

THE CHARGING STATION

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



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



The author for this month's feature articles on the 10,000 Trees Initiative is Sean Reynolds. As a Community Sustainability Coordinator with OSI, Sean's work primarily focuses on enhancing community resilience and building a circular economy.



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 our 10,000 Trees Initiative, which is but one of the many programs we run with the goal of 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.

THE 10,000 TREES INITIATIVE

BUILDING RESILIENCE, TREE BY TREE

Urban trees provide many environmental, economic, social, and health benefits to the community. These include reducing stormwater runoff, improving water and air quality, reducing neurotoxic exposures that can impair brain development in babies and young children, increasing biodiversity and resiliency against invasive species, moderating summer temperatures, lowering utility costs, improving quality of life, and beautifying the community. Our urban tree canopy is therefore crucial to our resiliency and carbon neutrality work. A properly managed urban tree canopy can create a safer and healthier future for residents, especially for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. But an urban tree canopy doesn't just include the trees lining our streets, in our parks, and around our public buildings. It's also comprised of trees on private property, from single-family homes and multi-family residential sites to private businesses and houses of worship.

In recognition of this, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations launched the 10,000 Trees Initiative in 2021, with the goal of seeing 10,000 new trees planted, and maintained, on private property in the city by the year 2030. The trees added by this initiative will enhance our current canopy cover and will help to make our urban tree canopy more resilient by increasing species diversity and helping to fill canopy gaps and re-connect forest fragments. So far, we have distributed more than 3,500 trees, through both Community Tree Planting events (see "Community Tree Plantings" on page 3) and FreeTree Giveaways.

Through our FreeTree Giveaway program, residents of Washtenaw County can receive free seedlings to plant on their private property. All the seedlings distributed through this program are donated to or purchased by the City of Ann Arbor and are provided to residents at no cost. All you need to do to get some seedlings is register for a time slot during a FreeTree event, show up at the distribution site during your time slot on the day of the event, pick up some seedlings in your vehicle, and take them home to plant! Delivery options are also available for those with mobility or access limitations, and tree care and planting information is provided with every tree. We hold two FreeTree Giveaways each year – one in the spring and one in the fall – and our next Giveaway is coming up on April 30th (see "Upcoming Events" on page 5 for more details).



TREEducation

In addition to getting trees in the ground, the 10,000 Trees Initiative is committed to ensuring tree health – and one of the most effective ways to make sure our trees stay healthy is to get community members interested and involved. By engaging with the community around trees, we hope that residents will be better able to take care of the trees on their property and be more invested in the urban tree canopy as a whole. To that end, we have created tree information cards for the most commonly planted species in our area, developed virtual tree tours to show off the many amazing trees found in Ann Arbor, and are working on a series of classes that will teach interested residents everything from tree ID and the benefits of a healthy tree canopy to tree planting and pruning. This series of classes will launch soon, beginning with our tree ID courses – keep an eye on a2gov.org/10ktrees for more info, or reach out to Sean Reynolds if you are interested in attending these classes when they launch.

Contact:

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Community Sustainability Coordinator

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COMMUNITY TREE PLANTINGS

GETTING TREES WHERE THEY'RE NEEDED MOST

While our FreeTree Giveaway program (see “The 10,000 Trees Initiative” on page 2) is a great way to reach a wide audience and distribute a lot of trees at once, OSI recognizes that there is a need for targeted tree planting efforts in areas of our community with low tree canopy cover – especially as these areas are often home to frontline populations who are disproportionately bearing the brunt of climate change impacts, and therefore could benefit the most from the resiliency benefits that a healthy tree canopy provides. To address this need, the 10,000 Trees Initiative has launched a Community Tree Planting program. Through this program, City staff and a group of volunteers gather to plant trees in a neighborhood, at an apartment complex, on the property of a house of worship, or in other community areas - at no cost to residents or property owners! Prior to the planting event, OSI staff work one-on-one with interested community members to determine what species of tree will best fit their needs and their space. The City then works with area nurseries to purchase these trees and have them delivered the day of the volunteer planting event. Organization of each Community Tree Planting event is in collaboration with members of the community, as well as a local community-based organization, such as a community center or house of worship.



