

# THE CHARGING STATION

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



## IN THIS ISSUE:

WELCOME .....	1
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	1
MAKING RENTALS EFFICIENT .....	2
GREEN RENTAL HOUSING .....	2
THERMOSTAT CONTROL .....	3
EFFICIENCY IN DORMS .....	3
COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT .....	4
EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS .....	5-6

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:



The lead authors for this month's feature articles are Zach Waas Smith, Sustainability Manager, and Joe Lange, Energy Analyst. Zach and Joe's work with OSI primarily focuses on the efficiency of our buildings.



## WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI)! This month's issue of *The Charging Station* focuses on ways to improve energy efficiency in rental housing, a crucial aspect of achieving the equitable, healthy, safe, and carbon neutral community envisioned in the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan. If you are interested in learning more about A<sup>2</sup>ZERO and our carbon neutrality work, more detail can be found on our website: [www.a2gov.org/sustainability](http://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 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.

# MAKING RENTALS MORE EFFICIENT

## TIPS FOR RENTERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

---

Rental housing represents a substantial opportunity to reduce Ann Arbor's overall carbon emissions - 67% of our greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, and 55% of our housing stock is rental units. This means making every rental in our city energy efficient is an important aspect of our carbon neutrality goals – and we all have a part to play!

**Renters.** While you may not have the opportunity to make structural changes to your living space, there are several steps you can take to improve energy efficiency in your rental unit! The top three things you can do are:

- Program your thermostat to 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in the winter, or as close as you comfortably can. Each degree closer you set the temperature inside to the outside temperature will save you 3% on your annual energy bill.
- Wash your clothes in cold water and dry them on the lowest setting or air dry them, if possible. 90% of the energy used by washing machines goes towards heating water.
- Unplug appliances like phone chargers, TVs, and laptops when not in use. Even when these devices are off, they can still draw power, costing you on your energy bill when you aren't using them. Bonus tip – use a smart power strip that will do this for you (i.e., when you turn your computer off, it also shuts off power to your monitors).

For more tips, check out OSI's [resource hub for renters!](#)

**Property Owners/Managers.** As a property owner, investing in energy efficiency measures can make your tenants more comfortable and more likely to remain in their unit, while reducing the risk of mold damage and other health hazards. Fortunately, there are a wealth of resources to help make these improvements:

- DTE has multiple [rebates and incentives](#) that are available for rental units, including for appliances, window insulation, and more.
- [PACE financing](#) is available to implement energy efficiency, water efficiency, and renewable energy projects in buildings. PACE financing has also just been updated to make more projects viable!
- [Michigan Saves](#), the state's green bank, offers great financing options for energy efficiency, electrification, and clean energy improvements.
- OSI has created and is consistently updating a [resource hub for property owners](#) that identifies financial and educational resources for making energy efficiency and clean energy upgrades to property.

### Green Rental Housing

---

OSI is currently working on the Green Rental Housing program, with the goal of promoting safe, healthy, efficient, and comfortable rentals in Ann Arbor.

The program includes a set of policy recommendations formulated by a task force of tenant, landlord, and low-income housing representatives, compiled to discuss incorporating sustainability into rental housing in Ann Arbor and led by the Office of Sustainability & Innovations.

The OSI team is currently working on finalizing the policy components of the Green Rental Housing program, while also developing resources to help landlords and tenants with the implementation of the program.

More information is coming soon! In the meantime, we invite you to learn more about the program by exploring our [Green Rental Housing website](#).



**A2ZERO**  
EQUITABLE • SUSTAINABLE • TRANSFORMATIVE

Contact Information:

Zach Waas Smith, Manager  
[ZWaasSmith@a2gov.org](mailto:ZWaasSmith@a2gov.org)

Joe Lange, Energy Analyst  
[JLange@a2gov.org](mailto:JLange@a2gov.org)

# WHAT IF I DON'T CONTROL THE THERMOSTAT?

## ACTIONS TO AVOID LIVING AT UNCOMFORTABLE TEMPERATURES

---

If you don't control the thermostat in your rental unit, it can lead to uncomfortable temperatures, especially in the summer and winter. And while opening the windows might help adjust the temperature, it can lead to a large waste of energy! Instead, try these actions to avoid living at uncomfortable temperatures:

- **Establish a process in the lease for resolving temperature change requests.** Coming to an agreement with your landlord about how they would like to be contacted to adjust the temperature before any issues arise can help make this process easier and less stressful. If you've already signed your lease, consider making a lease amendment.
- **Contact your landlord to request a temperature change.** Try calling, texting, or emailing your landlord to explain that you are uncomfortable and have been needing to open the windows or use a space heater to change the temperature. Both are less efficient fixes than adjusting the thermostat, thus causing them to spend more energy on your heating bill.
- **Know your rights as a renter to a warm living space.** If the temperature in your unit isn't warm enough to meet your basic needs, property owners are accountable for [an implied warranty of habitability](#). Try to remind your landlord of their responsibility to keep you warm before taking external action.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN A RESIDENCE HALL

