

THE CHARGING STATION

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



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ABOUT THE EDITOR



Bryce Frohlich (he/him) supports community resilience initiatives, including the A²ZERO Ambassador program! He is excited to continue building on the foundation of the Ambassador program making getting involved in local climate action more accessible. Interested in learning more? Reach out to Bryce at bfrohlich@a2gov.org.



AAFD Fire Chief Kennedy leads a tour of Fire House #1 for A²ZERO Ambassadors to learn about first responders responsibilities and how to increase community resilience.

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 the A²ZERO Ambassadors program and the impact Ambassadors are having on our community. 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. 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.

A²ZERO AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

VITAL COLLABORATORS IN ACHIEVING COMMUNITY-WIDE CARBON NEUTRALITY



Our 4th cohort of A²ZERO Ambassadors celebrating the completion of their training at the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market.

moving around the community, the circular economy, local food, community resilience and emergency preparedness, and how individuals can advance carbon neutrality!

While most of the training sessions are held in a hybrid format at Larcom City Hall (301 E Huron St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104) on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30pm EDT, OSI also hosts training sessions at locations such as the water treatment plant, Ann Arbor Fire Stations, Argus Farm Stop, and the Bryant Community Center, among others. During training sessions, Ambassadors are joined by topic area experts and city staff working to advance sustainability and resilience in the community.

For those wanting to get involved with sustainability and climate action, knowing where to start can be one of the most common obstacles. To address this barrier, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) created the A²ZERO Ambassador program in 2020, a community-centered program that continues to grow and evolve with each cohort. The A²ZERO Ambassador program is a consecutive, 12-session training program that brings together cohorts of up to 25 community members to explore what it takes to equitably transition Ann Arbor to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Upon acceptance into the program, A²ZERO Ambassadors pledge to attend and engage in all 12 training sessions, as well as committing to uphold the values of A²ZERO and OSI. These 12 sessions mirror the A²ZERO plan and equip future Ambassadors with the knowledge and connections needed to serve

as extensions of OSI and trusted brokers of A²ZERO-related work.

Upon completion of their training, people in the program complete one of two project pathways to become an official A²ZERO Ambassador:

Pathway #1: Pledge to complete at least one outreach activity, such as giving a presentation to a group they are part of about a current Office of Sustainability and Innovations priority.

Pathway #2: Pledge to assist on a sustainability-related project with other members of their cohort supported by OSI staff or a community collaborator.

During their trainings, A²ZERO Ambassadors learn about a wide variety of topics such as principles of equity and environmental justice, climate change, renewable energy and efficiency, urban water systems, transportation and choices about



A²ZERO Ambassadors managing the pick-up zone during an OSI spring free-tree giveaway.

A²ZERO AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

VITAL COLLABORATORS IN ACHIEVING COMMUNITY-WIDE CARBON NEUTRALITY



Ambassadors wrapping up various tree saplings during a free-tree giveaway.

If you are looking to get involved in local climate action for the first time, rest assured there is no prior experience required to join the A²ZERO Ambassador program – only the desire and commitment to work collaboratively towards an equitable transition to community-wide carbon neutrality. Being a part of the Ambassador Program is also a great way to meet new people with varying life experiences and interests in sustainability. At OSI, we embrace the reality that achieving carbon neutrality will take a monumental collaborative effort that relies on the dedication of community members like the A²ZERO Ambassadors.

Anyone interested in applying for our 6th A²ZERO Ambassador cohort can find the digital application [here](#). In-person interviews or phone interviews can also be scheduled. In-person interviews are available at our tabling events. Visit the Ambassadors webpage at osi.a2gov.org/ambassadors to learn more!

The Office of Sustainability and Innovations has officially trained 99 A²ZERO Ambassadors! With the graduation of the next cohort, OSI will achieve the goal of training 100 Ambassadors by the year 2025.

Our 6th cohort trainings will take place on the **following Wednesdays** from 6:30pm – 8:30pm EDT. While most trainings occur at Larcom City Hall with a hybrid component (301 E Huron St in Ann Arbor) some training sessions are at an alternate site.

March 27th – April 3rd – April 10th
– April 17th – April 24th – May 1st –
May 8th – May 15th – May 22nd –
May 29th – June 5th – June 26th

A²ZERO Ambassador Application Cohort 6



Scan the QR code to learn more!

If you need assistance completing your application, please book a time [here](#) to receive help or ask questions!

AMBASSADOR PROJECTS AND THE COMMUNITY

TURNING TRAINING TO ACTION

As part of the program, Ambassadors can opt-in to assist on a sustainability-related project with other members of their cohort supported by Office of Sustainability and Innovations staff or community partners. Three new projects are highlighted below.



THE GREEN ENERGY NEIGHBORS

Considering that all the options to reach carbon neutrality in your home can be daunting, wouldn't it be helpful to talk to a neighbor who has already made some of these changes? What if they could share their experiences with energy efficiency, electrification,

renewable energy adoptions, and lessons they learned along the way? Doing this and more is the goal of the Green Energy Neighbors.