In 2021, the Community Tree Planting program was piloted in the Bryant neighborhood, in conjunction with the Bryant Community Center, which is run by Community Action Network. More than 20 volunteers and City staff helped to plant 32 trees in the yards of 13 households across the neighborhood. “We contributed to our city’s green



infrastructure – helping to reduce flooding and stormwater runoff, mitigate air pollution, and cool our homes and streets. Every resident can help us achieve these benefits by planting trees, and this program makes it easier than ever for our residents to get involved,” said Ann Arbor’s Mayor Christopher Taylor. “Working with the City [...] was fun and simple. It all started with an email from Coordinator Sean Reynolds. What really impressed me is that Sean guided me in identifying a tree that met my needs and also met the needs of the Initiative. I am blown away by this program—it is such an easy way to have an impact,” added Bryant neighborhood resident Marc Anthony Brigolin.

If you are interested in bringing a Community Tree Planting event to your neighborhood, apartment complex, house of worship, school, or other community site, please email Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org. Please include the contact information for a community-based organization that can help us engage with neighbors, if you know of one. And no worries if you don’t – we can help find one! Also reach out to Sean if you are interested in volunteering at a tree planting event. You can learn more about the Community Tree Planting program, and the 10,000 Trees Initiative as a whole, at www.a2gov.org/10ktrees.

COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

WASHTENAW COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD, www.washtenawcd.org) is a locally controlled resource management agency that assists residents and landowners with the conservation, management, and wise use of the natural resources of the county. These goals are achieved through countywide resource assessments, conservation resource distributions, conservation education programs, and one-on-one technical assistance. The Conservation District is administered by a publicly elected five-member board of directors, which hires qualified staff to program, plan, and facilitate activities. The WCCD was organized in 1948 through the process of petition, hearing, and referendum under the leadership of local landowners who realized the importance of our soil and water resources.

The Conservation District focuses on a wide variety of resource concerns, including land use; surface and groundwater quality; solid waste management and recycling; and protection and management of forests and woodlots. Some programs offered by the WCCD to address these resource concerns include: native plant expos and sales; the MIFarmLink Program, which aims to protect future generations of Michigan agriculture by linking legacy farmers who are selling or leasing agricultural land with new farmers who need land to cultivate (learn more at mifarmlink.org); a tree planter rental program that helps residents with planting bare-root seedlings at adjustable depths, to create large-scale windbreaks, reduce field erosion, or enhance water quality (call 734.302.8713 to rent); a School and Community Habitat Grant program that supports native planting projects; and seminars offered on a wide range of conservation topics. For more information on upcoming WCCD events and program announcements, see the “Upcoming Events” and “Announcements” sections on Pages 5-6 of this newsletter, or visit www.washtenawcd.org/events.

A²ZERO AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

LUNIA ORIOL



Lunia joined the first A²ZERO Ambassador cohort to learn how climate change adaptation can be done on a city scale. An undergraduate student at the time, the program opened her eyes to not just the technical requirements to achieving carbon neutrality, but the social and economic dimensions as well. For her Ambassador project, she joined a team that aimed to establish a community-managed and community-shared orchard in Ann Arbor with pear, peach, and pawpaw trees. The orchard was planted in 2022 and serves as an education tool, a source of locally produced fruit, and a place to gather and enjoy community. In addition to this project, Lunia spent time volunteering with the 10K Trees Initiative and serving as a Youth member on the Ann Arbor Environmental Commission.

Learning about local food and environmental justice through the Ambassador program shaped Lunia’s professional goals. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Michigan working to obtain a degree in Urban and Regional Planning with plans to pursue a planning career with a focus on building sustainable, equitable, and climate-resilient food systems. In her free time, she enjoys puzzles, brewing kombucha, gardening, and listening to podcasts. It’s been great working with her cohort and the OSI team, and Lunia is grateful to be a part of a larger community that is committed to carbon neutrality.

UPCOMING EVENTS

'How to Assess, Manage, & Preserve Your Land' - Bridgewater Township Presentation

Monday, April 17th | 6:30pm | Bridgewater Township Hall

Join the Washtenaw County Conservation District to learn about options for conserving or managing your farmland and natural areas. Staff from local conservation organizations will discuss individual properties following the presentation. Learn more & RSVP at www.washtenawcd.org/lpcbridgewaterwp.

Earth Day 2023

Sunday, April 23rd | 12:00pm-4:00pm | Leslie Science & Nature Center

The Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival is an annual celebration coordinated by the Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival Planning Committee, a coalition of local environmental nonprofits and agencies. This free, family-friendly event features displays; hands-on activities; live entertainment; green building & commuting technologies; energy topics; water awareness; sustainable agriculture; and more. Learn more at www.a2earthday.org.

