



August 2021

WELCOME

Welcome to the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) latest newsletter! These past few months have presented us with a grand celebration (check out how we celebrated our first [A²ZERO](#) anniversary), exciting new projects, substantial progress in existing programs, and valuable opportunities for growth. This newsletter's purpose is to give Ann Arbor residents a glimpse into the work we do in working towards an equitable, healthy, safe, and carbon neutral community. Even more detail can be found on our updated website: 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 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.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Over the last several months we've been hard at work launching new programs, scaling existing ones, and planning for additional initiatives. Below are some updates on this work. More details on these projects and others can be found at www.a2gov.org/sustainability.

10,000 Trees Initiative: We will be launching a pilot of our BranchOut program this fall and have selected our first host for this pilot! We will be collaborating on this program with four local nurseries: Margolis, Lodi, Superior Wholesale, and Native Restoration Solutions. We are also collaborating with the Washtenaw County Conservation District on a FreeTree giveaway in early October, and hope to hold another FreeTree giveaway in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation sometime this fall. Additionally, we are working in conjunction with the RE⁴M project (see below) to plant trees in the Bryant neighborhood. Funding for this project is through a grant from Healthy Cities for the planting of trees in

neighborhoods with low tree cover and high levels of air pollutants. For more information on the 10,000 Trees Initiative and the programs available, as well as to register for upcoming FreeTree events or to join our pilot BranchOut events, please visit: www.a2gov.org/10ktrees.

A²ZERO Ambassadors: Our first cohort of A²ZERO Ambassadors completed their course work and additional projects this summer. To date, they have supported our office at park clean ups, given climate mitigation talks at Pioneer High School, attended residential meet-and-greets, presented with the American Red Cross on emergency preparedness, and have assisted us with our Juneteenth planning committee. They are now working on developing a solar garden at Bandemer Park. Our second A²ZERO Ambassadors cohort will kick off with an orientation dinner on September 13th with formal course work beginning on September 22nd. This will be a 10-week program for the ambassadors to delve into various topics and projects that align with our seven A²ZERO strategies and our values. For more information about the Ambassadors program please visit our [Get Involved](#) page of the website.

Aging in Place Efficiently: We have completed our initial assessments and are now in the process of moving ahead with helping four homes make improvements to ensure safe aging in place and home efficiency enhancements. We have completed social work assessments, occupational therapy assessments, and home energy audits. As a refresher, the goal of this initiative is to help underserved communities build their resiliency within their home, reduce their carbon footprint, energy cost, and improve safety so that they can stay in their home for as long as possible. Going forward, we will expand our pilot program to serve up to 20 additional homes but are also pursuing additional funding to scale this initiative countywide. Learn more at a2gov.org/AIP.

Building Codes: On July 20th OSI and Building Department staff submitted comments and testified at a public meeting encouraging the State of Michigan to adopt the 2021 building model codes for both residential and commercial sectors (the state is currently on the 2015 code). We are excited about this code because it represents a 10-14% efficiency improvement over the existing 2015 code. Additionally, we submitted several amendment proposals to the 2021 codes to better align with our A²ZERO goals. OSI will continue to engage in this conversation over the next several months – working to create a building code that protects public health and safety, while also saving money.

City Fleet: In this past fiscal year, OSI and the Green Fleets team have exceeded 10% electrification in the City's light duty fleet and are quickly approaching 20% with an anticipated set of replacements later this year. The police department has also integrated two fully battery electric vehicles into their fleet, which already includes electric community standard vehicles. In addition, we are actively pursuing multiple avenues of funding to electrify our heavy vehicles like refuse trucks, midsize trucks, and fire engines.

Commercial and Multifamily Energy Benchmarking and Disclosure: As part of our A²ZERO Plan, OSI staff are actively working to create energy benchmarking and disclosure policies. Staff have finalized the draft for an energy and water benchmarking ordinance, and the energy commission has passed a resolution in support of the ordinance. The next step is presenting the ordinance to Council – likely in the fall.

