

# 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
SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE.....	2
LEAF BLOWER ORDINANCE.....	4
COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT.....	5
ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	6
UPCOMING EVENTS.....	7

## ABOUT THE EDITOR



Carissa Ebling (she/her) supports the development and implementation of energy related programs and manages our greenhouse gas metrics. She currently leads work around the implementation of resources to support the phase out of gas-powered leaf blowers in Ann Arbor.



*Electric lawn care equipment demonstration with A&H Lawn Care at the Sustainable Lawn Care Learning Session.*

## WELCOME

Welcome from the City of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI). In this issue of the Charging Station, OSI is delighted to share details about sustainable lawn care. If you are interested in learning more about any of the organizations featured in this issue and how you can get involved, more detail can be found on our website: [www.a2gov.org/sustainability](http://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 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.

# UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

What comes to mind when you think about sustainable lawn care? Maybe it's creating a pollinator garden. Maybe it's avoiding the use of pesticides and letting your grass grow a little taller. Maybe it's using electric lawn care equipment.

Sustainable lawn care can come in many forms, but in general, it looks like maintaining a lawn in a way that supports native plants, animals, and pollinators while avoiding contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. Here are two programs that support sustainable lawn care in Ann Arbor: pollinator-aware yard care and avoiding gas-powered yard care. While the impacts of lawn care might feel small, employing sustainable lawn care practices can make a meaningful difference for local ecosystems, pollution prevention, and general comfort.

### POLLINATOR-AWARE YARD CARE

Around 75% of all plants rely on pollinators like butterflies, bees, beetles, and birds to spread their pollen. These plants reduce soil erosion and flooding, remove carbon and pollutants from the air, and provide homes for wildlife. Pollinators also help us put food on our tables. Worldwide, approximately 35% of crops are reliant on pollinator activity. However, pollinators are struggling due to threats to their native habitats. By employing pollinator-aware yard care practices, you can help establish more habitats for pollinators.

So, what does pollinator-aware yard care look like? There are many ways to make your yard more pollinator-friendly! These include planting native plants, reducing the area of mowed turfgrass, keeping fallen leaves intact, avoiding the use of pesticides, and turning off exterior lights when possible.

The Pollinator-Aware Yard Care (PAYC) program, which provides resources for property owners to implement yard care practices that promote native pollinators, is a great way to get involved with pollinator-aware yard care and learn more about pollinator-aware practices. You can also request a yard sign to show your participation in the PAYC program and spread the word about the importance of using pollinator-aware practices.

To learn more about this program, please visit [osi.a2gov.org/pollinators](https://osi.a2gov.org/pollinators).



*Pollinator Aware Yard Care sign available to those who participate in the PAYC program.*



# UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE LAWN CARE, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



### AVOIDING GAS-POWERED YARD CARE

One of the 7 strategies of A<sup>2</sup>ZERO, the City of Ann Arbor's carbon neutrality plan, is electrifying our vehicles and appliances. This includes our lawn care equipment. Using gas-powered lawn care equipment for one hour can emit the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions as driving a gas-powered car over 1000 miles.

The use of gas-powered lawn care equipment also poses several health risks. Gas equipment releases harmful pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) like formaldehyde, and fine particulate pollution. Exposure to these pollutants can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment, and respiratory disease. Gas-powered lawn care equipment can operate as loud as 100 decibels, which can also cause hearing damage and stress from noise pollution.

There are alternative options to avoid the use of gas-powered equipment. One option is to skip the use of equipment all together. Many times, manual, non-motorized equipment can be used to maintain a lawn. For example, a broom or rake can be used to remove leaves from sidewalks or driveways instead of a leaf blower. Another alternative is to use electric lawn care equipment. Electric lawn care equipment is a healthier alternative to gas and is widely available. This equipment produces no harmful air pollutants during operation, and is quieter than gas equipment.

*Net Zero Tree and Lawn Care using their electric chainsaw, lawn mower, and backpack leaf blower.*

# ANN ARBOR'S NEW LEAF BLOWER ORDINANCE

LEARN ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

## Electric Lawn Care Case Study Guide

A reference guide for service companies and large property owners looking to transition to electric lawn care.

