
The Newsletter for the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan
MARCH 2024 • Volume 19 • Number 3



Rebates, discounts and more news from Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations

Save money phasing out gas-powered lawn equipment — New discounts and rebates for electric leaf blowers and other electric lawn care equipment are being offered beginning March 1! These incentives are intended to help lower the cost of transitioning from gas to electric lawn care equipment, in accordance with Ann Arbor's new [leaf blower ordinance](#). Ann Arbor residents as well as lawn care and landscaping businesses that serve Ann Arbor customers can go to Grainger Industrial Supply (2915 Boardwalk Drive) and WEINGARTZ (5436 Jackson Road) to take advantage of this program, available through May 31, 2025, or until funding is expended. Visit the program page for details on discount amounts, as well as eligibility, at osi.a2gov.org/leafblowers.

New energy rebates available — The A²ZERO Home Energy Rebate program and the home energy advisor service are expanding to provide more money to more residents, with a streamlined process to make the application even easier. To learn more, visit osi.a2gov.org/rebates.

Join the Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility waitlist — The city is currently registering interest in the [Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility](#). If you are interested in enrolling or getting more information as it becomes available, please fill out the form to [join the waitlist](#).

Attend a sustainability forum

The Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) A²ZERO Sustainability Series continues, with three forums remaining for this year. Join OSI for timely topics and expert, engaging panels! Save the dates, and learn more at osi.a2gov.org/events. Each forum is hosted at 6 p.m. at the Ann Arbor District Library Downtown Branch.

Upcoming forums:

- **Thursday, March 27** — Swaps and Returnable Takeout Containers: Expanding Circular Economy Programs
 - **Thursday, April 24** — Making Change through Community Grants: Sustaining Ann Arbor Together
 - **Thursday, May 29** — The SEU and You: Ann Arbor's Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)
-

Fiscal years 2026/2027 budget process underway

The City of Ann Arbor two-year budget process for fiscal years 2026/2027 is underway. Fiscal year 2026 begins July 1, 2025, and ends June 30, 2026. City Council members can only adopt one fiscal year at a time, even though the city plans for multi-year budgets.

Recorded budget presentations will be available online via the [CTN YouTube channel](#). All [presentations and materials](#) will be posted online.



Budget timeline

March 24, 2025: City Council Work Session FY26 Budget Planning

April: In accordance with City Charter, the city administrator's recommended fiscal year 2026 budget is submitted to City Council in April. City Council members can only adopt one fiscal year at a time even though the city plans for multi-year budgets. View the [Proposed Budget for FY 2026](#).

May: City Council, with at least seven affirmative votes, will vote to adopt the budget at its meeting on May 19.

Budget-related feedback or comments are encouraged and may be submitted via email to budget@a2gov.org.



New Drop-off Station surcharge for hard-to-recycle items

Effective March 1, a hard-to-recycle fee will be added to the existing gate fee at the Drop-off Station, operated by Recycle Ann Arbor. This extra fee applies to both residential and large-volume recycling loads. Hard-to-recycle items include:

- Soft/film plastics
- Expanded polystyrene
- Motor oil
- Motor oil filters
- Antifreeze
- Vegetable oil

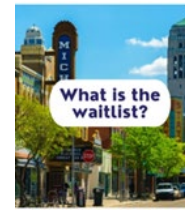
This is the first rate increase the Drop-off Station has implemented in 15 years and is necessary due to rising costs associated with materials handling and the influx of some challenging types of materials being brought in. The hard-to-recycle fee is: Residential volume: \$5 | Large volume*: \$17

Visit Recycle Ann Arbor online for [more information and a full list of accepted materials and pricing](#).

A2 affordable housing waitlist is now OPEN!

The Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development is looking for moderate-income applicants to join the Ann Arbor Affordable Housing Waitlist. The A2 waitlist pairs moderate-income individuals with below-market rental units in apartment complexes in downtown Ann Arbor.

Interested? Visit www.annarborwaitlist.com to learn more and to apply.



Sign up for the
Waitlist Now



See Available Units



Free viewing of "Beyond the Bridge" at the Michigan Theater

On Tuesday, March 11, at 6 p.m., the City of Ann Arbor is co-sponsoring a free event at Michigan Theatre to celebrate and screen the new documentary, "[Beyond the Bridge](#)." This powerful documentary examines the root causes of homelessness and explores comprehensive solutions.

The screening will be followed by an engaging panel co-moderated by University of Michigan School of Social Work Dean Beth Angell and City of Ann Arbor Mayor Christopher Taylor, featuring the following panelists: Don Sawyer (film director), Roshanak Mehdipanah (UM School of Public Health), Jennifer Hall (Ann Arbor Housing Commission) and Molly Smith (Avalon Housing). Prior to the event, UM faculty research on poverty and homelessness will be featured in the lobby.

Registration for the Beyond the Bridge screening event is required. [Go online to register to attend](#).

