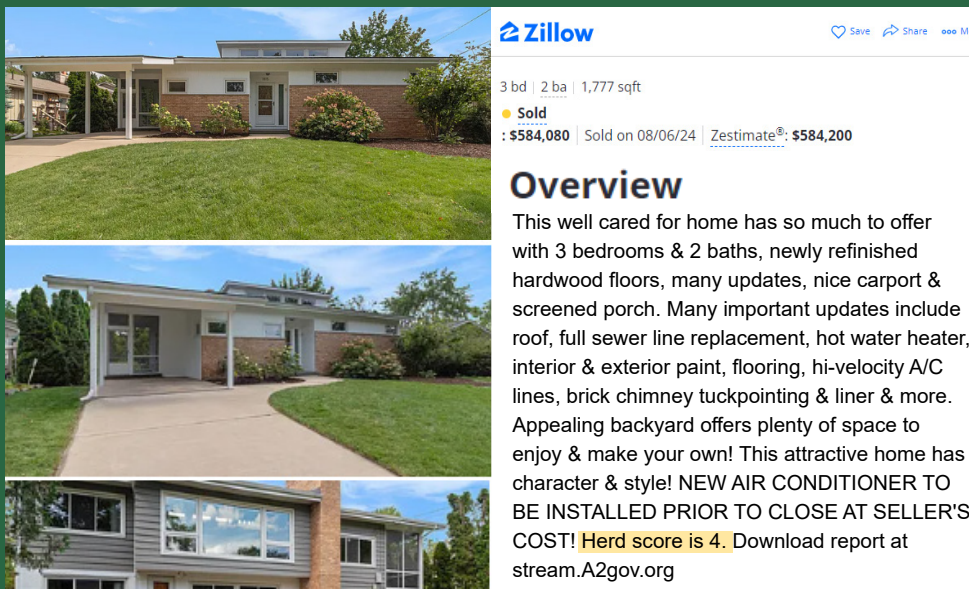
Sustaining Ann Arbor Together Grants. The Office of Sustainability and Innovations operates a grant program to help advance community sustainability-related projects. Grantees can receive up to \$10,000 in funding to implement a project that aligns with our A²ZERO plan. For more information, visit www.a2gov.org/sa2t.

Latest episodes of Green Light now live! A new series from CTN and OSI that digs into sustainability in Ann Arbor with the residents who are envisioning, creating, and establishing a sustainable and equitable future for our community. Check out our new episodes on the SEU and our collaboration with Community Action Network at osi.a2gov.org/GreenLight.

Ann Arbor's Home Energy Rating Disclosure (HERD) Ordinance has been in effect for 6 months! The Home Energy Rating Disclosure (HERD) Ordinance provides consumer protections by requiring that a Home Energy Score (HES) assessment be conducted before a home lists for sale. The HERD Ordinance also requires that the Home Energy Score and Report be included in a real estate listing and made available to all potential buyers. **The Office of Sustainability and Innovations wants to recognize the listing agents in Ann Arbor who have been early allies in the successful roll-out of the HERD Ordinance by using best practices that provide visibility and ease of access to information when including the Home Energy Score and Report in their listings.**

Thank you for demonstrating best practices right from the beginning!

Anne Gilbert; Howard Hanna - Ann Arbor | Carolyn Leopard; The Charles Reinhart Company
Carolyn Roopas; Real Estate One | DMA Real Estate: Real Broker | Elizabeth Brien; The Charles Reinhart Company
Justine Anthony; The Charles Reinhart Company | Kathryn Kiefer; The Charles Reinhart Company
Kathryn Linderman; The Charles Reinhart Company | Maris Laporter; The Charles Reinhart Company
Martin Bouma; Keller Williams Ann Arbor | Maura Rains; The Charles Reinhart Company
Michael Penn; The More Group | Mike Schmidt; Reinhart Realtors-West Ann Arbor
Scott Guyor; The Charles Reinhart Company | Sheila Hoeft; @ properties | Stacie Dugas; The Charles Reinhart Company
Stephen Hollowell; Keller Williams Ann Arbor



