



April 2021

WELCOME

Welcome to the fourth newsletter from the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI)! As we write this, we see the beginning of Spring and all the hope that comes with it, including preparations to celebrate our 1-year anniversary of A²ZERO. It's been a busy few months in the OSI as we work to expand access to renewable energy, create more supportive state and federal policy environments, strengthen and create new partnerships with members of our community, and continue efforts to create healthy, safe, and clean buildings. While this newsletter doesn't chronicle all of our sustainability efforts over the last several months, it does provide some notable updates on activities unfolding at OSI. 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 – (including Odawa, Ojibwe and Boodewadomi) 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

Below are some updates on sustainability activities in the City of Ann Arbor. More details on these projects and others can be found at www.a2gov.org/sustainability.

A²ZERO Ambassadors: In November, we launched our A²ZERO Ambassadors program. Ambassadors are residents interested in learning about the various ways the City and its people can advance sustainability and carbon neutrality and then given the tools to help operationalize that information. All Ambassadors are committed to attending a 9-week training course, supporting the implementation of a community project that advances sustainability, and conducting at least 20 hours of additional volunteer work in support of community sustainability and carbon neutrality (i.e., speak at events, talk to neighbors and peers, host community learning

sessions, lead local projects). This is the first Ambassadors cohort, but we are currently accepting applications for cohort two. Interested individuals can apply [here](#) (deadline to apply if May 21, 2021).

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 completed promising practice research, literature review, and partnered with peer cities to share experiences and lessons learned. Staff completed a Task Force to develop recommendations for the proposed policy. A draft policy incorporating those recommendations has been made [available for public comment](#). Feedback will be incorporated into the proposed policy.

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 are coordinating to bring together both tenants and landlords into a policy development process to co-create a green rental efficiency standard.

Time of Marketing: The City has been working with members of the Energy Commission to draft a Time of Marketing ordinance that would include energy-related information on MLS listings when homes are listed for sale. A series of stakeholder engagement activities have been initiated and more public engagement opportunities will be coming in the spring and early summer. Details to provide input will be provided at www.a2gov.org/sustainability.

Solarize – Calling Participants: Solarize is a community-centered group-buy program that brings neighbors and friends together to learn all about residential solar and have the opportunity to join a group-buy resulting in significant discounts. If you would like to attend a future meeting or help gather neighbors and community members for a group, let us know! The program has been wildly successful in its first year, having now enabled over 1 MW of new solar in our community, dispersed on approximately 150 roofs. To learn more or see discounts offered through the program, please visit a2gov.org/solar.

LMI Solar Access Working Group: Bi-weekly meetings have convened to find structures for providing the benefits of solar to the Low-Moderate Income Community. OSI is leading this working group through an ideation process, which will hopefully lead to an application for Technical Assistance from the National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP).

Electrification of Vehicles: In January, City Council unanimously adopted an electric vehicle readiness ordinance which requires new building developments and major retrofits to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure in their parking lots. In addition, OSI staff are working on the expansion of EV charging in City lots. Additionally, the City secured grant funding from the State of Michigan and from DTE's Charging Forward program to help support the installation of our first four direct current fast chargers (DCFCs) in the downtown corridor. OSI is coordinating with DTE and the electrical contractor to install the hardware in spring/summer 2021. More detail of EV programs available on our [EV webpage](#).

City Fleet: OSI and the GreenFleets team are also working to electrify the City fleet, including the heavy-duty Fleet. Significant electrification progress has been made within the light duty vehicles, but the cost of electric trucks and the market availabilities limit the current electrification potential within the heavy-duty fleet segment. Two grant opportunities are being pursued that would support electrification in the heavy fleet, including a bucket truck, street sweeper, and refuse truck. Notification of funding awards will occur over the summer and fall.

Bikes: Last fall, OSI and community partners helped launch Ann Arbor's Bike Discount Program, where OSI highlights bike and e-bike vendors who have discounted different products to support alternative transportation in our community. With the weather turning, OSI is focused on growing this program with more public outreach and the inclusion of more vendors. OSI is also working with the Police Department and Common Cycle to recycle and refurbish bikes abandoned in the community for use by in need residents.

Range Replacement: OSI is working to support home electrification by promoting induction ranges through partnerships with local vendors, through educational segments, and through demonstration projects. In addition, OSI has been collaborating with IBEW Local 252 to unite A2ZERO with IBEW training and outreach programs. This has included soon to be launched new website: <https://www.ibewneca252.org/a2zero>.

RE4M: 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 will be co-created with residents in the Bryant neighborhood and will culminate in a check-list that can be administered neighborhood by neighborhood to improve comfort, safety, and health while also helping to achieve our A2ZERO decarbonization goals. More details about this project will be forthcoming. Those interested in being involved in this work should contact Simi Barr (sbarr@a2gov.org).

Heat Pumps / Electrification: Community interest in learning more about heat pump technology has been growing over the last several weeks. As such, OSI is preparing a workshop on ground-source and air-source heat pumps as viable alternatives to gas furnaces. We are also exploring the potential of launching a bulk-buy discount program, similar to what we do in Solarize, to assist residents with making the transition to heat pumps. If you are interested in learning more and potentially attending this virtual workshop, please contact Julie Roth (jroth@a2gov.org).

Energy Criteria and Principles: Ann Arbor City Council formally adopted a set of Energy Criteria and Principles to help guide energy-related investments necessary to meet A²ZERO. You can learn review the principles [here](#).

The University of Michigan: The University of Michigan has released their full recommendations on achieving carbon neutrality. The full report is available [here](#). The City of Ann Arbor has a seat on the Commission and worked with the other Commissioners to create the recommendations, which have been shared with President Schlissel and the Regents for their consideration.