Barton Dam embankment work is underway

Construction is underway for the Barton Dam embankment remediation project. As a result, public access is now restricted in [designated areas](#) (PDF). (This includes no public on-site access to Barton Pond.) The construction site is adjacent to Barton Pond, Barton Nature Area, Bird Hills Nature Area and trails to and along the Huron River.



These areas are now restricted:

- The walking path beneath the railroad bridge at Barton Nature Area
- North of the pedestrian bridge on the west side the railroad crossing
- The right (west) embankment including the canoe portage on Barton Pond
- The spillway
- The left (east) embankment
- No public on-site access to Barton Pond

What's open? The pedestrian bridge over the Huron River and the city canoe launch downstream of the pedestrian bridge are accessible.

There is also potential for noise from equipment situated between the railroad tracks and the dam, as dewatering equipment must remain running 24 hours, seven days per week during key excavation work.

When visiting this area, please note the posted safety restrictions, barricades and signage on site and use caution in areas that remain open, such as the parking lot, pathway and other areas west of the Huron River, as some of these open areas will be shared by construction operations and construction traffic. This project is anticipated to be completed by June 2027. The city thanks community members for their patience during this Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)-required project. [Learn more](#), and visit the [project webpage](#).



Get ready for a summer of fun with Ann Arbor parks

Spring is just around the corner, and that means it's time to start planning for an unforgettable summer of adventure! Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation is bringing back all the favorite summer camp activities, including swimming, golf, canoeing and kayaking, nature exploration, arts and crafts and plenty of opportunities to make new friends at Buhr and Fuller park pools, Huron Hills Golf Course and Argo and Gallup park liveries.

Mark your calendar, and start planning! Summer day camp [program details will be available starting Saturday, March 1](#). Registration opens Wednesday, April 2, at 8 a.m. Prepare in advance by [creating/logging into your online registration account](#) to check that all your information is up to date. Need help? Call Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Customer Service at 734.794.6230 ext. 0 for assistance. Prepare, sign up ... and get ready for a summer full of fun!

Bird Flu Precautions

- Do not feed wild birds
- Do not touch dead or sick birds
- Keep pets away from wild birds and bird poop



If you see multiple dead or sick birds, make a report to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Use this QR code or call 517-336-5030.



Information current as of February 2025. Visit [washtenaw.org/health](https://www.washtenaw.org/health) for the latest updates.

With recent reports of dead birds in the area, the Washtenaw County Health Department is raising awareness about bird flu and sharing general precautions at www.washtenaw.org/health. If you see six or more dead wild birds, you can file a report using the DNR Eyes in the Field reporting form at <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ors/Survey/4> or by calling the DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory at 517.336.5030

Provide a safe passage for birds

From the middle of March through the end of May, and again mid-August through the end of October, migrating birds fly over Ann Arbor during spring and fall migrations. On clear nights, birds navigate by the stars; but at dawn or on cloudy and foggy nights, they attempt to navigate using the lights of tall buildings, putting them at risk of hitting these lit windows. They either crash going full speed, or they endlessly circle the building until they drop to the ground, exhausted and vulnerable to predators and other dangers.

Ann Arbor joins other cities in helping migrating birds have a safe passage. Occupants of buildings on floors five and above are asked to help prevent these needless deaths by pulling the drapes or closing the shades on windows in lit rooms between 11 p.m. and dawn. [Learn more.](#)





Seasonal siren testing resumes

The first test of the city’s warning siren system for 2024 will take place Tuesday, March 11. The City of Ann Arbor has 22 siren locations throughout city limits. Testing of these sirens takes place on the second Tuesday of the month, March through October, at 1 p.m. The tests consist of one minute of steady wailing.

For more information, visit the [alert systems webpage](#) and see the siren warning system section.

City strengthens focus on economic development

The City of Ann Arbor is focusing additional efforts on community collaborations, partnerships and investment opportunities for industry and commerce streams. The city recently announced the hiring of new economic development director, Joe Giant, who will join the city March 17.

Giant comes to Ann Arbor after serving as community development administrator for the department of redevelopment in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and also previously worked as a city planner in both Fort Wayne and in Minneapolis. His experience and successes include leading public-private initiatives which included creation of numerous mixed-use developments, an affordable housing/clinic/daycare complex and redevelopment for an activity center and fieldhouse.



Giant’s leadership will help the city to further establish Ann Arbor as a premier destination that proactively supports growth, new opportunities and quality of life for residents. [Learn more](#) about this new role for the city.



