

THE CHARGING STATION

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



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WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor’s Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI)! We hope that this newsletter provides a glimpse into the work we do towards achieving the equitable, healthy, safe, and carbon neutral community envisioned in the A²ZERO Plan. If you are interested in learning more about A²ZERO and our work, more detail can be found on our website: www.a2gov.org/sustainability. And 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ann Arbor Solar Stories

1st Thursday of the Month | 7:00pm | Zoom

This one-hour virtual event is hosted by the GLREA on the first Thursday of each month. In February, we'll hear from Ann Arbor resident Clifford Johnson. He will be sharing his experience of how he went solar through the Solarize Ann Arbor program. He has one year of data and will share how he has been monitoring his production. To date, he's learned how to effectively use his appliances and how to maximize his own solar usage. Also, he recently purchased a plug-in hybrid EV and will talk about how he is maximizing his clean energy by charging up with solar.

Sustainability Forum Series - Circular Economy

Wednesday, January 25th | 6:00pm | Zoom

The annual Sustainability Forum Series is back in 2023! We'll be kicking off this year's series on Wednesday, January 25th at 6:00pm, with a focus on the Circular Economy, featuring OSI staff and special guests. Register for this event (& others in the series) at https://a2gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_fmqnRmqXT6SgpyK mzRSQVg#/registration.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ann Arbor One of 122 Global Cities and Counties Named Climate Action Leaders on CDP 2022 A List

For the second year in a row, Ann Arbor has been recognized by CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) as one of 122 cities and counties across the globe that is taking bold leadership on environmental action and transparency. CDP's Cities A List is based on environmental data disclosed by local governments to CDP-ICLEI Track. In 2022, just over one in ten local governments scored by CDP (12% of such local governments) received an A. Ann Arbor and the other 121 cities and counties on this year's A List are celebrated for showing that urgent and impactful climate action - from ambitious emissions reduction targets to building resilience against climate change - is achievable at a global level, and in places with different climate realities and priorities. Special recognition goes to Thea Yagerlener, Energy Analyst, for leading the City's benchmarking and disclosure efforts. Way to go, Thea!! To read the full article about this exciting recognition, visit <https://www.a2gov.org/news/pages/article.aspx?i=930>.

Join Ann Arbor Solarize Groups

Interested in getting solar? Join ongoing Ann Arbor Solarize groups hosted by local residents in order to receive a bulk-buy discount on your solar installation. Learn more or sign up by emailing Julie Roth at JRoth@a2gov.org.

Become a Climate Hero or a Sponsoring Congregation

Did you know that 56% of Washtenaw County residents never talk about climate change? To help get more people talking about this issue, local Washtenaw County congregations have banded together to sponsor a "Climate Hero Stories" initiative, through which those taking action to address climate change can be recognized and their stories can spark conversation. Visit www.climateherostories.com to learn more about the program, how you can become a Climate Hero and share your story with the rest of the world, how your congregation can become a sponsor, and how to join the monthly *Reducing Your Carbon Footprint* webinars.

Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

As you may know, in 2022 President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). This new law makes historic investments in climate action. For instance, the IRA increases the federal tax incentive for solar to 30%, including installations completed in 2022. In addition, stand-alone batteries now qualify for a 30% tax credit (previously, these had to be paired with solar to qualify). And a slew of new incentives will be available this year for heat pumps, energy efficiency improvements, and much more. If you are interested in learning about the IRA, we will be posting updates as we learn more on our IRA webpage: www.a2gov.org/a2ira. Currently, this page contains a calculator from Rewiring America that provides estimates of applicable tax incentives your household may be eligible for.

An Evening with our A²ZERO Collaborators

OSI and members of the A²ZERO Collaborators network celebrated the winter solstice with an outdoor event on the grounds of the Leslie Science and Nature Center! About 40 collaborators plus OSI staff attended. Two night-hikes through the trails started over by the LSNC owl enclosures, which was a wonderful way to learn more about these magnificent bird ambassadors and the adaptations that make them well-suited for nocturnal hunting. A clear night sky, beautiful fire, and hot beverages made for easy conversation and relaxed fun. Thanks to all who took time out of a busy week to join us for this event!

OSI PROGRAM UPDATES

10,000 Trees Initiative

In almost two years of existence, the 10,000 Trees Initiative has distributed over 3,677 trees! Right now, we're in the process of developing a series of educational workshops and neighborhood tree walks to help community members engage with trees and our urban canopy. We plan to offer our "Tree ID 101" workshop over the winter months! Stay tuned for more details. The next FreeTree Giveaway event is tentatively scheduled for April 29th and 30th with a planned 3,000 trees available! Be sure to visit www.a2gov.org/10ktrees to keep up-to-date on these events and more, and to sign up for our mailing list. For more information, contact Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org.

