

# THE CHARGING STATION

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AND  
THE ANN ARBOR OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS



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## ABOUT THE EDITOR



Jennifer Wolf supports the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators network, helping to elevate and unlock the potential that organizations bring to the community through their own sustainability work. She is thrilled to share more about this amazing group of dedicated professionals in this month's issue! Interested in learning more? Reach out to Jennifer at [jwolf@a2gov.org](mailto:jwolf@a2gov.org).



*The Winter Solstice Gathering is a time for Collaborators to enjoy informal conversation around the fire while reflecting on the impacts of past and future sustainability efforts.*

## WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI). In this issue of the Charging Station, OSI is delighted to share details about the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators and their work bringing sustainability to a broad range of sectors. If you are interested in learning more about any of the organizations featured in this issue and how you can get involved, more detail can be found on our website: [www.a2gov.org/sustainability](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability). As always, thank you for your interest in sustainability activities in Ann Arbor!

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Equity and justice are at the center of A<sup>2</sup>ZERO 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.

# A<sup>2</sup>ZERO COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

PULLING TOGETHER FOR CLIMATE ACTION

In 2018, Ann Arbor's City Council declared a climate emergency.

In November 2019, the City Council passed Resolution 19-2103: A Resolution in Support of Creating a Plan to Achieve Ann Arbor Community-Wide Carbon Neutrality by 2030.

In June 2020, the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan, Ann Arbor's living carbon neutrality plan, was adopted by City Council.

As 2024 commences, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) is reflecting on the accomplishments and challenges of the past 3.5 years with tremendous gratitude for the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators! Please read on to learn more about this invaluable network of businesses, nonprofits, governmental entities, labor organizations, social service agencies, and education institutions pulling together to create a sustainable future for all.

Early on in the development of the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan, OSI identified the need for collaboration with a variety of entities planning for and practicing sustainability and climate action in the community. From that need, the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators quickly became a reality with 132 active Collaborators in the network, as well as seven City of Ann Arbor Units – including the Office of Sustainability and Innovations.

Together, the Collaborators leverage assets and amplify messaging for a greater impact. This is critical and necessary to achieve a just, equitable, carbon-neutral future throughout the community. Collaborators

attend quarterly sessions to learn about the effort of their peers and explore opportunities to work together for greater impact. Collaborators are also asked to share information about the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan with their professional networks, consider ways to elevate sustainability through events, presentations, or informal discussions, and refer other organizations with similar goals into the Network. Many Collaborators are visible

throughout the community as they have a physical presence – for example, the Ann Arbor District Library, the Ann Arbor Hands on Museum, the Humane Society of Huron Valley, and Zingerman's. Many are familiar for their advocacy – for example, the Sierra Club, Citizens' Climate Lobby, and the Huron River Watershed Council. Still others are working on policy or legislation in relatively quiet corridors – for example, the Downtown Development Authority, East Michigan Electric Vehicle Association, Representative Debbie Dingell, and the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association. Some Collaborators are familiar for their presence hosting or attending community events – for example, A2SF, Scrap Creative Reuse, and the Leslie Science and Nature Center. Many pull together to help decarbonize buildings and transportation systems – for example, Human Electric Hybrids, the 2030 District, IBEW Local 252, and the Washtenaw Area Housing Alliance. Other Collaborators are looking to waste reduction and resource recovery – for example, Recycle Ann Arbor, Zero Waste, Kiwanis, Food Gatherers, and Urban Ashes.



*In April of 2023, Collaborators met in person for a planning session to identify common goals and future opportunities for working together.*



*Kiwanis is committed to supporting their customers of all ages with resources on waste reduction and resource recovery.*

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# A<sup>2</sup>ZERO COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

## PULLING TOGETHER FOR CLIMATE ACTION

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Or they are recognized for their repair clinics - for example, Common Cycle and All Hands Active. Many work to shift our food systems to more sustainable models – for example, Perpetual Use, The Hungry Locavore, and the People’s Food Coop. Or to preserve the health, wellness, and biodiversity in our world – for example, White Coats for Climate Action, the Huron River Watershed Council, and the National Wildlife Federation. Collaborators also support and grow the capacity of the people

in the community – from Ann Arbor Public Schools to the University of Michigan, from the Community Action Network to the American Society of Adaptation Professionals – striving together to build the teams ready to address climate resiliency effectively and with urgency.

