



**Office of Sustainability
and Innovations**

Sustainability Commission Work Group Charter **2026 Work Plan**

Version 2.0

Table of Contents

- Overview.....1
- Work Group 1: Residential Neighborhood Decarbonization1
 - 1. Work Group Description1
 - 2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group1
 - 3. City Strategy Area(s).....1
 - 4. Commission Strategy Area(s)2
 - 5. Work Group Deliverables2
 - a. Out-of-Scope.....2
 - 6. Frequency of Meetings.....2
 - 7. Roles and Responsibilities2
 - 8. Timeline.....2
- Work Group 2: Community and Agriculture Resilience Audit.....1
 - 1. Work Group Description1
 - 2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group1
 - 3. City Strategy Area(s).....1
 - 4. Commission Strategy Area(s)1
 - 5. Work Group Deliverables2
 - a. Out-of-Scope.....2
 - 6. Frequency of Meetings.....2
 - 7. Roles and Responsibilities2
 - 8. Timeline.....2
- Work Group 3: Storytelling Campaign.....3
 - 1. Work Group Description3
 - 2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group3
 - 3. City Strategy Area(s).....3
 - 4. Commission Strategy Area(s)3
 - 5. Work Group Deliverables3
 - a. Out-of-Scope.....4
 - 6. Meeting Frequency4
 - 7. Roles and Responsibilities4
 - 8. Timeline.....4
- Work Group 4: Offsets and Future Planning Work Group5
 - 1. Work Group Description5
 - 2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group5
 - 3. City Strategy Area(s).....5

- 4. Commission Strategy Area(s)5
- 5. Work Group Deliverables5
 - a. Out-of-Scope.....6
- 6. Frequency of Meetings.....6
- 7. Roles and Responsibilities6
- 8. Timeline6

Overview

As per Section 3.2 of the Sustainability Commission’s Bylaws, the work of the Commission shall be directed by an annual work plan provided by the City Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) in coordination with the Public Services Area. The work plan will set the specific annual goals of the Sustainability Commission, with clear metrics established to not only determine progress towards these goals, but also articulate how success for each metric will be determined.

2026 Priorities

For 2026, the following topics are the priorities for the Sustainability Commission:

- Residential Neighborhood Decarbonization (Lead: OSI)
- Community and Agriculture Resilience Audit (Lead: OSI)
- Storytelling Campaign (Lead: OSI)
- Offsets and Future Planning (Lead: OSI)
- Other needs as identified

The remainder of this document will include details about each working group and how the working groups will address the 2026 priorities.

Work Group 1: Residential Neighborhood Decarbonization

1. Work Group Description

OSI has several successful residential decarbonization programs: Solarize, Home Energy Advisor, Heat Pump Concierge, Home Energy Rebates, and Electric Yard Care rebates. While successful, these programs generally are used by individual residents/households for individual homes. To meet our A²ZERO goals, OSI looks to scale these programs into a Neighborhood Decarbonization strategy. New programs may be created as part of this strategy. The Sustainability Commission would help identify priorities, messaging opportunities, and how a Neighborhood Decarbonization program would successfully scale and have impact. The commission would also provide feedback on new programs developed as part of this strategy.

2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group

The use of fossil gas for space and water heating, as well as cooking, in buildings represents over 25% of our community's greenhouse gas emissions. Transitioning away from fossil gas to electric, especially given our work to ensure that all electricity is powered with renewable energy, is a pivotal component of A²ZERO. The A²ZERO Plan envisions that by 2030, 30% of owner-occupied homes will have fully electrified and conducted air sealing and insulation improvements. Building occupants will also benefit from better indoor air quality.

As much as 80% of energy consumed in our buildings is wasted, through gaps in building envelopes or unnecessary operation of lights and electronics. Improving building envelopes with better insulation and windows, efficient lighting and appliances, and advanced heating and cooling systems can have a significant impact on the amount of energy our community uses to heat and cool our buildings.

Following the success of the Solarize program, the A²ZERO Plan proposes a broad-reaching public engagement campaign, 80% of residents and businesses participate in energy efficiency group-buys, incentivized through discounts achieved through economies of scale. The campaign is inclusive, designed with input from the public and helps reduce energy use of participating buildings by 20%.

Addressing these problems and opportunities will require community liaisons, such as neighborhood ambassadors, and successful communication and engagement strategies. The staff in the Office of Sustainability & Innovations have established successful relationships with residents of the Bryant Neighborhood, Pittsfield Village, and Colonial Square Cooperative. This working group will consider the goals and proposed actions of the A²ZERO Plan, the current successes and challenges of programming for individual households, and lessons learned from our neighborhood-focused initiatives to make recommendations for future neighborhood decarbonization efforts.