Electrification of Vehicles: We are working on various EV charging infrastructure projects around the city, including the installation of the first four direct current fast chargers (DCFCs) in downtown Ann Arbor. The DCFCs will be located at City Hall and publicly available. We are working through the permitting process right now and we are expecting to work on the site later this month. Similarly, we are working with the Downtown Development Authority on the expansion of level two charging in the city. Finally, we are in discussion with our major vehicle manufacturers around collaborations and different incentives like EV

bulk-buys and educational programs for the city. Find more detail of EV programs available on our [EV webpage](#).

Energy Concierge: We want to help our residents simplify the energy upgrade process so they can make the best energy-related decisions for their lives. We know it can be difficult for a resident to go through the amount of information and options available to make their home more comfortable and efficient. To address this, we have been researching models from around the country and are working with our Energy Commissioners to develop a business model for an Energy Concierge service in Ann Arbor. We aim to have a draft business model with actionable items by the end of September.

Equity Task Force: Our equitable engagement Steering Committee assembles community residents and representatives from local organizations who are committed to advancing equity. The Steering Committee, composed of 30 residents, launched in early August and will help shape the approach to equitable engagement, play an active role in refining the city's communication strategy, serve as connectors to the community and other organizations, and ensure quality outcomes. This group will also help us establish effective community engagement policies, tools, and practices. More information is available [here](#).

Greenhouse Gas Inventory: One of the main ways we track progress is through our community wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory. We have completed an estimate for 2020 community wide GHG emissions, and as expected, 2020 is an anomaly, given the pandemic. In 2020, we saw a 25% reduction in emissions from 2015 levels. In one year, we went from 2.1 million metric tons down to 1.7 million metric tons. About half of those reductions came from how we travel, so we do not expect to see this reduction sustained over the next few years. However, the other half came from lower energy use and our improvements in our electricity mix. Even though 2020 was an anomaly, it shows what drastic behavior changes around our commuting patterns and changes in our electricity grid can do. Right now, we are working to disclose these metrics to third parties and subsequently making this information publicly available through reports and accessible visuals. More details about our greenhouse gas accounting process and results can be found [here](#). OSI will also be looking for ways to sustain some of the behavior changes (i.e., teleworking) and supporting a return to transit ridership as soon as that becomes an option (August 29th).

Green Rental Housing: To further the efforts toward reducing emissions from buildings, staff is also focusing on rentals, which comprise 57% of our city's housing stock. Along with several other cities in Michigan, staff are participating in a cohort led by the Rocky Mountain Institute to identify the most effective means of improving the safety, comfort, health, and efficiency of rental units. Simultaneously, OSI staff launched a task force of landlords and tenants to assist in co-developing a green rental efficiency standard. This group will meet over the coming months and provide recommendations to staff on how best to green our rental housing stock.

Heat Pumps: Since our well-attended Heat Pump Workshop in May, we have started reaching out to “pilot households” to learn about their electrification journeys. Additionally, we are planning a Heat Pumps 2.0 in-person gathering at an outdoor venue, in collaboration with the GreenHome Institute and a local brewpub or business – stay tuned! Additionally, we are actively working with Michigan Saves on an HVAC Contractor training/engagement module, to help increase the number of contractors knowledgeable about and ready to sell heat pumps. Through this work we aim to create a badging system hosted by Michigan Saves for contractors qualified to support beneficial electrification. Finally, we have also been continuing with our Heat Pump Sticker campaign, for folks who want to commit to replacing their gas

furnaces with heat pumps when the time comes. Our website is updated with additional information about these initiatives and guidance on how to get involved: a2gov.org/electrify.