Zillow Save Share More

3 bd | 2 ba | 1,777 sqft

Sold
: \$584,080 | Sold on 08/06/24 | Zestimate®: \$584,200

Overview

This well cared for home has so much to offer with 3 bedrooms & 2 baths, newly refinished hardwood floors, many updates, nice carport & screened porch. Many important updates include roof, full sewer line replacement, hot water heater, interior & exterior paint, flooring, hi-velocity A/C lines, brick chimney tuckpointing & liner & more. Appealing backyard offers plenty of space to enjoy & make your own! This attractive home has character & style! **NEW AIR CONDITIONER TO BE INSTALLED PRIOR TO CLOSE AT SELLER'S COST!** Herd score is 4. Download report at stream.A2gov.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

CINEMA & SUSTAINABILITY SERIES: THE SMELL OF MONEY | *Wednesday, Sept. 4th, 7:30PM* | *Michigan Theater*

This event will include the screening of *The Smell of Money* and a short post-screening discussion about the film's topics. Tickets are available through the [Michigan Theater event page](#).

ANN ARBOR SOLAR STORIES | *Thursday, Sept. 5th, 7:00PM* | *Virtual*

One-hour virtual event hosted by the GLREA. Come hear from Ann Arborites who have gone solar, and have a chance to ask them all your questions! [Register here for "Thursday Night Energy Events" to receive meeting links](#).

PUBLIC FORUM ON AIR QUALITY MONITORING | *Friday, Sept. 13, 6PM* | *Ann Arbor District Library, Westgate Branch*

Join staff from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations and Office of Information Technology to learn about Ann Arbor's air quality monitoring work. [Learn more about our air quality monitoring work](#) and [register for the forum](#).

CLIMATE ACTION IN TÜBINGEN, GERMANY - WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM ANN ARBOR'S SISTER CITY

Wednesday, Sept. 18, 6 – 7:30 PM | *Ann Arbor District Library, Downtown Branch*

Hear from Lord Mayor Palmer of Tübingen, Germany as he shares what Ann Arbor's Sister City is doing to equitably address the climate crisis and how it can help shape Ann Arbor's A²ZERO initiative. This interactive session provides a truly unique opportunity to hear directly from representatives from one of Ann Arbor's Sister Cities about their work to make Tübingen one of the most sustainable cities in the world.

A²ZERO GREEN FAIR | *Friday, September 20, 2024* | *Main Street, Ann Arbor*

Green Fair is coming back to downtown Ann Arbor this fall! This annual event highlights the incredible community of stakeholders working to achieve our shared vision of a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030. Learn more at [a2gov.org/greenfair](https://www.a2gov.org/greenfair).

FREETREE GIVEAWAY | *Saturday, Sept. 21* | *Clague Middle School*

Registration is required and opens September 9th. Visit osi.a2gov.org/Fall2024FreeTree to register to get up to five trees to take home and plant on your private property! You must be a resident of Washtenaw County to participate. Tree species will include eastern white pine, red pine, white spruce, and balsam fir. Visit www.a2gov.org/10ktrees to find more information.

a2TECH360: EXPLORING INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS | *Tuesday,*

Sept. 24, 10AM – 2:30PM | *Venue by 4M*

Connecting the community with green tech innovators in Ann Arbor and beyond, [this event](#) highlights progress in sustainability, offering a venue for discussion, collaboration, and inspiration towards achieving environmental goals. In partnership with the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations, it also celebrates the Green Business Challenge awardees, honoring companies that excel in adopting green practices.

LOCAL FOOD FESTIVAL | *Thursday, Sept. 26, 5 – 8 PM* | *Ann Arbor Farmers Market*

[A community celebration of the beauty and bounty of local food & farming](#). Sample local foods, exchange your gently used cookbooks, purchase a meal or treat from one of our vendors, enjoy live music, play games, and connect with others in the community. Plus, enter for a chance to win prizes from local businesses! Free to attend.

TRASH TALK TOUR | *Sunday, Sept. 29* | *Recycle Ann Arbor*

Have you ever wondered what happens to your recycling after it leaves the curb? Here's your chance to find out and get an up-close and personal look at how recycling sorting works at Recycle Ann Arbor's Zero Waste Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)! Time slots from 8AM to 12PM available. [Register here](#).

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