Thirty-three Collaborators are mentioned here by way of example – and there are 100 more doing great work in the community every day!

The A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators are a remarkable

group of organizations addressing issues around sustainability and climate resiliency through impactful, powerful actions. **Pages 4-5** illustrate how all 132 Collaborators engage across the seven core Strategies of the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan. [You can find links to each organization’s website HERE.](#)

The City of Ann Arbor is grateful for their dedication, expertise, and commitment. Here at OSI, we look forward to all that we accomplish together in 2024!

## NEW Collaborator Spotlight

[ProVeg International](#) is the newest member of the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Collaborators network, advocating for plant-forward nutrition on a global scale, including within the United Nations, to reduce carbon emissions, improve health, and support sustainable and inclusive agriculture systems. Along with the team at VegMichigan, a few staff at the City of Ann Arbor recently participated in a US pilot test of a ProVeg app, Veggie Challenge Teams, which has been adopted by major corporate and government entities in the Netherlands and Belgium. The app helps teams try out and learn about plant-rich eating and the positive impact that our daily choices have on the environment and our health through a fun and interactive 30-day challenge. Improvements are being made before an official launch in the US, which is targeted for 2024. And the app facilitates competition between teams – stay tuned for an exciting Veggie Challenge between UM and OSI in the not-too-distant future!

ProVeg works closely with VegMichigan to implement a variety of strategies promoting plant-rich diets featuring fresh, local foods with lower carbon footprints. This includes institutional pledges, consultations with commercial food service providers on plant-forward menus, and education regarding the environmental impacts of common foods. ProVeg also works with partners to measure how local food systems and consumption contribute to overall emissions (scope 3 and consumption-based emissions). ProVeg looks forward to working with the OSI benchmarking team to explore this data-driven approach to bolster A<sup>2</sup>ZERO’s impact.

Tim Polkowski is the Director of US Strategy and Growth for ProVeg International and is a born and raised Ann Arborite. Tim attended the University of Michigan where he received a BA (Economics), MPP from the Ford School of Public Policy, and an MBA from the Ross School of Business.



*Tim (far left) and friends enjoying a ProVeg gathering with VegMichigan at Miss Kim in Ann Arbor. credit: T. Polkaowski.*

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# A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AND COLLABORATORS

## HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

These pages illustrate the connections between the Collaborators and the seven strategies of the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO plan

### Stakeholders in the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Civil Society and Labor Organizations (non-profit, labor, and faith-based organizations)
- Major Institutions (UM, SPARK, Chamber of Commerce)
- Local and Regional Governments

### Co-benefits of the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan:

1. Supports local economy
2. Produces local energy
3. Improves air quality
4. Creates jobs, develops work force
5. Improves local resilience
6. Improves public health
7. Cost savings accrued
8. Supports biodiversity preservation
9. Benefits the most vulnerable
10. Transferable to other communities

## STRATEGY 1: POWER OUR ELECTRICAL GRID WITH 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY

Center for Strategic Policy Innovation | D2 Solar Detroit | Energy Alliance Group | Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association | Michigan Municipal Association on Utility Issues | Rocky Mountain Institute | Ross Energy Club at UM | Sierra Club Huron Valley Group | Students for Clean Energy on the UM Campus

## STRATEGY 2: SWITCH OUR APPLIANCES AND VEHICLES FROM GASOLINE, DIESEL, PROPANE, COAL, AND NATURAL GAS TO ELECTRIC

East Michigan Electric Vehicle Association | Electric Lawn Company | IBEW Local 252

## STRATEGY 3: SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN OUR HOMES, BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, PLACES OF WORK, RECREATIONAL SITES, AND GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

American Institute of Architects Huron Valley Chapter | Ann Arbor/Washtenaw 2030 District | Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living | Ann Arbor Housing Commission | Ann Arbor Main Street Association | Ann Arbor SPARK | Black & Veatch | Building Matters Ann Arbor | Energy Sciences | Forest Hills Cooperative | Hughes Properties | ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) | Inclination Engineering | Lean & Green Michigan | Michigan Energy Efficiency Contractors Association (MEECA) | Old Fourth Ward | Prentice Partners Home LLC | Thrive Collaborative | University of Michigan Office of Campus Sustainability | University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability | Walker-Miller Energy Services | Washtenaw Area Apartment Association | Washtenaw Area Housing Alliance | Wessinger Properties