Home Energy Labeling Program (HELP): OSI is exploring ways to bring the energy consumption of single-family homes into the conversation. Other communities have done this through a “home energy labeling program”, or HELP. HELP aims to present energy efficiency metrics to the potential buyers when they’re looking at a real estate listing. Currently, we are having conversations with local realtors and associations to find the best path forward to ensure that future home buyers have the energy information they need to make an informed purchasing decision.

Low-to Median Income Solar Program: Working in partnership with a community task force, OSI developed a Low to Median Income (LMI) Solar business model to support more homeowners and rental properties with gaining the value of solar. OSI received a technical assistance award from the National Community Solar Partnership to further refine this draft business model and is currently working with technical advisors to build out the concept. Our goal is to have an initiative ready for piloting in early 2022.

RE⁴M (Pronounced reform): Working in partnership with Community Action Network and the Bryant Community Center, the OSI has secured a McKnight Foundation planning grant to create a resident-centered whole home health, safety, comfort, and decarbonization assessment. This assessment is being co-created with residents in the Bryant neighborhood and will culminate in a checklist that can be administered neighborhood by neighborhood to improve comfort, safety, and health while also helping to achieve our A²ZERO decarbonization goals. Our next neighborhood event is on August 7th, but most events are the last Tuesday of every month. Those interested in being involved in this work should contact Simi Barr (sbarr@a2gov.org).

Reusable Container Pilot: This program - known as Ann Arbor Reduce, Reuse, Return (A²R³) - launched during A²ZERO Week and focuses on bringing reusable containers into circulation through local restaurants. Zingerman’s Deli, Miss Kim, El Harissa, and Detroit Street Filling Station have begun offering some takeout and delivery orders in FDA-approved, microwave-, dishwasher-, and freezer-safe containers. We are currently working to expand this program to more restaurants and potentially to retail stores. Learn more and get involved [here](#).

Solarize – Calling Participants: Ann Arbor Solarize is now responsible for over 1.5 MW of new solar power in our community, representing over 200 homes, and over \$700,000 in savings on the up-front cost of solar. There are several full groups running now, but we are welcoming folks who would like to help convene new groups for the fall or winter. Additionally, Ann Arbor Solar Stories was launched, along with the GLREA (Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association). This zoom event occurs on the first Thursday of the month, and features an Ann Arbor resident, business, or non-profit who has gone solar, telling their “solar story” and answering questions about their experience. You can sign up for these Thursday Night Energy Events on the GLREA website. To learn more or see discounts offered through the Solarize program or to host your own event, please visit a2gov.org/solar.

Transportation: Ann Arbor’s Vision Zero Plan, [Ann Arbor Moving Together Towards Vision Zero](#), was adopted by City Council last year. This plan strives to have zero traffic fatalities and zero greenhouse gas emissions associated with our movement within, across, and through the community. One element of this work is our Healthy Streets Initiative, which is going well and looking to be expanded through the fall in the Main Street Area. Those interested in providing comment on the initiative can do so at this [website](#).

Water Heaters: After our heat pump workshop, we received inquiries from residents on air-source water-heater heat pumps. In Ann Arbor, there are not many installers who work with heat pumps for water heaters. To solve this, we are reaching out to manufacturers, distributors, and local installers to understand their difficulties and explore resolutions. We are planning an educational workshop on heat-pump water heaters this fall. More details will be posted on our website soon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us at one of the following upcoming events (register and see more events, which are being added weekly, on the City's public [calendar](#)):