Whether it's a home energy audit, energy recovery ventilator, electric appliance, heat pump, solar panel, storage batteries, electric vehicles and chargers, or even insulating your home, it can be a time-consuming and confusing process. It's also best to start this process well before you need to replace your existing system to give yourself the time to learn about new technologies, obtain quotes, and make an informed decision. Getting connected with the Green Energy Neighbors, an Ambassador-led initiative, can give insight about someone's lived experience on a journey another resident is about to or interested in undertaking.

Michael Hagan, an A²ZERO Ambassador, is just one of our Green Energy Neighbors that can talk you about efficiency, electrification, and renewable adoption. Michael has undergone a 12-year journey to achieving a net zero home.



The Green Energy Neighbors mentoring network is a cost-free service to connect individuals considering energy efficiency improvements ("Learners") with people in the community who have already made some of these changes and can share their experiences ("Mentors").

Find the Green Energy Neighbors at their next tabling event by visiting the A²ZERO Ambassador webpage. As projects are completed, community members are welcome to apply to become a mentor to share stories and have an impact on our community!

The Green Energy Neighbors will be at the January 31st and May 29th Sustainability Forums hosted by OSI!



A²ZERO Ambassador Michael Hagan at a community event sharing his personal experiences, lessons learned, and successes in home decarbonization.

AMBASSADOR PROJECTS AND THE COMMUNITY

TURNING TRAINING TO ACTION

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY ADVISOR TEAM

Community-based organizations (CBO) often find themselves busy and at or over capacity. While an organization may have interest in integrating sustainability into their operations, making time to research and then implement changes often proves a challenge. That is where a group of dedicated Ambassadors come in! Tim Vaduva, Hannah Bernstein, Lynda Snider, and David Russel of The Community Organization Sustainability Ambassador team reach out to community-based organizations and gauge their interest in aspects of sustainability the organization would like to see implemented. From there, the Ambassadors work as a team to research the desired goals of the CBO and present them with options for moving the needle on their sustainability goals.

Ambassadors also enjoy occasional opportunities to get their hands dirty! Such was the case when they supported a rain garden installation at Genesis of Ann Arbor to relieve flooding issues on their grounds.

Completed rain garden at Genesis of Ann Arbor that is designed to help relieve flooding.



A²ZERO Ambassadors directing the Fox Fire Neighborhood Swap Day.

NEIGHBORHOOD SWAP DAYS

One A²ZERO Ambassador project team combined two goals – to engage in the practice of the circular economy and connect with neighbors – into one great project! Ambassadors Alexandria Galens (left), Husnu Kaplan (center), and Elaine Ezekiel (right) implemented Neighborhood Swap Days, which create opportunities for community members to come together and offer or exchange goods for free. Such items include clothes, books, décor, small appliances – anything one might find at a yard

sale. The project team organized two successful swap days in the Kerrytown and Foxfire Neighborhoods, bringing together approximately 40 households. Over 100 people visited and collected items, and all remaining items were donated to thrift stores.

Some of the participating households shared these thoughts about participating in the swap days:

"Getting rid of things [that] I was no longer using by passing them on and not throwing them away. The amount of waste is so crazy and, most of the time, the items would be useful to someone else."

"We felt like we were helping our neighbors."

"I got to meet neighbors and get some nice free stuff. It was less stressful than planning and setting up a yard sale. It was also great that remaining items were picked up at the end of the event."

"It was so easy. We didn't have to figure out which organization is open for donations when, and if they take everything except kid's toys, etc. We put our items out, many were picked up by people during the swap hours and the remainder were collected by volunteers."

"It was nice to see our neighbors again."

Visit A2ZERO.org to view the Neighborhood Swap Day replication guide that came out of this Ambassador Project or email wgarcia@a2gov.org with any questions on hosting a swap day.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS AMBASSADORS



The biggest thing I took away from the Ambassadors program was the huge diversity of what sustainability can look like. Recycling and clean energy immediately come to mind, but sustainability can also be better food access, a more bikeable city, and stronger community ties. And I got to see examples of how all this work on sustainability can help address racial and social inequities as a part of a local, just transition. With so many people that are passionate about all these different aspects of sustainability, I loved learning how everyone I met through the program looks at addressing climate change.

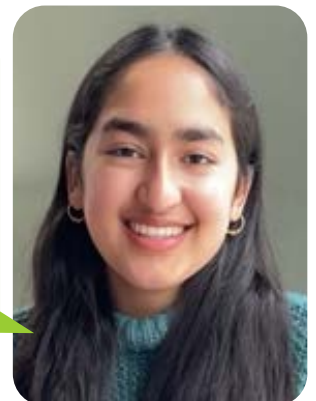
SAM FLECKENSTEIN, COHORT 5

I first heard about the A²ZERO Ambassador program at the beginning of high school from a fellow classmate. What attracted me to the Ambassador program was its approachability: it assumes no significant prior knowledge, just curiosity. The main thing that surprised me about going through the program was the diversity, in age and background, of the participants in my cohort. Their differences in perspective provided a richness to the experience that couldn't be achieved on its own.