## STRATEGY 4: REDUCE THE MILES WE TRAVEL IN OUR VEHICLES BY AT LEAST 50%

Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority | Ann Arbor Community Commons Initiating Committee | Clean Mobility Consultancy LLC | Common Cycle | Human Electric Hybrids and Urban Cargo Riders | TheRide (AAATA) | Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition

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## A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AND COLLABORATORS

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### STRATEGY 5: CHANGE THE WAY WE USE, REUSE, AND DISPOSE OF MATERIALS

All Hands Active | Ann Arbor Area Elders Climate Action Chapter | Ann Arbor Distilling Company | Argus Farm Stop | Bløm Meadworks | BYOC Co. | Cinnaholic | Destination Ann Arbor | Ecology Center | El Harissa | Everyday Wines | Food Gatherers | Glacier Highlands Neighborhood Association | House N2 Home | Humane Society of Huron Valley | Kiwanis Thrift Sale | People's Food Co-op | Perpetual Use | ProVeg International | Recycle Ann Arbor | SCRAP Creative Reuse | Slow Food Huron Valley | Temple Beth Emeth | The Hungry Locavore | Urban Ashes | VegMichigan | Washtenaw County Conservation District | Whole Foods Cranbrook | ZeroWaste.org | Zingerman's

### STRATEGY 6: ENHANCE THE RESILIENCE OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR PLACE

A2 Climate Mobilization | ADAPT: Community Supported Ecology | American Society of Adaptation Professionals | Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels | Community Action Network (CAN) | Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley | HDR Inc. | Huron River Watershed Council | Leslie Science and Nature Center | Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action (MiCCA) | National Wildlife Federation | Natural Resources Defense Council | NSF International | Pesticide-Free Ann Arbor | White Coats for Planetary Health

### STRATEGY 7: OTHER - ORGANIZATIONS THAT CROSS-CUT STRATEGIES, ADVOCATE, OR BUILD THE CAPACITY OF PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS

Ann Arbor District Library | Ann Arbor Hands On Museum | Ann Arbor Indivisible | Ann Arbor Public Schools | Ann Arbor Summer Festival (A2SF) | Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber | Citizens' Climate Lobby - Ann Arbor Chapter | Citizens' Climate Lobby - UM Student Chapter | City of Ypsilanti | College Democrats at UM | Earth Sciences at UM LSA | Environmental Consulting Organization (ECO-UM) | Episcopal Church of the Incarnation | Fresh Coast Climate Solutions | Ginsberg Center at UM | Girls Group | Huron Valley Democratic Socialists of America | Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice | Michigan Climate Action Network (MiCAN) | Michigan Environmental Council | Michigan Interfaith Power and Light | Michigan League of Conservation Voters | Mindful City Ann Arbor | NAACP-Ann Arbor Branch | Neutral Zone | Poverty Solutions | Representative Dingell | Rotary Club of Ann Arbor West | Student Sustainability Coalition at UM | Sunrise Movement | The Modern Firm | Theta Alpha Psi | United Way of Washtenaw County | University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability | Voices for Carbon Neutrality | Washtenaw 350 | Washtenaw Climate Reality | Washtenaw County Democratic Party | Washtenaw County Democratic Party Black Caucus

**The City of Ann Arbor embraces the need for sustainability across all sectors of its work supporting the community.** The following units are actively engaged with the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Community Collaborators: City Administrator, Communications, Parks & Rec (including NAP, Parks Planning, and Greenbelt), Public Works, Sustainability and Innovations, Systems Planning, Transportation, Emergency Management Services, Community Services (including City planning and building development) and Public Services.