- **August 5th, 7:00pm - Ann Arbor Solar Stories.** Want to hear more about your friends and neighbors experience with solar? Join us on August 5th for the third Ann Arbor Solar Stories event. More details available [here](#).
- **August 12th, 8:00am – Climate, Coffee, and Conversation:** This monthly recurring virtual event is an opportunity for Ann Arbor residents to come enjoy your morning beverage of choice and chat in an informal setting with OSI staff about A²ZERO initiatives and/or sustainability in general. Attendance is free, but [registration is required](#).
- **August 15th – Dexter Ann Arbor Race:** Calling all volunteers. The Dexter to Ann Arbor road race is looking to go zero waste but needs your help. More details about volunteering are below but if you are interested in getting involved or learning more, please contact Tina Miller, the race volunteer coordinator (tinalou617@gmail.com).
- **August 18th, 6:00pm – Plant-based Diets Seminar:** Join OSI for an evening exploring plant-based diets. Learn about the health benefits of a plant-based diet and the environmental impacts of animal agriculture, all while enjoying a cooking demonstration focused on a delicious and nutritious plant-based meal! Presenters include Dr. Melissa Sunderman from IHA; Marc Ramirez from Chickpea & Bean; Andrea Wotan, RDN with Wotan Nutrition; and chef Jeff Tritten of Washtenaw Optimal Wellness. Register [here](#).
- **August 29th – AAATA Services Resumes.** TheRide's permanent schedule goes into place on August 29th. TheRide has pre-published the schedule details on their [website](#).
- **September 18th – Taste of Ann Arbor.** Calling all volunteers. The Taste of Ann Arbor is looking to go zero waste and could use your help. They are looking for 36 volunteers between 11am and 5pm on September 19th to help ensure that all material generated during the event is properly disposed of. More details about the opportunity are below.
- **October 1st, 6:00pm – 9:00pm - Green Fair.** Come join OSI staff as we host our first Autumnal Green Fair on Friday, October 1st from 6-9pm. We will be showcasing Washtenaw County Green Businesses and non-profits along with our A²ZERO Collaborators to spread the word on what we can all do to help us achieve Carbon Neutrality. You will find energy saving appliances, solar displays and installers, alternate modes of transportation, and live entertainment. There will be something for everyone!
- **Anytime - A²ZERO Scavenger Hunt.** Spend an afternoon strolling around town learning about some of the sustainability features within our community by taking the A²ZERO Scavenger Hunt. More details available [here](#).

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Taste of Ann Arbor Needs Your Help to Go Zero Waste! This annual community event draws 15,000 - 20,000 people each year. It creates roughly 2,750 pounds of garbage. To do our part for climate change we are hoping to go fully zero waste this year! To do so we need the help of volunteers in the community like you. The compost we collect needs to be less than 2% contaminated, more than that and the entire bag of compost is rejected and goes to a landfill. For that reason, we need volunteers to stand by the different disposal areas we'll have placed throughout the event to direct people where to throw their waste. There will be a bin in each disposal area for compost, recyclables, and landfill. This is an incredibly important job!!

- Event date is Sunday, Sept. 19 from 11am - 5pm
- We need a total of 36 volunteers
- Volunteer shifts are 2 hours:
 - o 11am - 1pm: 12 volunteers (2 volunteers per disposal area, there are 6)
 - o 1 - 3pm: 12 volunteers (2 volunteers per disposal area, there are 6)
 - o 3 - 5pm: 12 volunteers (2 volunteers per disposal area, there are 6)
- Water and Taste of Ann Arbor food tickets will be provided. If you or your group is interested, please email sandra@mainstreetannarbor.org

Dexter – Ann Arbor Race Needs Your Help to Go Zero Waste! The Dexter to Ann Arbor road race is looking to go zero waste but needs your help. If you are able and interested in volunteering, or know folk that might be, the race organizers are looking for 30 volunteers to help during 2-3 hours shifts between 8am and 3pm to ensure that all material generated during the race is repurposed, recycled, or composted. Below are more details:

- Event date is August 15th from 9am – 3pm
- We need a total of 30 volunteers
- Volunteer shifts are 2:30-3 hours:
 - o Sustainability at the Finish Line Area:
 - 8am – 10:30am – 9 volunteers
 - 10:30am – 1:00pm – 9 volunteers
 - o Sustainability Sorting
 - 9am – 12pm – 6 volunteers
 - 12pm – 3pm - volunteers
- If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Tina Miller, the Race Volunteer Coordinator at tinalou617@gmail.com.