I also found the process of completing an ambassador project extremely rewarding because of the hands-on nature of it. I was part of the team that started the Plant-Based Challenge, working on the sustainable food aspect of the A²ZERO plan. The support we received from OSI staff and our nonprofit partner, VegMichigan, was crucial to our success. Taking initiative to solve a real issue that I saw in my community engendered a sense of ownership over climate change, but also a sense of hope.

Overall, I highly recommend this program for people of all ages, but especially for high school and college students. The Ambassador program gives you the knowledge and skillset to enact change within your community while also connecting you with like-minded people that you would have never been able to meet otherwise.

AVNI RAO, COHORT 3



WHAT'S IT LIKE?

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS AMBASSADORS

As a chemistry PhD student with a broad range of interests in environmental science, public health, and policy, I was interested in joining the ambassadorship program to understand more about where science, technology, and policy intersect, and how I can use my interests to help Ann Arbor become a more sustainable city. My advisor, Prof. Anne McNeil, who is also an ambassador, encouraged me to seek this opportunity based on her great experiences in the program!

Through the ambassadorship, I not only got a chance to broaden my knowledge, but I also got to meet people across various fields with a shared passion for making Ann Arbor a greener city. The field trips and group discussions were some of my favorite parts of the training as they gave me the unique perspective to see what the city government is doing to bring about change. For anyone with a passion for making the world a more sustainable place, I would highly encourage you to join the program! Let's all take small (and sometimes big!) steps to make our city healthier, happier, and greener!

MALAVIKA RAMKUMAR, COHORT 5



Ambassadors and VegMichigan ready to welcome the community at their Plant-Based Challenge kick off.

Questions? Email Bryce at bfrohlich@a2gov.org

Connect with us at a2zero.org!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONQUER THE COLD | Jan 15 - Feb 15

Conquer the Cold is an annual promotion that aims to show that it isn't as difficult to get to work without driving as it may seem in the winter months. Through education, outreach, and different challenges, the campaign aims to help commuters overcome the potential barriers of changing their patterns in colder weather. Individuals participating in Conquer the Cold can log their trips on the [getDowntown](#) challenge website and earn rewards based on their participation.

A²ZERO AMBASSADOR APPLICATION NOW OPEN!

The A²ZERO Ambassador Program provides an opportunity for interested individuals to dive deeply into pathways for advancing local sustainability initiatives, resilience, and carbon neutrality. To learn more about the program and apply to join our 6th Ambassador cohort, please visit [A²ZERO Ambassadors](#). Applications open until February 14th at 5pm.

CITY SEEKING MURAL PROPOSALS FOR BICENTENNIAL

City staff are seeking artists to submit proposals for mural designs that recognize the past, present, and future of our community to celebrate 200 years of Ann Arbor. For more information, visit the [City of Ann Arbor's website](#) about the Bicentennial mural. Submissions are due by Feb. 5, 2024.

W.O.W. COMMUNITY READ

Washtenaw Optimal Wellness is sponsoring a book reading of Dr. Michale Greger's new book "How Not To Age." Discussions take place in Ann Arbor over multiple sessions at 4pm on the fourth Saturday of the month through June. For registration and to information about meeting locations, please email w.o.w.bookgroup@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONQUER THE COLD

Join us and invite others to kickoff and participate in the [Conquer the Cold challenge](#).

- Feb. 1, 5-7pm – Conquer the Cold 2024 Mixer
- Feb. 7, 6pm – Park & Ride Meet Up
- Feb. 13, 8-9am – Buddy Walk

ANN ARBOR SOLAR STORIES | Feb. 1 | Virtual

This one-hour, online event is hosted by the GLREA. Hear from Ann Arbor residents who have gone solar and ask them all your questions! [Register in advance](#) to receive a confirmation email containing information to join the meeting.

KITCHEN ELECTRIFICATION WEBINAR | Feb. 13 | 12pm | Virtual

Join the 2030 District Ann Arbor/Washtenaw for an informative webinar about electrification best practices in commercial kitchens. A case study from University of Michigan for implementing all-electric food service within the Central Campus Residential Complex will be presented. [Learn more here](#).

ECO-TRIVIA NIGHT | Feb. 20 | 7-9pm |

Venue by 4M, 1919 South Industrial Hwy

The Ann Arbor chapters of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, Wild Ones, Common Cycle, and the Huron Valley Group Sierra Club invite you to a free evening of Eco-Trivia. Seating is limited. Bring your own team of six, or join a team when you arrive. [Register to reserve your spot and learn more](#).

SUSTAINABILITY SERIES | 6-7:30pm | Ann Arbor District Library, Downtown

OSI is bringing the Sustainability Series back for another season at the Ann Arbor District Library! Join in person or online on the last Wednesday of every month. [You can register here for the virtual meetings](#), but registration is not required to attend.

1. Feb. 28 – Home Energy Rating Disclosure
2. March 27 – Circular Economy and e-Waste
3. April 24 – A²ZERO Equity in Action
4. May 29 – Rebates & Home Energy Advisor Services

For more info, please visit www.a2gov.org/sustainability/events.