10,000 Trees Initiative: We are excited to announce the launch of the 10,000 Trees Initiative! This initiative, a part of the A²ZERO Plan, is focused on getting trees planted on private property in the City. We are proud to offer two exciting new programs through this initiative – BranchOut and FreeTree! BranchOut is a group-buy program that will launch in early summer 2021 and will bring groups of neighbors and friends together to learn about the benefits of trees, speak with a 10,000 Trees partner nursery, and purchase trees at discounted rates! All trees purchased through this program will be professionally planted by a partner nursery. The FreeTree program will distribute seedlings to residents at no cost – simply register for a giveaway, go to a distribution site, pick up your trees, and plant them when you're able! Planting instructions and informational materials will be provided with each tree, and a delivery option will be available for those with mobility or access challenges. Our first FreeTree Giveaway will be in celebration of Arbor Day 2021, with Norway spruce, white spruce, white pine, and arborvitae/white cedar available at several locations across Arbor Day weekend (4/30-5/2)! For more information on the 10,000 Trees Initiative and the programs available, as well as to register for the FreeTree event, please visit www.a2gov.org/10ktrees.

Aging in Place Efficiently: This brand-new pilot program helps low-income seniors in our community upgrade their homes for energy efficiency and ease of use, with a goal of simultaneously increasing home comfort while reducing the carbon footprint. Phase I launches this summer, with five homes scheduled for upgrades. In the spring of 2022, Phase II will launch with an additional 20 homes. Keep an eye on the City's website for more details regarding this developing program.

Greenhouse Gas Inventory: We annually estimate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions associated with our community, and work on the 2020 greenhouse gas inventory has commenced. Additionally, work on developing a comprehensive municipal greenhouse gas inventory based on established protocols has begun. OSI staff will also be joining at ICLEI cohort starting in late Spring looking at conducting local government consumption-based emissions inventories. More details about our greenhouse gas accounting process and results can be found at: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/sustainability/Carbon-Neutrality/Pages/Greenhouse-Gas-Inventory.aspx>.

A²ZERO Week: June 1st, 2021 marks the 1-year anniversary of the adoption of A²ZERO. In honor of this, OSI is launching A²ZERO week. Running for June 1- June 7th, this week-long event will be a series of decentralized and distributed virtual and in-person activities to help people: a) learn about sustainability activities; b) take action; and c) have fun. The full schedule is still being finalized but will be posted at www.a2gov.org/sustainability. If you'd like to partner with OSI in hosting an event, please contact Missy Stults (mstults@a2gov.org).

Sustaining Ann Arbor Together Grant: The OSI administers a grant program to help community members advance local sustainability. If you have a project idea that can be completed in public spaces or the public right of way and that will advance local sustainability, learn more and consider applying at: <http://www.a2gov.org/sa2t>.

Onsite Solar: The City of Ann Arbor just closed a request for proposals to install rooftop solar on 13 city facilities. We are about to release a similar RFP to support onsite solar installation at Ann Arbor Housing Commission sites. Once installed, these systems will increase local solar energy generation by over 2MW.

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](#)):

- April 8th, 8:00am – Climate, Coffee, Conversation: This monthly recurring virtual event is an opportunity for any and all 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](#).
- April 10th, 10:00am – Solarize zoom meeting hosted by Ann Arbor resident Jennifer and neighbors. Sign up here: [LINK](#)
- April 25th, 2:00pm – Solarize zoom meeting hosted by Ann Arbor resident Cliff (special opportunity for those who might need roof replacements as well). Sign up here: [LINK](#)
- April 25th, 1:00pm – Earth Day 2021. Join us for this free virtual community celebration, including activities and entertainment for the whole family. This year's theme is: "Restore Our Earth." More information [here](#).
- April 28th, 6-8:00pm – A²ZERO Sustainability Forum 4 of 5: Waste Reduction and Circular Economy. Join a panel discussion about how we generate waste, what we do with it, and how we can re-imagine our consumption patterns.
- April 30th - May 2nd, various times – Arbor Day FreeTree Giveaway. Help the 10,000 Trees Initiative celebrate Arbor Day this year by planting a free tree! Use [this form](#) to register, and find more information at www.a2gov.org/10ktrees.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for nominations for A²ZERO Champions. Do you know an individual or organization that goes out of their way to advance sustainability, equity, and climate action? Nominate them to be an A²ZERO Champion. Nominations can be submitted [here](#) and all nominations are due by May 20, 2021.

We've **updated our website!** It's been a long time coming but if you haven't yet, please check it out: www.a2gov.org/sustainability.

We've launched a **YouTube Channel!** Did you miss an event? Want to see some of the things we've been up to? Check out our new [YouTube Channel](#). Events added almost every week.

Remember that our **Sustaining Ann Arbor Together grant program** is available to those who have ideas for how to advance sustainability in the public right of way. Learn more and apply on the [sustainability website](#).

Thank you to the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association for recognizing the A²ZERO Ambassadors and the Solarize Program as the GLREA Exemplary Project of the Year.

OSI is pleased to announce that we are one of 10-semifinalists for the American Climate Leadership Awards, which is hosted by ecoAmerica. This program recognizes, awards, and shares best practices on climate change advocacy in action in America. The winner and run-up will be announced at the ACLA21 conference on April 27th.

The City received a Silver designation from the national SolSmart program for making it faster, easier, and more affordable for homes and businesses to go solar. Read more at <https://www.a2gov.org/news/pages/article.aspx?i=768>.