Published October 2024

City of Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations

[sustainability@a2gov.org](mailto:sustainability@a2gov.org)



*Cover page of the Electric Lawn Care Case Study Guide.*

In December 2023, Ann Arbor City Council passed an ordinance placing new restrictions on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers within Ann Arbor city limits. The ordinance states that, beginning in 2024, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers is prohibited in Ann Arbor from June 1 to September 30 of each year until 2028. Beginning in 2028, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers will be prohibited at all times in Ann Arbor.

The purpose of this ordinance is not only to promote the City's sustainability goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also to protect the health and welfare of Ann Arbor residents. As noted above, gas-powered lawn care equipment, including leaf blowers, can have significant environmental and health impacts. Ordinance violations can be reported to the Ann Arbor Police Department Community Standards at 734.794.6942.

In July 2024, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) hosted an input session with lawn care and

landscaping businesses as well as property owners to understand what resources were needed to comply with this new ordinance. Using the feedback received, OSI established several new resources to support the transition off of gas-powered leaf blowers and other gas-powered lawn care equipment.

Following the input session, OSI hosted a learning session for businesses and property owners to learn more about sustainable lawn care and see electric lawn care equipment in action. A sustainable lawn care case study guide was also published, showcasing the stories and strategies of three businesses who successfully made the switch to electric lawn care.

Additionally, this year, OSI introduced two new programs designed to lower the cost of transitioning to electric lawn care equipment: the Electric Lawn Care Equipment Discount Program and the Electric Leaf Blower Rebate Program.

The Electric Lawn Care Equipment Discount provides discounts on electric lawn care equipment from March 1 through May 31, 2025. Ann Arbor residents as well as lawn care and landscaping businesses that serve Ann Arbor customers are eligible for the discount. The Electric Leaf Blower Rebate Program establishes rebates for businesses that provide lawn care or landscaping services to properties located in Ann Arbor. These rebates can be used for electric leaf blowers purchased at any retailer and will be offered March 1 through May 31, 2025, or until funding is expended.



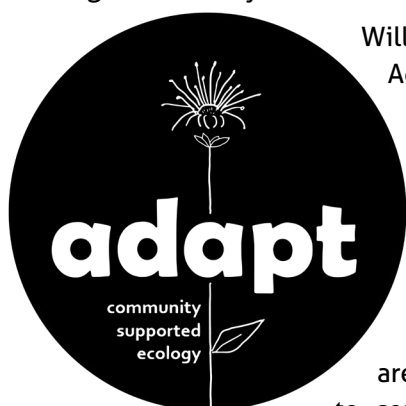
*Electric lawn care equipment demonstration with Net Zero Tree and Lawn Care at the Sustainable Lawn Care Learning Session.*



# COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT

## ADAPT: COMMUNITY SUPPORTED ECOLOGY

Adapt: Community Supported Ecology offers free services and resources associated with ecological restoration, native plant gardening, and permaculture, including consultations, micro-meadow installations, garden kits, and educational opportunities. Their mission is to sustain and promote connections between people and the land that supports them through community co-creation of native and perennial food landscapes.



William Kirst founded Adapt in 2020 with the vision that each piece of property, no matter how small, can be a space that sustains life. Since its founding in the Ann Arbor area, Adapt has grown to serve 12 communities

across Michigan, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. In addition to their free services, their for-profit arm, Adapt Landscapes, designs and installs larger gardens for a fee. This service, along with volunteer support and donations, supports their free services.

Each year in March, Adapt launches their Service Request Form, where community members can sign up for one of their free services. For those looking to volunteer, their volunteer form is always open, and they host a yearly training session for those looking to become an Adapt Community Leader.

This year, in addition to their service offerings, Adapt is working to create additional educational opportunities for a variety of different learning styles. These include video tutorials, available on their YouTube channel, as well as public workshops and presentations on botany and garden design hosted at Argus Farm Stop.