### TIPS FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

---

If you live in an on-campus residence hall, you might have less control over your space and the energy you consume, but there are still things you can do to be more efficient! While you might not be directly paying for your energy, efficiency across all our buildings is important as we work to equitably achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Consider these tips to help:

- **Get the most efficient model of items you need.** While the first step should be to only bring what you truly need, for electronics you do need, make sure they are [ENERGY STAR](#) rated and as efficient as possible.
- **Be smart with blinds and curtains.** Blinds and curtains add insulation to your windows, meaning when you close them it will keep your room cooler in the summer or warmer at night in the winter. Conversely, keep them open during sunny winter days to help heat the room. Lastly, when possible, make use of natural daylight instead of relying on other lighting sources.
- **Use LEDs.** While you might not control your overhead lighting, use LED light bulbs if you have a desk lamp or other lighting. LEDs use less energy and last longer than traditional lighting options.
- **Turn your laptop off.** Not only is leaving your laptop on all the time bad for the battery, it also uses a lot of energy – laptops are generally a student's biggest energy use source. A good rule of thumb is to set your computer to sleep if you will not be using it for 20 minutes or more and to turn it off if you will be away for two or more hours.
- **Unplug devices that are not in use.** Make sure to unplug phone chargers, TVs, and other appliances when not in use. You can make this task easier by [learning how to use smart power strips](#), which will simultaneously switch off power to all unused devices on that strip. This way, when you turn off your TV, the smart strip will also switch off power to your video game consoles.

For more energy efficiency tips you can use in your dorm room, check out [Shrink Your Dorm Print](#).

# COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

## INCLINATION ENGINEERING

---

This month, we are proud to feature A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Collaborator [Inclination Engineering](#)! Caleb Kline is the man with the plan behind Inclination Engineering, who joined the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Collaborator Network in 2022. “I would have joined earlier if I had known about it. I think it’s a great way to meet people who are also interested in sustainability in Ann Arbor,” Kline says. We spoke with Kline in August about the work Inclination Engineering does and how they can support their clients and their community.



**OSI: So, who is Inclination Engineering and what do they do?**

*Kline: I’m a professionally licensed mechanical engineer who specializes in building HVAC systems. I started Inclination Engineering because I saw the need for sustainability in my field and I wanted to focus on existing buildings. I do a lot of retro commissioning, which is basically a building “tune-up”; it’s a process of analyzing, diagnosing, and optimizing a building’s systems through strategic (and often simple) improvements, like installing programmable thermostats, for instance.*

**OSI: How does Inclination Engineering help clients achieve their sustainability goals?**

*Kline: In short, Inclination Engineering is “turning building sustainability goals into plans.” A lot of people have these goals, and they get hung up on how to achieve them. They sometimes stop at low-flow water fixtures or LED lights because they don’t know what to do beyond that or how to do it. Also, a lot of people don’t think about their HVAC equipment until it breaks, but often times, they’re likely to replace with new equipment that will have the same problems. IE helps people get started by making a plan for what to do when equipment fails that builds toward a more sustainable solution.*

**OSI: As it relates to rental housing, what are some projects you’ve worked on that have improved efficiency?**

*Kline: I developed a decarbonization plan and did some retro commissioning for a local sorority. We looked at near-term payback options – we made some minor programming changes to the boiler that saved 25% off their gas usage(!). Plus, they’ll save on A/C costs because their boiler is fine-tuned to run less during the summer. The decarb plan includes what kinds of things they want to do to prepare the building for electrification by prioritizing what equipment will likely need to be replaced over the next 10 years or so.*

**OSI: Okay, so it sounds like local landlords and others could benefit from Inclination Engineering’s services. Where can folks start? How can IE help?**

*Kline: Yeah, as the city is looking at changing some regulations around rental housing and the university is moving toward being carbon neutral, I’m hoping there will be more demand for rental housing moving in the same direction. It’s important to know where their buildings are now to know how to get to carbon neutrality. I think a great place to start is by getting an energy audit. Air sealing goes a long way. Also, they can join the 2030 District & the Multi Family Working Group.*

Learn more about Inclination Engineering on their website: [www.inclinationengineering.com](http://www.inclinationengineering.com)

# UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

---

## **Ann Arbor Solar Stories**

*Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> | 7:00-8:00pm | Virtual*

Happening the first Thursday of each month, this one-hour online event is hosted by the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association (GLREA). Come hear from Ann Arborites who have gone solar, and have a chance to ask them all your questions! Register for "[Thursday Night Energy Events](#)" to receive meeting links.

## **Save Carbon & Cash While Improving Home Energy Efficiency**

*Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> | 6:30-8:30pm | Venue (1919 S Industrial Hwy) & Virtual via Zoom*

Join the Ann Arbor Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby to learn how to reduce your carbon footprint by electrifying your home and improving its energy efficiency - and save money while doing it! A panel of experts will discuss how to get major federal incentives, find low-rate financing, set up a home energy audit, and select from a network of nearly 800 contractors. Learn more and register [here](#).