2023 Sustainability Series - Renewed Renewables: The Bright Future of Renewable Energy in Ann Arbor

Wednesday, April 26th | 6:00pm | Virtual via Zoom & In-Person at the AADL Downtown Branch

The annual A²ZERO Sustainability Forum Series is back in 2023 and this year we're hybrid! Join us online or at AADL Downtown for these seminars focused on a wide array of sustainability topics. In April, we'll be discussing renewable energy, recent advancements in renewable technology, and the future of renewables in Ann Arbor. Register for this event (and for others in the 2023 series) [here](#).

Spring 2023 FreeTree Giveaway

Sunday, April 30th | 10:00am-4:00pm | Leslie Science & Nature Center / Tappan Middle School

This year's spring FreeTree Giveaway is our largest yet, with around 2,500 free trees available! Registration is now full – however, you can join the waitlist in case of cancellations by emailing Sean Reynolds at SReynolds@a2gov.org. Species available will include flowering dogwood, basswood (American linden), white oak, white pine, and redbud.

Spring Master Rain Gardener Classes

Washtenaw County Water Resources will be holding their 5-week Master Rain Gardener class on Wednesday afternoons, 12:00-2:30pm, from April 19th through May 17th. Join to learn everything there is to know about rain gardens, design your own rain garden step-by-step, visit existing rain gardens, and become a Master Rain Gardener! Learn more and register at <https://www.washtenaw.org/675/Master-Rain-Gardener-Class>.

Washtenaw County Conservation District Native Plant Expo & Marketplace

Mark your calendars for June 3rd and shop over 100 Michigan native plants from local growers in one convenient location! Learn how to establish and care for native landscapes and connect with experts specializing in planning and maintaining native plant landscapes. Learn more at www.washtenawcd.org/npem.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WCCD School and Community Habitat Grants

Does your school, community organization, or non-profit need expert consultation or plant materials to create a native garden, rain garden, food forest, windbreak, or other native plant project? The Washtenaw County Conservation District School & Community Habitat Grant is now accepting applications until the June 11th, 2023 deadline! Please visit our website to learn more, download the application, and explore past projects: www.washtenawcd.org/schg. Native plant installations provide benefits to residents (human or otherwise) including purpose and connection to local ecology, wildlife habitat, greater biodiversity, air and water filtration, carbon sequestration, aesthetic beauty, and many more ecological services. Previous awardees are welcome to share the grant and/or apply again for the next phases of their projects. If you have questions, please contact Summer, our Community Forester, by emailing summer@washtenawcd.org or calling 734.302.8715.

Apply to be an Ann Arbor Energy Commissioner

Are you interested in getting more involved with energy policies and programs in Ann Arbor? Then consider applying to be a member of the [Ann Arbor Energy Commission](#)! The Energy Commission also has youth positions (ages 16-25), so we encourage everyone to apply. All those interested can [fill out an application online](#) by April 16th. If you have any questions about the commission or what the responsibilities of a commissioner are, reach out to Joe Lange at JLange@a2gov.org.

New Heating Franchise Website Launched

The City of Ann Arbor is exploring a new heating franchise to ensure that all Ann Arborites have access to safe, healthy, clean, and affordable heating and cooling choices. City Council authorized the City Administrator to begin working on this important topic during their March 20th meeting. To learn more about this work and stay up to date, check out the new City website [here](#). And stay tuned to the website and the City's newsletters for upcoming opportunities to learn more and share your thoughts. Or submit your thoughts at any time to franchisefeedback@a2gov.org.

Commercial Solar Program Launched

The City's new Commercial Solar Program has launched! In collaboration with the [Ann Arbor 2030 District](#), the City is delighted to announce it has launched a new program designed to help commercial properties in Ann Arbor and throughout the County access the benefits of clean, renewable energy. The program provides one-on-one assistance to screen properties for solar potential, help with design and release of Requests for Proposals to qualified installers, support in review of proposal responses and understanding financial benefits, and help with review of post-installation energy bills to ensure proper production. To learn more, check out www.a2gov.org/solar or email Julie Roth at JRoth@a2gov.org.

Solar Installations at City Buildings

The City is delighted to share that solar is starting to be installed at multiple City sites, including many City parks! Residents should expect to see new solar installations at just over a dozen City facilities over the coming months. Stay tuned to the City's website (www.a2gov.org/solar) to learn more and to monitor how these systems are performing.

Interested in having announcements posted in *The Charging Station*? Contact Sheronda at SGloster@a2gov.org.

CONNECT WITH THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS

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