

A²Zero Governance Model

OVERVIEW

The A²Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan was designed to be a living, iterative plan. As such, this document outlines the proposed governance model that will be used to review the plan and make revisions, as necessary. This document should also be considered living, meaning that it will be evaluated, as noted in the details below, at regular intervals to ensure the processes articulated are effective.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Guiding the process outlined below is a Governance Framework (Figure 1). The framework outlines what inputs tell us where we are going, where we are, how we propose getting from where we are to where we want to go, and how we will know we have achieved our goal. This governance document touches on each of these areas but is most prominently grounded in the third section, “How We Get There,” and especially the elements related to the A²Zero Plan and revisions / updates. This document also discusses how we gauge performance in regards to meeting our goal through indicators and metrics tracking and reporting.



Figure 1: Governance Framework that notes the inputs that help answer where we want to go, where we are, how we propose getting to our goal, and how we'll know we've achieved our goal.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

The remainder of this document presents the proposed A²Zero governance model. There are three main sections in the model: key stakeholders (far left), engagement events / input formats (far right), and decision makers and decision framers (middle) (Figure 2).

Stakeholders

The major stakeholders groups from which input will be sought to update and implement the A²Zero Plan and achieve community-wide carbon neutrality by the year 2030, include (far left):

- Residents – including individuals of all ages, renters, home owners, and students.
- Businesses – including owners and employees within our business community.
- Civil Society and Labor Organizations – including our numerous nonprofit and labor community/partners as well as our communities of faith.
- Major Institutions – including entities such as the University of Michigan, SPARK, the DDA, DTE, and the Chamber of Commerce, including their leadership and employees.
- Local and Regional Governments – including staff in the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and surrounding local and regional governments.

Engagement Events / Input Formats

The major engagement events where input is collected and incorporated back into the A²Zero process and plan include (far right):

- An annual survey to people who live, work and recreate in the City regarding carbon neutrality and sustainability.
- An annual carbon neutrality summit where we celebrate successes and carbon neutrality champions, outline upcoming initiatives, gather feedback, and learn from each other and outside experts.

- Regular (and ideally automated) tracking of progress on carbon neutrality efforts through an online sustainability dashboard. This also includes quarterly updates to City Council, which will reflect progress detailed on the dashboard for pertinent metrics.
- Annual City Council carbon neutrality work session in which progress is discussed, next steps outlined, and dialogue is undertaken regarding priorities for the coming year.
- Ongoing and regular community engagement, which includes the regular engagement channels the Office of Sustainability and Innovations and other City departments use to work with and gather feedback from the public.

All of these venues will provide opportunities for revisions and refinements to the carbon neutrality plan. All proposed revisions will be reviewed through the lens of the prioritization framework, however, to ensure they are held to the same standard as existing actions.