# NEW COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

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**WHOLE FOODS CRANBROOK** focuses on supporting our community and the environment through a variety of practices embedded in the values of the team members and organizational culture. At the Cranbrook location, food waste reduction is a priority and the team tackles this challenge using a four-tiered approach:

- **DECREASE!** Ordering tools help track movement and trends so we can order effectively to maintain excellent product quality and prevent food waste.
- **DONATE!** We donate fresh and prepared food to our community partners like Foods Gathers and Salvation Army.
- **DIVERT!** Food that cannot be utilized by partners serving people in our community is diverted to local animal welfare organizations like Creature Conservancy, Barn Sanctuary, Sasha Farms, and the Humane Society. As a store, Whole Foods Cranbrook recommitted to this tenant in 2023, diverting on average 11,000 pounds each month – carrot tops, melon rinds, and pineapple cores are especially well received!
- **DIVE DEEP!** Several times a day we inventory trash bins throughout the store to ensure that we are recycling, donating, and diverting as much as possible. The team calls this Code Green, and this practice means that we integrate opportunities to correct or improve our systems in real time.

In 2024 Whole Foods has joined [the U.S. Food Waste Pact](#), further committing to our goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. As the Store Team Leader at the Cranbrook location, Jason Otten is proud of the initiatives undertaken by all team members toward realizing this important sustainability goal.



*Dropping off food donations to the Creature Conservancy always brings a smile.  
credit: J. Otten*

**EL HARISSA** is a family-owned restaurant, deli, market, and catering service tucked in a retail plaza on the northwest side of Ann Arbor. Since 2013, El Harissa’s slow-food menu specializes in healthy, local, fresh ingredients inspired by the flavors of North Africa and the greater Mediterranean region. Customers return for the amazing food, but the in-house menu also raises awareness for sustainability by featuring the carbon footprint for each item. El Harissa supports local farmers by partnering with The Hungry Locavore to deliver fresh recipes featured in the CSA boxes.

In addition to creating great food, Yusef Houamed also champions the reusable take-out container pilot program with the City of Ann Arbor, Zero Waste, and Perpetual Use. El Harissa has been involved since the inception of [A2R3](#) in 2021, and Yusef’s direct experience contributes to effective design and implementation of this evolving sustainability model. [Call ahead to order](#) and request A2R3 containers – it’s that easy to support sustainable take-out!

*El Harissa is committed to supporting customers with guidance on the carbon impacts of each menu item.*

**Ann Arborites are making changes to eat more sustainably, and so are we!**



high



moderate



low

Join us on our journey and try our green dishes, which have a low carbon footprint and are kinder to the planet.

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# NEW COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

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**THE HUNGRY LOCAVORE** just launched an innovative model based on the traditional CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) but with several twists to increase engagement in support of sustainable agriculture practices. Here are a few sustainability highlights from this past year:

- Reduce delivery miles traveled by 50% with efficient, combined routes and a focus on hyper-local sources (within 30 miles)
- Minimize packaging and encourage plant-based packaging when needed, plus support customer reuse – 80% of all customers bring back their boxes each week!
- Feature a few ready-to-eat products from local restaurants using produce collected from local farms in each box
- Implement fair pricing policies for farmers, vendors, and producers within the system
- Reduce food waste by making each week “opt-in” for customers

The Hungry Locavore is grounded in a passion for small-farm sustainable agriculture with consideration of production, distribution, and consumption from soil-to-table. Proprietors Ryan and Kelly Poe encourage farmers to try new, innovative practices; support young farmers; encourage restaurants to prepare foods using local ingredients; and encourage consumers to explore, learn, and live better by embracing models that support sustainable food systems. People who buy a share get a little peek behind-the-scenes with The Hungry Locavore newsletter featuring the details and stories from each local source.

As 2024 begins, Ryan and Kelly look to continue building a community based in a diverse and expansive network of people supporting regenerative agriculture practices – be it through their farming practices, their menu ingredients, or the foods they choose to put on their tables each day. Learn more at [TheHungryLocavore.com](http://TheHungryLocavore.com)



*Sharing The Hungry Locavore story with the public at the A²ZERO Green Fair.*



*Human Electric Hybrids and Ella Cafe partnered to create a “peddle for your beans” station at A2SF for A²ZERO Week to get a sense of what it takes to brew a shot of delicious espresso!*



*The People's Food Co-op is also a new Collaborator. The store on 4th Ave has been offering local shoppers sustainably-centered goods since 1971.*

**We will keep spotlighting the A²ZERO Collaborators throughout the year ahead! Please stay tuned to learn more about their amazing work in the community.**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CONQUER THE COLD | Jan 15 - Feb 15

Conquer the Cold is an annual promotion that aims to show that it isn't as difficult to get to work without driving as it may seem in the winter months. Through education, outreach, and different challenges, the campaign aims to help commuters overcome the potential barriers of changing their patterns in colder weather. Individuals participating in Conquer the Cold can log their trips on the getDowntown challenge website and earn rewards based on their participation.