3. City Strategy Area(s)

A²ZERO Strategy 1: Power our Electrical Grid with 100% Renewable Energy

A²ZERO Strategy 2: Switch our Appliances and Vehicles from Gasoline, Diesel, Propane, Coal, and Natural Gas to Electric

A²ZERO Strategy 3: Significantly Improve the Energy Efficiency in our Homes, Businesses, Schools, Places of Worship, Recreational Sties and Government Facilities

A²ZERO Strategy 6: Enhance the Resilience of Our People and Our Place

4. Commission Strategy Area(s)

3.2(a): Advise on energy policies and practices that affect the City or its residents; ways to engage the public on energy matters and encourage public action to further City energy goals; and the City’s A²ZERO plan.

5. Work Group Deliverables

A Residential Neighborhood Decarbonization Work Plan. Specifics to be determined by the City Staff and Work Group Members.

a. Out-of-Scope

- Creating new building codes or advocating for new building codes
- Programs, regulations, or incentives that are out of the control of the City of Ann Arbor
- Determining budget allocation
- Administering neighborhood decarbonization programming

6. Frequency of Meetings

To Be Determined by City Staff Co-Chair and Work Group Members

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Responsibilities
City Staff Co-Chair	Connor Dailey, OSI	Advises the work group, helps set agendas and leads work group meetings.
Workgroup Co-Chair	TBD	Primary liaison for the Commission, keeps Commission informed of project progress and issues, helps set work group meeting agendas, coordinates work group meetings.
Work Group Members	TBD	Helps Chair move work forward.

8. Timeline

All work is to be completed by the May 2027 Sustainability Commission meeting, at which time the work group will present its findings.

Work Group 2: Community and Agriculture Resilience Audit

1. Work Group Description

As OSI continues to grow and develop our sustainable food programming, it has become clear that a more coordinated strategy to guide this work is needed. To develop this strategy, we have begun collecting information about how food moves into and through our community, and the programs, policies, and projects that shape our food system. This Sustainability Commission working group will help with the discovery phase of food systems strategic planning by collecting data about Ann Arbor's local food system using a process known as the [Community Agriculture Resilience Audit \(CARAT\)](#).

2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group

The Community & Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool, commonly known as CARAT, is a collaborative platform that brings together community stakeholders for a self-assessment of their local food system. Its primary aim is to gauge how a community is leveraging food systems assets to achieve a substantial level of community resilience. To accomplish this, CARAT utilizes 101 indicators that measure the resources within a food system. These indicators are instrumental in determining the next steps for enhancing community resiliency and food sovereignty.

The assessment revolves around seven core themes, addressing the complex nature of community resilience:

- Theme 1: Natural Resource Management, Use, Conservation and Preservation of Ecosystems and Farmland
- Theme 2: Community Health and Well-being
- Theme 3: Community Self-Reliance in Food
- Theme 4: Distributed and Democratic Leadership
- Theme 5: Focus on Local Farmers, Food Processors, and Food Distributors
- Theme 6: Food Sovereignty
- Theme 7: Place-Based Economics

The Working Group will assist City Staff with the CARAT to refine future sustainable food programming.

3. City Strategy Area(s)

A²ZERO Strategy 5: Change the Way We Use, Reuse, and Dispose of Materials

A²ZERO Strategy 6: Enhance the Resilience of Our People and Our Place

4. Commission Strategy Area(s)

3.2(a): To advise the City Council and City Administrator on sustainability policies and practices that affect the City or its residents, and ways to engage the public on sustainability matters and encourage public action to further City sustainability goals, including A2 ZERO goals.

5. Work Group Deliverables

Completed Community Agriculture Resilience Audit (CARAT) Assessment

a. Out-of-Scope

- Programs, regulations, or incentives that are out of the control of the City of Ann Arbor
- Determining budget allocation
- Implementing recommendations that emerge from the working group

6. Frequency of Meetings

To Be Determined by City Staff Co-Chair and Work Group Members

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Responsibilities
City Staff	Azella Markgraf, OSI	Advises the work group, helps set agendas and leads work group meetings.
Workgroup Co-Chair	TBD	Primary liaison for the Commission, keeps Commission informed of project progress and issues, helps set work group meeting agendas, coordinates work group meetings.
Work Group Members	TBD	Helps Chair move work forward.

8. Timeline

All work is to be completed by the May 2027 Sustainability Commission meeting, at which time the work group will present its findings.

Work Group 3: Storytelling Campaign

1. Work Group Description

A core theme for this year at OSI is storytelling, and to do this, the City started consistently highlighting the sustainability work of OSI and other City departments. But we need help sharing the stories of everyday residents who are the true champions of this work. Therefore, this working group will create a plan and engage in storytelling opportunities to show what Ann Arborites are doing in support of our community's climate goals.