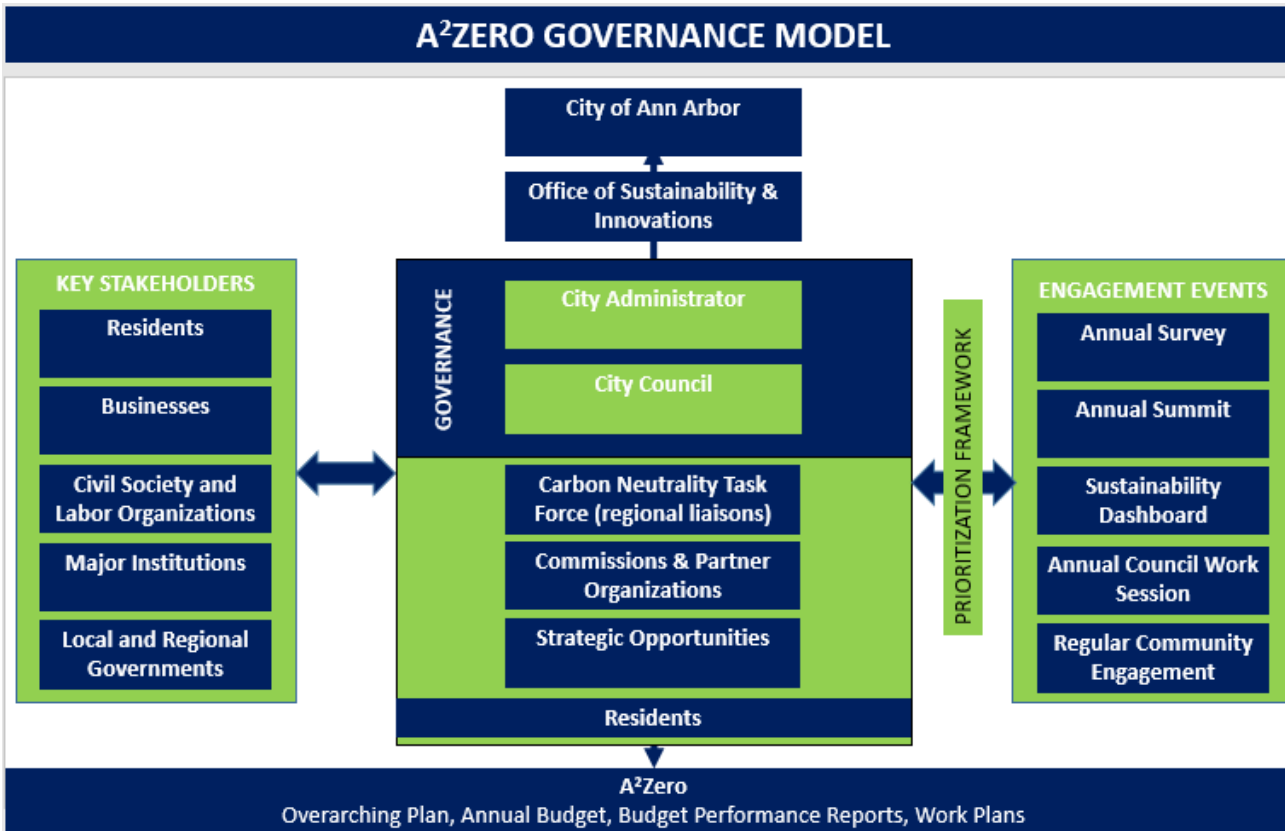


Figure 2: Proposed Governance Framework for the A2Zero Initiative. Major stakeholders are outlined on the left, decision makers and decision influencers in the center, and major public engagement events on the far right.

Decision Makers and Decision Informers

The middle section outlines the major decision makers and/or decision informers that help to determine what gets prioritized and accomplished, as well as how and when. This work is primarily overseen by the City’s Office of Sustainability and Innovations, with support from other City departments and partner organizations. The key City-focused decision makers in this model are:

- The City Administrator
- City Council

The Decision Informers include:

- A newly formed Carbon Neutrality Task Force that is composed of staff leads from major institutions necessary to achieve community-wide carbon neutrality such as the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor Public Schools, the University of Michigan, DTE, and TheRide. This will be a staff-led coordinating committee to help align and scale carbon neutrality work through the City’s major institutions. This group will also share recommendations with City Council, as appropriate but will largely be working to coordinate the day to day activities necessary to achieve community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030.
- City Commissions and Partner organizations, that will help support and implement actions outlined in the A²Zero plan. Each partner will undertake their own governance and decision-making processes to determine which carbon neutrality-related actions to support and how. Similarly, relevant City Commissions (i.e., Energy, Environmental, Transportation, Planning), will determine if, where, and how best to support select strategies and activities within the Plan. This work will be coordinated, to the extent practical, by staff in the Office of Sustainability and Innovations.
- Strategic opportunities – these are unforeseen opportunities that would help us move an element of our carbon neutrality work forward. This could be new funding opportunities that align with elements of the A²Zero plan, new research opportunities related to things outlined in the A²Zero plan, a new partner that has resources and capacity to move a section of the Plan forward, or something similar. Overall, these are strategic opportunities that can’t be anticipated but which would help to move all or portions of the A²Zero Plan forward.
- Residents, who will have multiple ways and means (as outlined in the engagement section as well as through traditional City channels) of influencing decisions related to the A²Zero plan.

UPDATES

Being transparent in regards to what is happening, when, and how is a core tenant of A²Zero. To achieve this tenant, we will: 1) create and post a sustainability dashboard that keeps real-time (or as close to real-time) data on carbon neutrality activities as possible; 2) include a column in the City’s monthly residential newsletters about the City’s carbon neutrality work and opportunities for engagement; 3) update our website with pertinent information about our carbon neutrality work; and 4) provide quarterly updates to Council on our carbon neutrality efforts.

TIMELINE

Most of the things outlined in this Governance Plan will happen at least yearly (i.e., Council, the public, partners, and residents will have annual opportunities to propose revisions and refinements to the A²Zero plan through the events outlined in Figure 2). In addition, we are proposing that the full A²Zero plan and the investment plan be evaluated every 3 years to ensure the actions are still the most appropriate and to provide greater clarity on investment opportunities and needs. This will also present an opportunity to holistically evaluate the successes, limitations, and opportunities for improvement to the actions outlined in the plan.