## **Pollinators Walking Tour**

*Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup> | 2:00-6:00pm | Bløm Meadworks (100 S 4th Ave, Suite 110)*

Join the Office of Sustainability and Innovations, the UM Office of Campus Sustainability, and the Pollinators Working Group of the Environmental Commission at Bløm Meadworks to learn more about native pollinator species and what you can do to help protect them! Plus, try some local honey and embark on a self-guided walking tour that starts at Bløm and will take you to a variety of sites where you can learn more about pollinators and their habitats. Learn more at <https://osi.a2gov.org/pollinators>.

## **Second Annual Local Food Festival**

*Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> | 5:00-8:00pm | Ann Arbor Farmers Market (315 Detroit St)*

The Office of Sustainability and Innovations, Ann Arbor Farmers Market, and Argus Farm Stop are excited to announce the second annual Ann Arbor Local Food Festival, an event to celebrate and enjoy the abundance of this year's harvest from local farms. This event will showcase the many restaurants, chefs, and others in the Ann Arbor area who prioritize local ingredients at their businesses. It will also offer opportunities for community members to hear the stories of those who produce their food – our local farmers and the organizations focused on elevating those farmers and their products. This family-friendly event is free to attend. Food and beverages will be available for purchase from a variety of local vendors. Learn more at [www.a2gov.org/localfoodfest](http://www.a2gov.org/localfoodfest).

## **Sequoia Place Community Tree Planting**

*Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup> | 9:00-11:00am | Samaritas Affordable Living at Sequoia Place (1131 N Maple Rd, #125)*

The Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovation's 10,000 Trees Initiative, in collaboration with the Ann Arbor Senior Center, will be holding a tree planting event at Samaritas Affordable Living at Sequoia Place on September 16th! We will be planting five trees on the property, as part of a Kindness is Contagious wish from one of the property's residents. These trees will help shade the building, provide habitat for wildlife, and add beauty to the property. If you are interested in volunteering at this tree planting event, please find more details and register [here](#). Plus, keep an eye out for volunteer registration for another Community Tree Planting event in the Bryant Neighborhood, coming up in early October. If you're interested in volunteering at this event or other tree plantings, please email Sean Reynolds, Senior Analyst, at [SReynolds@a2gov.org](mailto:SReynolds@a2gov.org).

## 2023 A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Green Fair

Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> | 5:00-8:00pm | Downtown Main Street & Library Lane Lot

Stroll local exhibits and learn innovative ways to live sustainably and take climate action. Dozens of nonprofit, governmental, and other exhibitors will be on hand to answer your questions. Enjoy a wide variety of interactive demonstrations, see the latest in tech innovations, and enjoy great music! Bring an upcycled t-shirt or tote bag to use at the sustainable screen-printing station, get ready to answer trivia questions and win fun prizes, and join the bike parade for the planet. Plus, stop by the Library Lane Lot, 343 S. Fifth Ave, from 2:00-6:00pm to learn about a variety of alternate forms of transportation. Learn more at [www.a2gov.org/greenfair](http://www.a2gov.org/greenfair).

**Friday, September 22nd**

**A<sup>2</sup>ZERO GREEN FAIR**

Connect with the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan for a sustainable future!

It's World Car Free Day! Ditch the car and walk, bike, or take a bus to Green Fair!

2-6 pm – Library Lane (345 S. Fifth Ave)  
Experience all things e-transportation: test drives, e-cargo transport, e-scooters, and bus bike rack demos

5-8pm – Main Street (William to Huron)  
Family-friendly fun, 75+ exhibitors, games, a Bike Parade for the Planet, live music, and a transportation treasure hunt

Be sure to check out Tech Trek from 1-5pm on Liberty!

**A<sup>2</sup> TECH TREK**

City of Ann Arbor  
[a2gov.org/greenfair](http://a2gov.org/greenfair)

## OSI is Hiring!

OSI is currently looking for individuals with a passion for climate action that might be interested in joining our team. To see a current list of opportunities, please check out the City's [hiring website](#).

## Requests for Proposals from OSI

OSI just released two requests for proposals (RFPs) to hire firms to help:

- Administer residential rebates to support home (including rental unit) decarbonization actions. This administrator will aid in distributing funds, tracking progress, and measuring impact.
- Administer a Home Energy Advisor Program to help provide a one-stop service that residents can go to with their energy-related questions.

If you know of anyone that may be qualified and interested in responding to these RFPs, please direct them to: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/finance-admin-services/purchasing/Pages/Proposals.aspx>

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit [www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events). Interested in having announcements posted in *The Charging Station*? Contact Sheronda at [SGloster@a2gov.org](mailto:SGloster@a2gov.org).

**CONNECT WITH THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS**

**EMAIL US ([SUSTAINABILITY@A2GOV.ORG](mailto:SUSTAINABILITY@A2GOV.ORG)) | VISIT US ON THE WEB ([A2GOV.ORG/SUSTAINABILITY](http://A2GOV.ORG/SUSTAINABILITY))**

**[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#) | [CHECK OUT OUR YOUTUBE PLAYLIST](#)**