2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group

Beginning in January 2026, the Office of Sustainability & Innovations significantly increased its efforts around storytelling, taking the opportunity to create a narrative about the work surrounding the A²ZERO Program. Following the advice of climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe, we know that the most important thing individuals can do to help climate action is to talk about it! OSI launched the "I Am A²ZERO" storytelling campaign on Earth Day, 2026, with a video showing some of the wide variety of things the Ann Arbor community is doing to become more sustainable. Celebrating residents taking actions both big and small, this campaign highlights the impact of climate action in the Ann Arbor community straight from the members of the community themselves and is now live at osi.a2gov.org/iama2zero. Campaigns such as this one can have a significant impact on residents' familiarity with A²ZERO programming and can contribute to a feeling of collective action that promotes more people joining and feeling hopeful in the city's efforts to address the climate emergency.

Working Group members will work with City staff to create new methods and strategies for the campaign and will complete their own contributions as well.

3. City Strategy Area(s)

The Storytelling Campaign will support all seven of the A²ZERO Strategies, as well as the city's strategies in Achieving Equitable Engagement in Ann Arbor (2023).

4. Commission Strategy Area(s)

3.2(d): To advise the City Council and City Administrator on sustainability policies and practices that affect the City or its residents, and ways to engage the public on sustainability matters and encourage public action to further City sustainability goals, including A²ZERO goals.

5. Work Group Deliverables

Completed storytelling plan and participation in at least two pieces of storytelling.

a. Out-of-Scope

- Programs, regulations, or incentives that are out of the control of the City of Ann Arbor
- Determining budget allocation

6. Meeting Frequency

To Be Determined by City Staff Co-Chair and Work Group Members

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Responsibilities
City Staff Co-Chair	Grace Franke, OSI Communications Coordinator	Advises the work group, helps set agendas and leads work group meetings.
Workgroup Co-Chair	TBD	Primary liaison for the Commission, keeps Commission informed of project progress and issues, helps set work group meeting agendas, coordinates work group meetings.
Work Group Members	TBD	Helps Chair move work forward.

8. Timeline

All work will aim to be completed by the May 2027 Sustainability Commission meeting, at which time the work group will present its findings.

Work Group 4: Offsets and Future Planning Work Group

1. Work Group Description

Offsets are a significant portion of A²ZERO and as we gear up to begin purchasing them, we'd like to engage with our community to understand their desires, needs, and aversions to offsets. This Sustainability Commission working group will help provide insights into the engagement plan around this work stream, including providing their thoughts to help shape the process and outcomes.

2. Problem(s) or Opportunity(ies) Addressed by Work Group

Our community has been doing a lot of work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, but a lot of additional work will be needed for many years into the future to fully eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. For the activities that we cannot currently reduce emissions from (e.g., due to a lack of technical, financial, legal feasibility), we can purchase carbon offsets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions outside of our community while we simultaneously continue our work to lower local emissions. Because greenhouse gases act the same way in the Earth's atmosphere, regardless of where they are produced, our community can purchase and retire renewable energy credits replacing fossil fuels to offset our own emissions as we work towards our target. Offsets are only used to close the greenhouse gas emissions gap between what we are able to do locally and what needs to be offset to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

While local offsets may or may not be feasible, the City wants to understand what values the public is looking for in offsets – not if we'll use them.

Offsets can be a very technical topic in the sustainability sector, with lots of jargon and assumed knowledge about carbon data and emissions calculations. In keeping with the community-led development of the A²ZERO plan, it is important that there is a feeling of transparency and buy in from residents as the City moves forward on purchasing offsets. The Working Group will help ensure communication about offsets is clear and the engagement process centers residents.

3. City Strategy Area(s)

A²ZERO 7: Offset Greenhouse Gas Emissions

4. Commission Strategy Area(s)

3.2(a): To advise the City Council and City Administrator on sustainability policies and practices that affect the City or its residents, and ways to engage the public on sustainability matters and encourage public action to further City sustainability goals, including A²ZERO goals.

5. Work Group Deliverables

Revised Offsets and Future Planning Work Plan and updates

a. Out-of-Scope

- Programs, regulations, or incentives that are out of the control of the City of Ann Arbor
- Determining budget allocations
- Choosing what offsets the city purchases

6. Frequency of Meetings

To Be Determined by City Staff Co-Chair and Work Group Members

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Name	Responsibilities
City Staff Co-Chair	OSI (TBD)	Advises the work group, helps set agendas and leads work group meetings.
Workgroup Co-Chair	TBD	Primary liaison for the Commission, keeps Commission informed of project progress and issues, helps set work group meeting agendas, coordinates work group meetings.
Work Group Members	TBD	Helps Chair move work forward.

8. Timeline

All work will aim to be completed by the December 2026 Sustainability Commission meeting, at which time the work group will present its findings.