A²ZERO Ambassadors

We have launched our fourth cohort of A²ZERO Ambassadors – thanks to all who applied! Meanwhile, our first three cohorts continue to work on their community projects and have been invaluable in our community engagement efforts. For more information or with any questions about the Ambassadors program, contact Bryce Frohlich at BFrohlich@a2gov.org.

Aging in Place Efficiently

Through the Aging in Place Efficiently pilot program, 17 older, income-qualified adults received energy efficiency improvements and home safety installs to support their intention to age-in-place. We are thankful for their participation and feedback, as they truly helped shape the program for the benefit of future recipients. Service providers, contractors, and program partners worked diligently to ensure high quality work and customer satisfaction. Their dedication contributed to a successful pilot program. In addition to increased home safety and comfort, reductions in carbon emissions and energy burdens were achieved. Over the lifetime of the installations, carbon reductions total 113 metric tons and utility cost savings total \$45,800.

Aging in Place Efficiently is excited to announce a new study pilot designed to review the title and transfer status of past participants' residential property, in partnership with Legal Services of Southeast Michigan, the UM Housing Bureau for Seniors, the Bryant Community Center, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. This study pilot is funded by Partners for Places, with the hope that this type of legal consultation can be embedded in future services to protect against home loss and displacement.

Currently, the Aging in Place Efficiently pilot program is officially closed - but we welcome submissions for the wait list at www.a2gov.org/AIP. For more information or with any questions, contact Jennifer Wolf at JWolf@a2gov.org.

Air Quality Monitoring

OSI has installed three solar-powered AQMesh air quality monitors - one at the Kerrytown Farmers Market, one at the Bryant Community Center, and the third at the intersection of Main & Washington; we are working to install a fourth air quality monitor at a local AAPS Elementary School, with further locations in the works. These monitors measure pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, and nitrous oxides.

We are excited to announce that all data collected by the monitoring network is now publicly available for download at www.a2gov.org/airquality – and a data visualization platform is coming soon! For more information on our air quality monitoring efforts, contact Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org.

Ann Arbor Reduce, Reuse, Return (A²R³)

US-made, USDA-approved, microwave-, freezer-, and dishwasher-safe reusable containers are available for select takeout orders at Zingerman's Next Door Café, Ginger Deli, Cinnaholic Bakery, and El Harissa Market Café. Containers can be returned to participating businesses to be cleaned and used for future takeout orders, reducing single-use container waste and supporting Ann Arbor's circular economy. Additional businesses are added to the program continually. Simply visit www.livezerowaste.org/a2r3 to register and to check out a container each time you visit a participating business! For more information or with any questions on the A²R³ program, contact Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org.

Building Codes

Code review is currently awaiting action from Michigan's Licensing and Regulatory Affairs department and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. The City has also signed on to a letter to the Michigan Public Service Commission encouraging them to disallow use of the Low-Carbon Facilities Fund for methane and biogas infrastructure. For more information on the City's effort to get Michigan to adopt more health- and safety-centered building codes, contact Zach Waas Smith at ZWaassmith@a2gov.org.

Circular Economy

Check out our new Circular Economy webpage at www.a2gov.org/circulareconomy. On this page, you can learn more about the Circular Economy and view our Circular Economy GIS map, a tool for residents to engage with circular entities in Ann Arbor. Here you can also find a link to sign up for our Circular Economy mailing list. The Public Works Department and OSI are currently working on a circular economy strategy that is undergoing stakeholder engagement. If you are interested in participating in this stakeholder engagement process, or with any questions related to the circular economy, contact Hannah Loftis at HLoftis@a2gov.org.

City Fleet Electrification

So far, we have exceeded 20% electrification of the City's light fleet and continue to work towards near complete fleet electrification. For more information on the City's efforts towards fleet electrification, contact Simi Barr at SBarr@a2gov.org.

Commercial & Multifamily Energy & Water Benchmarking

Buildings over 100,000 square feet were required to submit a benchmarking report by August 1, 2022. Building owners can visit www.a2gov.org/benchmarking or email Benchmarking@a2gov.org for instructions on how to benchmark your buildings with the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, or share questions related to accessing energy and water data or how to submit benchmarking reports. Support is available to help benchmark buildings - the Ann Arbor 2030 District offers free benchmarking services to member buildings. There is no cost for Property Owner/Manager membership, or to benchmark building(s). Please contact the 2030 District at A2benchmarking@2030districts.org to learn more. For more information or with questions on our benchmarking program, contact Thea Yagerlener at TYagerlener@a2gov.org.

Community Climate Action Millage

Through the Community Climate Action Millage, Ann Arborites will invest an estimated \$7 million per year for 20 years to fund local clean energy, waste reduction, energy efficiency, sustainable food, and resilience programs and services. Funding for these programs will be included in the upcoming city budgeting process and be available for expenditure starting July 1, 2023. Visit www.a2gov.org/2022CommunityClimateActionMillage for more information.