## A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AMBASSADOR APPLICATION NOW OPEN!

The A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Ambassador Program provides an opportunity for interested individuals to dive deeply into pathways for advancing local sustainability initiatives, resilience, and carbon neutrality. To learn more about the program and apply to join our 6th Ambassador cohort, please visit A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Ambassadors. Applications open until February 14th at 5 pm.

## ANN ARBOR INSTALLS MORE SOLAR IN 2023 THAN ANY YEAR ON RECORD

As the sun sets on 2023, there is a new dawn for solar in Ann Arbor. With 1.8 MW of solar added across 217 systems and counting, there have been more solar systems installed in Ann Arbor than any other year! And with continuing incentives from the federal government and Ann Arbor's Solarize program, 2024 is set to become an even bigger year. Learn more and get involved at a2gov.org/solar.

## THE BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER IS GOING CARBON NEUTRAL

Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, the City in collaboration with Community Action Network is going to be transitioning the Bryant Community Center into a fully carbon neutral building. But that's not all! The grant funds will also help turn the site into a living, learning laboratory of what it means to transition a home to carbon neutrality. Thanks to the McKnight Foundation, we are delighted to share a new video about our work to make the Bryant neighborhood the nation's first carbon neutral neighborhood. Check out the video here.

## NEW OSI STAFF



### AZELLA MARKGRAF | SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR, FOOD

Azella's work focuses on programs and initiatives that advance a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable community food system in Ann Arbor. A native of Central Ohio, Azella has a professional background in regenerative agriculture, farmers market and nonprofit management, and food justice advocacy. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies and Anthropology from Davidson College, where she focused her research on understanding how local communities imagine, interpret, and respond to the climate crisis. Azella describes herself as a passionate lover of all things fresh and delicious and sees the growing and sharing of food as an opportunity to foster meaningful connections between people, food, and land.

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

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CONQUER THE COLD

Join us and invite others to kickoff and participate in [the Conquer the Cold challenge](#).

- Conquer the Cold 2024 Kickoff – January 9, 11:30am
- Online Info Session for VanRide – January 18, 11am
- Conquer the Cold 2024 Mixer – February 1, 5-7pm
- Park & Ride Meet Up – February 7, 6pm
- Buddy Walk – February 13, 8-9am

### SUSTAINABILITY SERIES | 6-7:30 PM | Ann Arbor District Library, Downtown

OSI is bringing the Sustainability Series back in 2024 for another season at the Ann Arbor District Library! Join us in person or online on the last Wednesday every month. Please hold the dates! We look forward to engaging and sharing with you! [You can register here for the virtual meetings](#), but registration is not required to attend in person.

1. Jan. 31 – Electrification
2. Feb. 28 – Home Energy Rating Disclosure
3. March 27 – Circular Economy and e-Waste
4. April 24 – Equity in Action through A2ZERO
5. May 29 – Rebates and Home Energy Advisor Services

### ANN ARBOR SOLAR STORIES | Feb. 1 | Virtual

This one-hour, online event is hosted by the GLREA. Hear from Ann Arborites who have gone solar and ask them all your questions! [Register in advance](#) to receive a confirmation email containing information to join the meeting.

### A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AMBASSADOR MEET-N-GREET | January 16 | 2:00pm – 4:00pm | Ann Arbor District Library, Mallets Creek Branch

If you're curious about contributing to A<sup>2</sup>ZERO's carbon neutrality goals and uplifting our community, we encourage you to meet with our Ambassador team. This meet-n-greet will be an opportunity to learn about previous work that's been done in the community as well as what the future holds. The option to apply for the program in-person during this time is available, and an interview may take between 30-45 minutes. We look forward to seeing you there!

**For more information on our upcoming events, please visit [www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events).**

**Stay tuned for the February edition of the Charging Station! OSI's Bryce Frohlich will report out on the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Ambassadors. Learn more about the origins of this group of individuals motivated to take climate action through a range of innovative and impactful projects. Can't wait? Head over to [the Ambassadors webpage](#)!**