Through supporting sustainable lawn care and landscaping, Adapt is helping Ann Arbor meet its carbon neutrality goals. Will says, "Any bit of land that is returned to native planting sequesters carbon into soil. That bit of land no longer requires mowing, so no energy or gas is wasted in an effort to keep growth at bay. Insect biodiversity and biomass increases creating more resources for birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Finally, when beauty is all around us, we feel settled. Why drive to feel calm when it's right outside your front door?"

To support sustainable landscaping, Will suggests shrinking your lawn as much as possible. "There are always design solutions to bring about an aesthetic that works well for you and your family". You can fill out Adapt's service request form for free services such as consultations, micro-meadow installations, and garden kits, and Will recommends checking out Adapt Landscapes for larger project ideas.

If you are interested in Adapt's work, there are three main ways to get involved. You can sign up for one of their services, volunteer to help plant gardens or become a community leader, or donate so that they can keep their work going. To learn more about Adapt and how to get involved, visit [www.adapteco.org](http://www.adapteco.org).



# BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS

## NEW HEATING FRANCHISE AND UPCOMING A<sup>2</sup>ZERO WEEK

### ANN ARBOR, DTE SIGN COUNTRY'S FIRST HEATING FRANCHISE TO INCLUDE CLIMATE GOALS

Officials from the City of Ann Arbor and DTE Energy joined on Earth Day, April 22, 2025, to sign a new heating franchise, the first in the country to include a climate agreement with associated activities that will demonstrably improve health, safety and make forward progress toward addressing the climate crisis.

Included with the franchise is an Agreement Regarding Climate Action (ARCA), which outlines commitments to cooperate in support of the City of Ann Arbor's A<sup>2</sup>ZERO program, Ann Arbor's work to achieve a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by the year 2030, as well as a commitment to help advance DTE's own goals for achieving net-zero carbon emissions from its operations. The ARCA also outlines a requirement for the City and DTE to collaboratively develop two-year work plans over the course of the 10-year franchise to specify activities that will be undertaken to advance stated climate goals.

The first two-year work plan includes the potential for substantial funding commitments for community geothermal installations, energy efficiency improvements in rental units, workforce development, and the exploration of a biodigester at Ann Arbor's wastewater recovery facility. It also includes the commitment of significant staff time to help foster better data sharing and infrastructure coordination.

The existing natural gas franchise agreement was adopted in 1997 and runs through January 2027. In 2023, Ann Arbor City Council requested staff negotiate a new franchise with a focus on finding sustainable ways to heat and cool our community. The new franchise will last for 10 years, shorter than the previous agreement, signaling the exploration of alternatives for heating that support the city's A<sup>2</sup>ZERO goals for achieving a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality.

To learn more, please visit the [Sustainable Heating Franchise webpage](#).

### A<sup>2</sup>ZERO WEEK RETURNS FOR 2025: JUNE 1 - 7

In June 2020, the City's plan to achieve a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality, known as A<sup>2</sup>ZERO, was unanimously adopted by City Council. Each year, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations organizes A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Week to commemorate the passing of the plan and to celebrate the work done by the City and our many collaborators in the sustainability space.

Join us for a week-long celebration of climate action and community with family-friendly events, prizes, resources, food, & more!

Event highlights include:

- June 1: Dexter - Ann Arbor Run, Taste of Ann Arbor, Cargo bike Rally with Human Electric Hybrids, All-Electric Home Tour, AFC Ann Arbor Home Game
- June 3: Ward 2 Paty, Love a Park Day
- June 4: Farmer's Market, SCRAP Creative Reuse Mending Workshop, Climate Board Game Night, Big George's Rooftop Party, Ward 5 Party
- June 5: Climate Trivia with Terry, Ward 4 party
- June 6: Ward 1 Party
- June 7: Community Clean Up, Electronics Takeback, Community Swap
- and more!

**Learn more and see the full schedule with event details at [osi.a2gov.org/a2zeroweek](https://osi.a2gov.org/a2zeroweek).**



*Shirts screen-printed on shirts brought in by residents during A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Week 2024.*



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**ANN ARBOR, DTE SIGN COUNTRY'S FIRST HEATING FRANCHISE TO INCLUDE CLIMATE GOALS** – Officials from the City of Ann Arbor and DTE joined on Earth Day to sign a new heating franchise, the first in the country to include a climate agreement with associated activities that will demonstrably improve health, safety, and make forward progress toward addressing the climate crisis. Learn more about the franchise in the excerpt on Page 6, or by visiting the [Sustainable Heating Franchise webpage](#).

