

# Municipal Efforts to Reduce Waste Packaging

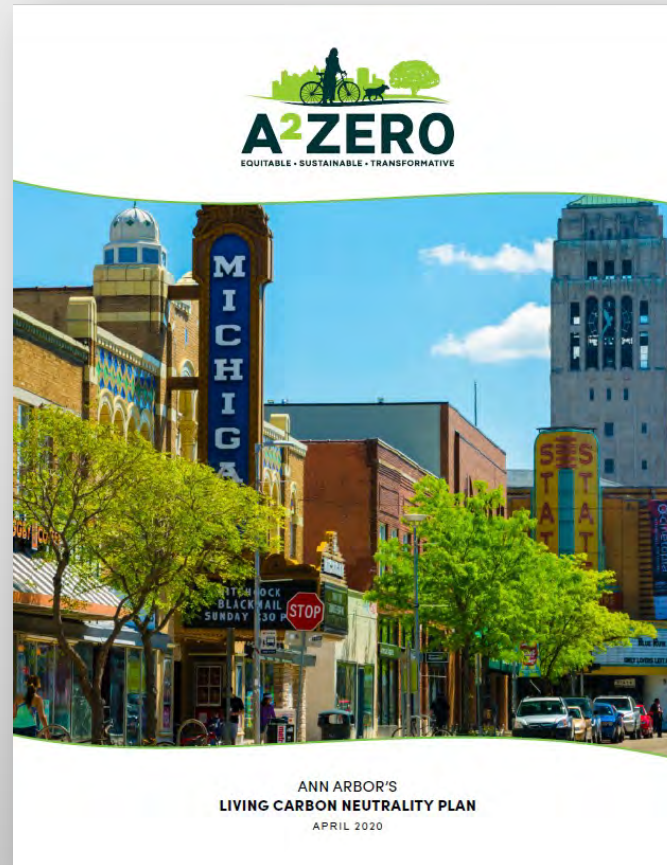

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*A case study from Ann Arbor, MI on promoting reusable packaging programs*

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Sustainability and Innovations

# Background

- A<sup>2</sup>ZERO – Ann Arbor’s living plan for achieving a just and equitable transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by the year 2030
- Strategy 5 – Change the way we use, reuse, and dispose of materials

**STRATEGY 5:**

**Change the Way We Use, Reuse, and Dispose of Materials**

This strategy focuses on changing our relationship with what we buy and use, how we buy and use materials, and how we dispose of materials once we are done using them. The calculations in this section only focus on the greenhouse gas savings associated with reducing the disposal of materials and products. City staff will continue working on a methodology to capture upstream emissions associated with extracting and creating the goods and materials we use. For now, however, upstream emissions are not included in calculations. To achieve this strategy, six specific actions have been identified:

1. Expand Composting Program
2. Expand Commercial Recycling
3. Require Sustainable Materials in New and Existing Developments
4. Move Toward a Circular Economy
5. Support a Plant Rich Diet
6. Enhance Refrigerant Recycling and Reuse Program

Combined, these six actions reduce baseline community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 0.3% and cost just over \$45,000,000.

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# Background

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- Zingerman's Delicatessen – Interest in sustainability; A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Collaborating Organization; pitched creating a returnable container program to OSI

*Zingerman's*®  
DELICATESSEN

# Background

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- Over 1.6 billion takeout containers used in the U.S. in 2020; most accumulate in landfills
- Reusable containers can typically be used up to 1,000 times, and are recyclable at the end of their lifespan
- Reuse promotes a circular economy

# Ann Arbor Reduce, Reuse, Return (A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>) Program - Pilot

- Zingerman's Delicatessen, El Harissa Market Café, Detroit Street Filling Station, Miss Kim
- Polypropylene containers
- Select take-out and delivery orders
- QR code directed to a form for customers to report returned containers for a discount



**Reusable Container Pilot Program**

For the month of June, select dishes in take-out and delivery orders will be served in reusable containers! Simply wash the container and return it to a participating restaurant in order to receive a discount on a future order!

**A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>**  
**REDUCE  
REUSE  
RETURN**

# Challenges

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- How do we encourage customers to return containers?
- How do we keep track of the containers that are in use?
- How do we source the containers as sustainably as possible?
- How do we expand the program to additional businesses?
- How do we extend the reach of the program to our community?



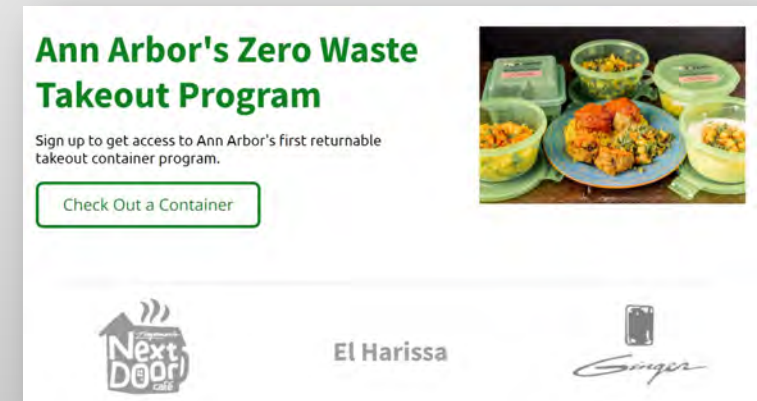
# Ann Arbor Reduce, Reuse, Return (A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>) Program

- Zingerman's Delicatessen, El Harissa Market Café, Ginger Deli, and more to come!
- Investigating partnerships with UM and Meals on Wheels
- US-made polypropylene containers



# Ann Arbor Reduce, Reuse, Return (A<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>) Program

- Membership program (free, with the potential to become a paid membership)
- Run by non-profit Live Zero Waste
- QR code directs to a website to sign up or to check out a container
- Promoted through community events





# Municipal Involvement

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- Program establishment
- Funding support
- Logistical support
- Staffing support
- Building and fostering connections



# Thank you!

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