DTE Rate Case Intervention

OSI is a formal intervenor on DTE's rate case U-20836, arguing against the proposed changes to rates, a new tariff for solar users, and proposing changes to battery pilots (along with other updates). The City's testimony is public and can be found on the Michigan Public Service Commission website. For more information on the rate case and OSI's testimonial in the case, contact Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org.

DTE Integrated Resource Planning (IRP)

OSI staff attended DTE's IRP technical workshops and provided comments relating to coal plant retirement, renewable energy capacity expansion, energy efficiency, and electrification. Staff also attended the Michigan Public Services Commission's technical workshops on the Michigan IRP Parameters (Case No. U-22119) and submitted comments relating to these topics. For questions or more information, contact Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org.

Electrification of City Buildings

OSI staff have compiled the hourly electricity load profiles and load shapes of each City-owned building and have projected energy demand both before and after building electrification and energy upgrades. The 2030 District has been contracted to perform energy audits on six City-owned buildings to help identify saving opportunities. We have also started to draft a building decarbonization plan, develop customized plans for each building, collect building information, and develop an inventory of City buildings to document building data and major appliance information. For more information, contact Simi Barr at SBarr@a2gov.org.

Electrification of Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Readiness

OSI and the Downtown Development Authority collaborated to deploy 40 dual-port networked charging stations across DDA-owned parking garages. We are also assisting multi-unit dwellings interested in EV charging by connecting them with incentives, contractors, and other resources. If you live in an apartment or condo and are interested in EV charging at your home, or have any questions, contact Simi Barr at SBarr@a2gov.org.

Energy Concierge

OSI has contracted community partners EcoWorks and Elevate Energy to co-develop design of a one-on-one Energy Advisor service with the City of Ann Arbor, including a pilot testing of the service with 10-20 buildings. This free service would assist residents with evaluating their homes, creating road maps to electrification and efficiency, and connecting with contractors. Pilot projects are expected to commence in the spring of 2023, with pilot program completion at the end of June, followed by evaluation. For more information, contact Julie Roth at JRoth@a2gov.org.

Green Rental Housing

Based on input collected during the open comment period and through ongoing engagement with landlords, engineers, and architects, staff are continuing to make edits to the draft Green Rental Housing (GRH) Policy and the proposed prescriptive checklist. Simultaneously, the draft policy is awaiting comment from the City's legal department. Community engagement will continue through program implementation, and staff are at hand to receive feedback. Once necessary revisions have been made, the policy and checklist will go before the task force once more before proceeding to City Council (expected in early 2023). Staff have begun using new tools developed by the Department of Energy and Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory to help model the carbon emissions reductions from certain building improvements. This is proving to be a long and arduous process, but we'll continue using the information from these models to inform changes to the checklist as necessary. Staff are also hard at work compiling a comprehensive GRH Resource Hub for landlords and tenants to accompany the policy. The GRH Resource Hub will include information about the policy, an FAQ, connections to City and third-party financial assistance, and tips for sustainable living. If you have ideas for what the GRH Resource Hub could include, or have any questions about the GRH program, contact Zach Waas Smith at ZWaassmith@a2gov.org or Joe Lange at JLange@a2gov.org.

Home Electrification and Heat Pumps

The Electrification Contractor Training and Badging program, in partnership with Michigan Saves, is going strong in assisting residents in finding qualified professionals (HVAC, plumbers, energy auditors, and solar contractors) to assist them with the move toward electrification of their home. Badged contractors can be found on the Michigan Saves [Locator](#) by searching "Electrification," and you can read more on MI Saves [Home Electrification Page](#). The Electrification web page at www.a2gov.org/electrify and the Heat Pump web page at www.a2gov.org/heatpumps continue to be updated with additional information and resources. The IBEW/NECA, our local Electrical Workers Union, is partnering with A²ZERO on electrification readiness, and continues their campaign called "[The Future is Electric.](#)" As part of this campaign, they have been releasing [informational videos](#) to help residents know what might be involved with upgrading homes for electrification of appliances and vehicles. Take a look at videos on panel upgrades, heat pump dryers, induction stoves and EV charging! OSI staff are beginning to strategize around an Electrify Ann Arbor program, that brings together the various incentives and rebates, contractor network, financing programs, and budding energy concierge service into a one-stop-shop, helping residents with individual projects as well as developing their own roadmaps to achieving healthy, comfortable, zero-emission homes. For more information on electrification, contact Julie Roth at JRoth@a2gov.org.