**ATTENTION UNIVERSITY STUDENTS!** Moving out at the end of the semester and have things you no longer need? Donate your stuff to keep it out of the landfill and help the Ann Arbor community. Find a drop-off event or location near you and give your clothing, household items and furniture a second life. For more information go to [a2gov.org/studentmove](#).

**IRA HOME ENERGY REBATES ARE NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH THE STATE OF MICHIGAN!** These Michigan Home Energy (MiHER) rebates provide significant help to income-eligible residents making improvements in their homes, including insulation, air sealing, heat pumps and more. And they can "stack" with Ann Arbor's Home Energy Rebates (available to all Ann Arbor residents, regardless of income), lowering costs even further. MiHER Standard Rebates are available for households earning between 81%-150% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and Enhanced Rebates are available for households earning 80% or below the Area Median Income.

**NEW: THE A<sup>2</sup>ZERO HEAT PUMP CONCIERGE PLATFORM:** Users can input home information to generate initial heat pump system design options in a process that takes approximately five minutes. Together, this information aims to empower residents to choose the heat pump that's right for them, including any and all necessary improvements that might be needed as part of transitioning from fossil gas heat to heat pumps. The entire process is free for Ann Arbor residents. Learn more at [osi.a2gov.org/HeatPumpConcierge!](#)

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ANN ARBOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY UTILITY!** It's official, the Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility has been created. Effective, April 17th, 2025, the Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU) is an official entity within the City. This major milestone helps the City move one step closer to operationalizing the SEU. To stay up to date with SEU developments, check out [www.a2gov.org/a2seu](#).

**ELECTRIC LAWN CARE EQUIPMENT DISCOUNT PROGRAM AND ELECTRIC LEAF BLOWER REBATES:** Designed to help lower the cost of transitioning from gas to electric leaf blowers, in accordance with Ann Arbor's new leaf blower ordinance, discounts and rebates for electric lawn care equipment will be available March 1 – May 31 of this year, or until funding is expended. For more information visit [osi.a2gov.org/leafblowers](#).

**NEW EMAIL LIST FOR ELECTRONICS TAKEBACK EVENTS!** Our recent Electronics Takeback event was a hit, so we encourage you to join [the Electronics Takeback Event email list](#) to get notified when the next event is announced.

**GREEN RENTAL HOUSING ORDINANCE** – Office of Sustainability and Innovations staff have been working for four years with community stakeholders to craft a new Green Rental Housing Ordinance. Slated to be presented to City Council in May, the Ordinance will help protect the health, safety, and well being of renters across the city. We encourage residents to learn the facts about the Ordinance at [the Green Rental Housing Ordinance webpage](#).

**FAST TRACK TO REDUCING FOOD WASTE: LAUNCHING JUNE 8TH!**

Want to reduce food waste and save money? Join this new program from A<sup>2</sup>ZERO and ZeroWaste.org to build three essential habits that will help you make the most of your food. With daily tips and a friendly competition for prizes to encourage you along the way, you'll be on the fast track to making a real impact for the planet and your wallet! Sign up at [zerowaste.org/fasttrack](#).

**CONNECT WITH THE OFFICE OF  
SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATIONS**  
[sustainability@a2gov.org](mailto:sustainability@a2gov.org) | FB: A2Zero | IG: @a2zero2030  
[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST](#) | [YOUTUBE](#) | [a2zero.org](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **ANN ARBOR COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN DRAFT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SESSION** May 7, 3 - 7 PM

*AADL Traverwood Branch*

The Ann Arbor Comprehensive Land Use Plan draft is now available for public review on the new online platform for city projects, Engage Ann Arbor (EA2), at [plan.a2gov.org/plan24](https://plan.a2gov.org/plan24). The draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan seeks to align with the city's Carbon Neutrality Plan where it can permit denser land uses to reduce vehicle miles traveled, incentivize green building practices, support resilience hubs, encourage a circular economy, and more. All are welcome to attend the engagement session to discuss the plan draft with staff, ask questions and provide feedback.

