



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

City of Ann Arbor

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This guide offers a successful and stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the award-winning programs from the finalists of the American Climate Leadership Awards 2021 by ecoAmerica.

PURPOSE

Looking to support a just transition to carbon neutrality in your community? Interested in building a broad coalition of over 70 partner organizations and hundreds of residents to implement transformative solutions? Want to get 1MW of solar installed every year? Check out A²ZERO, Ann Arbor's decarbonization program. A²ZERO includes plans, programs, frameworks, outreach materials, and toolkits to help every sector in our communities achieve a just transition to carbon neutrality by 2030.

DESCRIPTION

In 2019, Ann Arbor City Council unanimously adopted a Climate Emergency Declaration, signaling our community's commitment to finding comprehensive solutions to the climate crisis – solutions that reflect the rigor, vigor, and timeliness an emergency deserves. In this declaration, the City committed to a March 2020 deadline for the development of a plan aimed at achieving a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030. Over the course of 82 working days involving 68 partner organizations, 3 public surveys, 80 technical advisors, 68 public events, and input from at least 1 in every 11 Ann Arborites, the A²ZERO plan/program was born.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Every sector, every system, every business, every resident, and every student are our target audience. No one can be left out; especially not traditionally underserved, marginalized, and frontline populations. That is why we work with anyone who cares about quality of life, comfort, safety, justice, climate, good jobs, and sustainability.

GOALS

- Together, implementing a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality.
- Creating pathways, policies, and solutions that are scalable and replicable in other communities and regions of the U.S. and using our networks and relationships to grow our impact.
- Building an unmovable coalition that helps institutionalize equity, justice, and decarbonization in all systems and sectors of our community and region.



PRIMARY COMPONENTS OR ACTIVITIES

- The Governance Model describes how A²ZERO is a “living” plan and program, which can be modified as necessary, and shows how stakeholders can engage with the plan and its initiatives.
- The Prioritization Framework is a tool developed to evaluate strategies within the carbon neutrality plan and centers on four core criteria: Greenhouse Gas Mitigation, Cost, Feasibility, and Co-Benefits (which heavily weights equity).
- The A²ZERO Plan and Investment Scenario outlines the living path to a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality, along with information on how the Plan can be financed, staffed, and supported.
- Community Engagement, which is intrinsic to A²ZERO and includes dozens of activities such as: PowerHours; Sustainability Forums; an A²ZERO Ambassadors program; Climate, Coffee, and Conversation events; Partners’ Meetings; Neighborhood Town Halls; Block Parties; mailings; public campaigns; co-branding with partners; newsletters; media blasts; volunteer opportunities; Listening Tours; and more!
- Programmatic and Policy Work. A²ZERO is about real-world change. That is why we have over 20 programs that are part of our work, including: Solarize; 10,000 Trees; Beneficial Electrification; Bicycle Discounts; Energy and Water Disclosure; Green Rental Housing; Solar Faithful; EV Replacement; the Sustaining Ann Arbor Together grant; and more.

IMPACT & OUTCOMES

In less than a year, we have:

- Secured over 75 community partners
- Facilitated 1 MW of new residential solar through Ann Arbor Solarize
- Adopted an Electric Vehicle Readiness Ordinance
- Launched our A²ZERO Ambassadors program
- Installed our first resilience hub at a local community center
- Replaced 20 city vehicles with electric; including two in our police department
- Installed four fast chargers
- Distributed dozens of energy efficiency and emergency preparedness kits
- Awarded 12 grants through our Sustaining Ann Arbor Together grant program
- Launched our 10,000 Trees initiative
- Created a bicycle and e-bicycle discount program
- Initiated work on a 24MW solar installation
- Intervened in rate cases to encourage more affordable renewable energy options

- Drafted an energy benchmarking ordinance
- Drafted a home energy audit disclosure ordinance
- Launched a rental efficiency task force
- Launched an equity task force to ensure our work remains grounded in justice
- Released an RFP for over 1.2MW of solar on City facilities, and one for over 1MW of solar at affordable housing sites
- Launched a beneficial electrification program, starting with range replacements
- Created an aging in place efficiently program to help low-income seniors
- Co-created with the community a neighborhood decarbonization, health, safety, and comfort initiative

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- 1. Name the problem** — Publicly state and ratify a resolution declaring a climate emergency. Declaring a climate emergency allows decision makers to go on the record stating their understanding of climate science and commitment to action and can be a rallying force for community support of climate action.
- 2. State the goal** — The overall goal is carbon neutrality. But each community needs to decide if a different initial goal is warranted and what their timeline will be. Regardless of your choice, stating the goal is essential to developing a plan, securing public support, and ensuring all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the task at hand.
- 3. Determine your values** — Sustainability and climate mitigation will certainly guide your plan's development. But what are the core values that ground your plan? What are the tenets that will bring your community together and keep you centered in your work? Naming these will be essential to keeping you focused and moving forward. The values that permeate A²ZERO are Equity, Sustainability, and Transformation.
- 4. Build a coalition** — Solving the climate crisis will necessitate working with all sectors and systems within your community. Start early and cast a wide net for partners. Build nontraditional coalitions to ensure that unique voices are integrated into your work. Foster relationships with religious organizations, nonprofits, affordable housing advocates, justice avengers, neighborhood associations, industries, educational institutions, landlords, tenants, realtors, and more. You never know what great ideas are out there until you ask.

- 5. Determine your baseline** — A baseline greenhouse gas inventory and vulnerability assessment should be conducted to understand where your community stands along its journey to carbon neutrality. Don't be overwhelmed; start with whatever data you have. And don't get too concerned with having every possible piece of data. While it's true you can't effectively manage what you don't measure, it's also true that action is more important than measurement.
- 6. Ideate** — Gather input from the community, staff, and technical experts and learn about what other communities have done to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Accept all ideas and seek them from unlikely places. A homeless veteran or an affordable housing tenant might have one of the most brilliant ideas, so remember to seek insights from a wide array of community stakeholders – especially those who are traditionally marginalized or are in frontline and fenceline communities.
- 7. Prioritize** — Your plan should reflect your values as well as your capacity. Co-create criteria to prioritize actions with your partners and then evaluate suggested ideas through your prioritization framework. This will allow you to identify those most closely aligned with your local values and opportunities, making it easier to move quickly from planning to action.
- 8. Determine the “how”** — After selecting the highest scoring actions, you need to determine how each action can be implemented. Developing goals, metrics for tracking, indicators of success, and work plans for the identified actions will give actors (City staff, community partners, etc.) the ability to undertake an initiative and understand criteria for success. And remember to keep engaging with your partners and community members to understand their ideas for how actions should be implemented.
- 9. Report and Revisit** — Progress towards carbon neutrality should be transparent to the community and to you, so a system to report performance needs to be in place. Identify what information you will need to know and work with colleagues to set up automated reporting platforms. And make sure to regularly review your performance metrics so you can identify things that are working, things that need tweaking, and things that need to be sunset.
- 10. Have Fun** — Solving the climate crisis is both a marathon and a sprint. Remember to celebrate the victories, no matter how small. And remember to breathe through the defeats, no matter how big.