



November 2021

## WELCOME

Welcome to the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) latest newsletter! These past few months have seen the passing of summer and the ushering in of fall. We've had some extreme weather events, celebrated the start to the school year, and everything in between. We know you are busy, so we are delighted you've taken a moment to hear about some of the exciting things underway at OSI. In the pages below you can learn more about what we've been up to and find ways to engage. If you're eager to know more than what's found in these pages, check out our website: [www.a2gov.org/sustainability](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability). As always, thank you for your interest in sustainability in Ann Arbor.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Equity and justice are at the center of [A<sup>2</sup>ZERO](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability) 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](http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability).

**10,000 TREES INITIATIVE:** On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, we gave out 828 trees at the Leslie Science & Nature Center during our Fall 2021 FreeTree giveaway. These trees were purchased in conjunction with the Washtenaw County Conservation District, with funding support from the National Wildlife Federation. Additionally, with funding from the Healthy Cities program, we worked with 12 residents of the Bryant neighborhood to plant 32 trees on their properties. This brings our total number of trees distributed in the first year of the Initiative to 1,860!

We are also excited to announce the launch of TreeTracker, the 10,000 Trees Initiative's web application. TreeTracker allows residents who have received a tree through the Initiative to enter their tree's information and then access species-specific care information, planting instructions, and fun facts! Users can also sign up for watering alerts and view information on upcoming events through the app. For more information on the 10,000 Trees Initiative and the programs available, as well as to sign up for the TreeTracker app or join our 10K Trees mailing list, please visit: [www.a2gov.org/10ktrees](http://www.a2gov.org/10ktrees).



**A<sup>2</sup>ZERO AMBASSADORS:** Our first cohort of A<sup>2</sup>ZERO 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 AAPS, attended residential meet-and-greets, presented with the American Red Cross on emergency preparedness, assisted us with various community engagement planning committees, and are working to install a solar picnic table at Bandemer Park. Our second A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Ambassadors cohort kicked off with an orientation dinner on September 13<sup>th</sup> and are expected to complete their coursework by 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2022. And we are actively recruiting for our third cohort of Ambassadors, which will begin in February/March 2022. For more information about the Ambassadors program or to apply for our 3<sup>rd</sup> cohort, please visit the [Get Involved](#) page of the website.

**AGING IN PLACE EFFICIENTLY:** We have completed our initial assessments, including social work assessments, occupational therapy assessments, and home energy 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 are also moving ten more individuals through the assessment phase of the project and have started a waitlist should additional funding to support the program be secured. As a refresher, the goal of this initiative is to support income-qualified older adults with making improvements in their home that help them age in place for longer. At this point we are actively seeking additional funding to expand this pilot program in the city and throughout the county. Learn more at [a2gov.org/AIP](http://a2gov.org/AIP).

**AIR QUALITY MONITORING:** OSI is currently working to install air quality monitors around the city, in order to assess air quality, track changes in air pollutants over time, and determine where air pollutants are at the highest levels. These monitors will measure pollutants such as particulate matter, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, and ozone. OSI has identified a series of potential air quality monitors and locations for installation. Our goal is to purchase these monitors before the end of the year and get them installed in the Spring of 2022.



**ANN ARBOR REDUCE, REUSE, RETURN (A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>):** This program launched during A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Week and focuses on bringing reusable, returnable containers into circulation through local restaurants. Zingerman's Deli, Miss Kim, and El Harissa 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. And have recently introduced new US-made containers! Learn more and get involved [here](#) or email Sean ([sreynolds@a2gov.org](mailto:sreynolds@a2gov.org)).

**BIGGEST (ENERGY) LOSER CHALLENGE:** We are excited to announce that, starting January 1, 2022, all Ann Arborites can compete in the Biggest Loser challenge. Ann Arbor's Biggest Lower challenge is a home energy competition run in partnership with the [GreenHome Institute](#). From March 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, participants will reduce their gas and electric bills through a variety of energy efficiency improvements – and the household with the largest reduction in energy usage will win \$500. Other prizes will also be available, based on improvements in Home Energy Score, decreases in water usage, and more. For more information, see: [The Biggest Loser Home Energy Competition](#).

**BUILDING CODES:** On July 20<sup>th</sup> 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 A<sup>2</sup>ZERO 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. We also secured grant funding to purchase two electric refuse trucks – which would be the first in the State of Michigan! In addition, we continue to pursue multiple avenues of funding to support our fleet electrification.