### **STEWARDS' CIRCLE: HEMLOCK WOOLY ADELGID IDENTIFICATION** May 13, 6 - 7 PM | *Nichols Arboretum, 1610 Washington Heights Entrance*

Join the Huron Arbor Cluster for the monthly Stewards' Circle! Hemlock Wooly Adelgid was detected in Nichols Arboretum in the spring of 2023. Learn how to identify this invasive pest of hemlocks, its life cycle and spread, and how Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum is working to control it. Free, no registration required.

### **BIKE TO WHEREVER DAY** May 14, 7 - 9:30 AM

Join The City of Ann Arbor, GetDowntown, the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, and businesses across the community in celebrating Bike to Wherever Day. A network of pop-up commuter stations, hosted by local businesses and organizations, will be out to support you along the way with free food, drinks, games, and more. Post images of your journey the hashtag #MyA2Commute

### **ADOPT-A-PARK WORKDAY** May 16, 3 - 5 PM | *Park TBD*

Join us in adopting Ann Arbor's parks! OSI and Parks staff will be doing stewardship work in one of Ann Arbor's parks. Volunteers are welcome - come prepared to get dirty and make a difference! Close-toed shoes, long pants, and a refillable water bottle are recommended. Please email questions Sean Reynolds ([sreynolds@a2gov.org](mailto:sreynolds@a2gov.org)).

### **HURON RIVER DAY** May 18, 12 - 4 PM | *Gallup Park*

[This free, family-friendly event](#) is a celebration of the Huron River and all it has to offer, now in its 45th year. Spend the afternoon enjoying nature, hands-on activities, fishing, live animals from Leslie Science & Nature Center, food trucks and eco-friendly exhibits.

**UM INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY SOLUTIONS ENERGY SYMPOSIUM: WHAT (ENERGY ISSUE) IS KEEPING YOU UP AT NIGHT?** May 20 - 21 | *University of Michigan, EECS Building & Chrysler Center* - Join us May 20 - 21 to discuss pressing issues surrounding the electricity grid, cybersecurity, data centers, environmental justice, and more with energy experts from U-M and around the US. [Learn more at the Symposium's website.](#)

### **SPARK ANNUAL MEETING** May 21, 10 AM - 1 PM | *EMU Student Center*

The Ann Arbor SPARK Annual Meeting is attended by business, government, and academic leaders from across the Ann Arbor region. This insightful event is your unique opportunity to preview new projects and initiatives for the coming year. Hear from keynote speaker Abraham Lustgarten, an award-winning investigative reporter about his book *On the Move*, the definitive account of what this massive population shift might look like. Learn more and get tickets on [SPARK's website](#).

### **SOLARIZE KICK-OFF - FARAH & OAK ELECTRIC** May 22, 7 - 9 PM | *Virtual*

Learn all about solar and the group-buy that resident Jackie Farah is hosting along with their installer, Oak Electric. [Register on Zoom](#) or email Connor Dailey ([cdailey@a2gov.org](mailto:cdailey@a2gov.org)) to learn more and for an opportunity to save on a new system from the group's bulk-buy discount. All Washtenaw County residents are welcome!

### **SUSTAINABILITY FORUM - THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY UTILITY (SEU) AND YOU** May 29, 6 PM | *AADL Downtown*

The upfront cost of technologies like solar panels remain a barrier for many. Fortunately, this barrier is about to change in a BIG way! In November 2024, residents voted to authorize the creation of a Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU), an opt-in, supplemental community-owned energy utility that will provide 100% renewable energy from solar, battery storage, and networked geothermal systems installed at participating homes and businesses. Join us for the last Sustainability Forum of 2025 to hear from Missy Stults, Director of Ann Arbor's Office of Sustainability and Innovations, as she discusses the SEU - what it is, what it isn't, and what's coming next!

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit [www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events](https://www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events).