Home Energy Rating Disclosure

City staff have drafted a revised version of a Home Energy Rating Disclosure (HERD; like a miles per gallon rating, but for your home) and, with help from UM research fellow Jess Silber, have developed an engagement strategy and implementation pathway based on promising practices from peers. The strategy identifies target audiences, key messaging, and the best tactics to engage each audience. An informational website has been drafted, with pages dedicated to homeowners, home buyers, realtors, and energy professionals. Materials including mailers, fact sheets, and fliers have been prepared for distribution should City Council adopt the policy, which is currently undergoing final legal review. For more information or with any questions, contact Zach Waas Smith at ZWaasSmith@a2gov.org.

Municipal Energy Use

The City is working with two firms to install over 4MW of solar energy for various municipal sites - including City Hall, the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, the airport, and various Parks sites. Funding for this project is coming, in part, from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Additionally, the City is conducting energy audits of various municipal sites, to understand energy consumption and make improvements where needed. For more information or with any questions, contact Simi Barr at SBarr@a2gov.org.

Neighborhood-Scale Climate Action - Bryant

The City continues to collaborate with the Community Action Network, the residents of the Bryant neighborhood, Elevate, and other collaborators to make Bryant the first fully decarbonized existing neighborhood in America. OSI is delighted to share that the project team recently won a Michigan Housing Opportunities Promoting Energy Efficiency (MI-HOPE) program grant for \$500,000 to help advance decarbonization work in the neighborhood, a Solar Moonshot grant to support two households with deploying solar, and a continuation grant from the McKnight Foundation to continue and deepen our engagement work in Bryant. In addition, energy assessments of neighborhood residences are underway, and any Bryant resident interested in receiving a free energy assessment should contact Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org. The City and partners also continually look for other funding sources to support this project. To learn more or get involved, contact Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org.

Net Zero Energy Affordable Housing

Working in collaboration with the Ann Arbor Housing Commission, OSI continues to advance energy waste reduction, electrification, and solar energy deployments at affordable housing sites. This includes a \$3 million earmark received from Congresswoman Dingell to support the transition of 3-4 existing affordable housing sites to as close to net zero energy as possible. Staff are currently working on the requests for proposals (RFPs) for solar installations and electrification support at these sites. To learn more, contact Thea Yagerlener at TYagerlener@a2gov.org.

Proposed Municipal Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

City Council has approved a contract for firms to assist the city with an Energy Options Analysis, which explores all the options the City has for achieving 100% renewable energy for the entire Ann Arbor community. These options include the SEU, a feasibility study for a traditional municipal utility, virtual Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), onsite generation, and other options, including the stacking of multiple options. To learn more, visit www.a2gov.org/a2seu or check out this [video](#). For questions about the energy options analysis or the proposed SEU, contact Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org.

Resident Race to Zero Waste

The Resident Race to Zero Waste challenges participants to do their best to produce no trash or recycling for a week, while providing help in moving towards zero waste goals through daily webinars and activities. To date, 926 Ann Arbor residents have participated in our first two Zero Waste Challenges, and we've had over 35 collaborating businesses! Future challenges are in the works, including one specifically for UM students. To learn more, visit www.livezerowaste.org/a2 or contact Hannah Loftis at HLoftis@2gov.org.

Solarize

New group-buys are forming for early 2023, and there are opportunities to join a group. As of mid-December, the 3-year old program has now surpassed 3.8 MW of new solar in our region, representing over 500 installations, over \$1.6 million saved in upfront costs, and well over \$16 million saved in energy costs over the 25-year warranted life-span of solar panels. The program is also introducing more and more people to the topics of electrification and energy efficiency and is deepening our residents' connection to their energy usage and production.

The Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association (GLREA) awarded OSI staff member Julie Roth with the 2022 Exemplary Partnership Award for her collaboration in helping to scale the Solarize Ann Arbor model throughout the state. Congrats, Julie! The Solarize Ann Arbor toolkit was recently updated, and is available to municipalities, non-profits, or any volunteer groups looking to pilot a Solarize program in their community. A commercial solarize program is currently in the design phase, in partnership with the 2030 District, and is planned to launch in early 2023. For more information on the Solarize program, contact Julie Roth at JRoth@a2gov.org.

Sustainable Food

City staff and local food experts are meeting routinely to develop a framework for defining sustainable food in Ann Arbor. This framework will be used in developing preferred food and vendor lists to guide City employees in making food purchasing more sustainable. OSI is in the early stages of developing a network of local businesses interested in advancing sustainable food work. If you own a local business involved in the food system (restaurants, bars, grocers, local food markets, farms, etc.) and are interested in learning more or in joining this network of businesses, contact Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org.

Sustaining Ann Arbor Together (SA2T)

The Sustaining Ann Arbor Together grant is an opportunity to fund publicly focused sustainability-related activities. Learn more and see how to apply at www.a2gov.org/sa2t or by contacting Missy Stults at MStults@a2gov.org.

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