**COMMERCIAL AND MULTIFAMILY ENERGY AND WATER BENCHMARKING:** As part of our A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Plan, OSI staff are delighted to share that Council unanimously adopted an energy and water benchmarking ordinance. This ordinance supports consumer protection by disclosing key information about the energy and water efficiency of commercial and multi-family facilities, helping consumers make more informed decisions and providing critical data that will help us better manage our built infrastructure. More information about the Ordinance can be found [here](#).

**COMMUNITY SOLAR PILOT:** Through success in a regulatory intervention (VGP 2021), the City of Ann Arbor and DTE are working together to develop the first community solar project in DTE's service territory. This project will be at the City's capped landfill and in the surrounding area. An RFP was released in early fall to determine final designs and costs associated with



building the array. OSI anticipates going to Council with final project information in early 2022, at which time a decision will be made to proceed or terminate the project. More details will be available on the sustainability website soon.

**ELECTRIFICATION OF VEHICLES:** We are working on various EV charging infrastructure projects around the city, including the successful installation of the first four direct current fast chargers (DCFCs) in downtown Ann Arbor. The DCFCs are located at City Hall and publicly available for 30-minute charging sessions. In addition, we are working with the Downtown Development Authority on the expansion of level two charging in the city, including the potential installation of nearly 80 new chargers (hopefully by summer 2022). 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 make it easier to find the information you need to do things that improve comfort, reduce energy consumption, and save money, because we know it can be difficult to navigate the current deluge of information. To address this, we have been researching models of energy concierges 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 are also currently working with the City's IT department to figure out better ways to convey our existing information. We hope to have a plan with actionable next steps for consideration by spring 2022.

**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 is helping shape the approach to equitable engagement in Ann Arbor while also playing an active role in refining the city's communication strategy, serving as connectors to the community and other organizations, and ensuring quality outcomes. This group also helps 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, with many

of us staying home. 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. We've completed our third party disclosure work and are working to update our website with more details on our inventory. Updates on this work, including our updated inventory, can be found [here](#). OSI is currently looking for volunteers to work with us on finding ways to sustain some of the behavior changes (e.g., teleworking) and support a return to transit ridership. If you're interested, please send us a note at [sustainability@a2gov.org](mailto:sustainability@a2gov.org).

**GREEN RENTAL HOUSING:** To further the efforts toward reducing emissions from buildings, staff is 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:** To follow up on our well-attended Heat Pump workshop in [May](#), we held a hybrid event in September, at the Ann Arbor Distilling Co., in partnership with the GreenHome Institute. This was a deeper dive into the real-world applications of air-source heat pumps for heating both homes and water: a recording can be viewed [here](#). We have also worked with GHI to compile a [Playlist](#) of webinars related to heat pumps, including topics ranging from ducted systems to water heaters, to boilers and more. These resources can also be found on our continually updated [Heat Pump web page](#). Additionally, we continue to work 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. We anticipate launching the training in November and having badging available by early 2022. Finally, we have also been continuing with our Heat Pump Sticker campaign (see also the website link above), for folks who want to commit to replacing their gas furnaces with heat pumps when the time comes.



**HOME ENERGY RATING DISCLOSURE:** 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 rating disclosure", or HERD. HERD 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.

**RE<sup>4</sup>M (Pronounced reform):** Working in partnership with Community Action Network and the Bryant Community Center, the OSI has secured a McKnight Foundation planning grant and an EPA Region 5 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 A<sup>2</sup>ZERO decarbonization goals. Currently this work is focusing on conducting home comfort assessments in dozens of households in the neighborhood. Those interested in being involved in this work should contact Simi Barr ([sbarr@a2gov.org](mailto:sbarr@a2gov.org)).