2024 highlights from AAFD

The [Ann Arbor Fire Department](#) is highlighting recent initiatives, operations and accomplishments in the [2024 AAFD Annual Report](#) (PDF). Check it out to learn details for:

- The department's planning and response for the celebrations of the University of Michigan National Championship football game and victory parade
 - Training initiatives
 - The fire recruit program, leading to hiring of new firefighters
 - The annual Blaze & Blue Summer Camp, introducing first-responder careers to area girls and young women
 - Essential additions to the department's equipment and fleet
 - Planning, coordination and response to numerous dignitary visits ahead of the 2024 Presidential Election, as well as preparations for coverage needs during the November election
 - And more!
-

Blaze & Blue Camp registration begins March 17

Back for its fourth year, the Ann Arbor Fire and Police departments will host [Blaze & Blue Camp](#) 8 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday–Friday, July 7–10. **Registration begins Monday, March 17, at 10 a.m.**



The free, four-day program provides local young women ages 15–18 years the opportunity to experience the most challenging and exciting tasks in firefighting, first response and law enforcement. The week will focus will be:

- July 7–8 — Fire department
- July 9–10 — Police department

When enrollment begins March 17, priority will be given to city of Ann Arbor residents, followed by residents of other Washtenaw County communities. Questions? Contact Fire Department Office Manager Chantel Jackson at cjackson@a2gov.org.



Save the date! Police and fire departments open house is May 17

Save the date to meet our local first responders, including police K-9 officers, get up close with police and fire vehicles, watch demonstrations and so much more at the annual [City of Ann Arbor Fire and Police Open House](#) (PDF)! The event takes place along Fifth Avenue, in front of fire station No. 1, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Saturday, May 17.

Train your eye to the sky

The [Washtenaw County Sheriff Emergency Services Division](#), in conjunction with the National Weather Service Detroit/Pontiac, is offering a Skywarn Spotter training at Pioneer High School

Saturday, March 15, 10–11:30 a.m., with check in beginning at 9:30 a.m. The training is free and is open to anyone 18 years of age and older. Participants will learn severe-weather identification, protection and reporting procedures.

Class sizes are limited, and preregistration is required.

If you have previously completed training and your identification expires in 2026, you should defer training until next year or attend a virtual session as a refresher. Washtenaw County will continue to recognize trained spotters who attend online training, however, Skywarn Spotter Identification will no longer be issued to individuals not attending in person. You must be a currently trained Skywarn Spotter to receive the official related weather messages.

Go online to [learn more](#). Questions? Contact Washtenaw County at 734.222.3911 or EOC@WashtenawCounty.net.





Still time to experience: Oscillation

Have you visited the interactive art exhibit in Liberty Plaza, downtown Ann Arbor (310 S. Division St.)? Through March 16, [Oscillation](#) treats visitors to a collection of large, glowing crystals that interact with movement. As you walk toward the piece, Oscillation plays different sounds and pitches depending on your distance from the crystals, as colors reflect and light changes direction in different ways based on your angle and position.

Oscillation is the debut project from the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) public art and placemaking program, [Elevate](#), which strives to enhance the downtown experience for all by funding public art and placemaking installations. Elevate will feature a variety of temporary interactive and permanent installations across downtown.

“Get moving,” and experience Oscillation for yourself! And be sure to share your photos and videos with the hashtags #oscillationA2 and #elevateA2. [Oscillation](#) is free and open to the public.

CTN highlights

Check out Ann Arbor [Community Television Network's \(CTN\)](#) wide range of programs available to watch online now.



[City Round Up](#) — Distracted driving

[CTN Sports 2025](#) — Saline at Huron Boys Basketball, Feb. 18: SENIOR NIGHT!

[CTN Sports 2025](#) — Pioneer at Huron Boys Basketball, Feb. 4

[FYI](#)— Karrie Waarala, director of PTD's The Hat Box, discusses this mystery involving parental relations; WCC celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.; and learn the laws about distracted driving.

[FYI](#)— Brittany Patton with Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation discusses the Snow Match program; Dance Marathon at the University of Michigan (DMUM) Formal; the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority's Elevate program

[FYI](#)— Kate Brindle with the Humane Society of the United States clears up confusion on the cage-free egg law and the rising cost of eggs; a celebration of girls and women in sports; and Melody on Ice

[Let's Watch with the Ann Arbor Film Festival](#) — Yazmin Dababneh, an interdisciplinary Detroit-based artist, discusses her surreal art and works, Off the Screen, at the Ann Arbor Art Center during the 63rd AAFF (March 25-30)

[Let's Watch with the Ann Arbor Film Festival](#)— Paul Echeverria, multi-media artist and educator, with work, Off the Screen, at the Ann Arbor Art Center and a special presentation at the Michigan Theatre, both in honor of the late experimental filmmaker Luther Price, during the 63rd Ann Arbor Film Festival (March 25-30)

[Senior Moments](#) — Brittany Patton, Ann Arbor Senior Center director, talks about events and activities at the center.

[Senior Moments](#) — Mark A. Harris, fitness instructor, discusses how to prevent falling and shares exercise tips for seniors to maintain their health and avoid accidents in their daily lives.

[Sustainability Forums](#) — Natural Features and Me: Promoting and Protecting Nature in the City

[Ward Talk](#) — Erica Briggs, Ann Arbor City Councilmember from the 5th Ward, visits the CTN studio