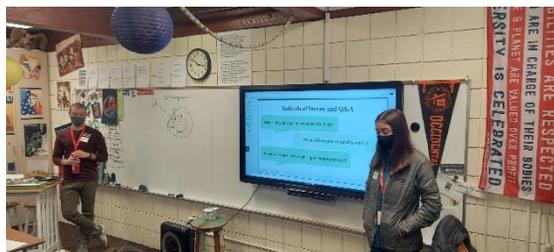
**SOLARIZE:** Solarize Ann Arbor hit a major new milestone, with a full 2 MW of new solar committed through the program in under 2 years, on 285 homes in and around Ann Arbor. This represents approximately \$927,000 saved by residents on the upfront cost of solar, with an estimated \$11.9 Million dollars of savings over the 25-year lifespan of the panels. The program continues to move forward with new groups forming regularly. In addition, we have built a City-wide Solar Tracker Graph, that updates automatically as new arrays are finalized and go live in our city. You can view that tracker on our web page at [www.a2gov.org/solar](http://www.a2gov.org/solar).



The GLREA (Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association) continues to partner with us to feature Ann Arbor Solar Stories, a zoom event occurring the first Thursday of the month, featuring 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](http://GLREA website). In addition, Solarize Ann Arbor worked with GLREA to adapt our toolkit for regional use, and the GLREA is now helping to facilitate pilots in other communities around the state.

**SUSTAINABLE ENERGY UTILITY:** The City of Ann Arbor released a report describing the feasibility of a Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU) - a new construct that would give city residents and businesses the opportunity to supplement their service from DTE with locally sourced, reliable, renewable, and cost-effective energy. Staff in the OSI, along with five technical advisors prepared the report, which envisions a 100% renewable powered, reliable, local, shared, and publicly owned municipal energy utility, built by the community for the community. More information is available at [www.a2gov.org/a2seu](http://www.a2gov.org/a2seu).

**SUSTAINABLE FOOD:** In August, we held a special sustainability seminar focused on plant-based diets. Topics included the health benefits of a plant-based diet and the environmental impacts of animal agriculture, as well as a cooking demonstration focused on a delicious and nutritious plant-based meal. Presenters included Dr. Melissa Sunderman from IHA; Marc Ramirez from Chickpea & Bean; Andrea Wotan, RDN with Wotan Nutrition; and chef Jeff Tritten of Washtenaw Optimal Wellness. You can watch a recording of this seminar [here](#). In addition, the City is exploring development of a sustainable food purchasing policy, which could set standards for all food purchased by the city.



**SUSTAINING ANN ARBOR TOGETHER:** The City administers a grant program for residents to advance community-wide sustainability, known as the Sustaining Ann Arbor Together (SA<sup>2</sup>T) grant program. SA<sup>2</sup>T is

currently accepting applications for this year's grant program. Successful applicants can receive up to \$10,000 to advance social or environmental sustainability in the community. Learn more at [www.a2gov.org/sa2t](http://www.a2gov.org/sa2t).

**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](#).

## 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](#)):

- Two **Solarize** group-buy meetings – choose whichever works best for your schedule:
  - Solarize group-buy hosted by Ann Arbor residents Seth and Sarah – informational meeting on 11/18 at 7:00pm, sign up [HERE](#)
  - Solarize group-buy hosted by Pittsfield township resident Craig H – informational meeting on 12/5 at 2:00pm, sign up [HERE](#)
- **New Year-Clean Energy Webinar:** Join us for this webinar, presented by RMI (formerly the Rocky Mountain Institute), that centers renewable energy opportunities available here in Michigan. Guest speaker Jackie Lombardi, Associate in Urban Transformation at RMI, will walk through various energy procurement pathways and be available to answer your questions. Come learn more and engage in an interactive discussion about how we can power our community with clean energy! Registration is required [here](#).
- **Anytime – A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Scavenger Hunt.** Spend an afternoon strolling around town learning about some of the sustainability features within our community by taking on the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Scavenger Hunt. More details available [here](#).

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please join us in welcoming Sean Reynolds and Hannah Loftis to the OSI team! Sean is the City's new Sustainability Coordinator and will continue to lead the City's work related to the 10,000 Trees Initiative while also advancing our work related to sustainable food, A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>, air quality monitoring, and resilience more broadly. Hannah joined us as an Energy Fellow and has been instrumental in helping us identify key locations for EV charging, supporting community solar initiatives, and supporting development of the SEU report. Welcome Sean and Hannah!

We're also delighted to share that the [A<sup>2</sup>ZERO: I Have A Vision](#) video one the 2021 Phil Excellence for the George C. Stoney Community Activism Award. This award is given annually to a program PSA or promotional video that campaigns for social change. Congratulations to Tim Nagae from CTN, and Galen Hardy and Zach Waas Smith from OSI!