



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: May 13, 2025

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Approved By: Gabe Engeland

Subject: Status Report on Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- ☐ Public Safety
- ☐ Business Communities
- ☐ Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- ☒ Environmental Sustainability
- ☐ Housing
- ☒ General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Receive status update regarding gas-powered leaf blower use within the City of Los Altos.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

May 9, 2023, June 27, 2023, and July 11, 2023.

BACKGROUND

On May 9, 2023, the City Council directed staff to take existing leaf blower regulations contained within the municipal code and create a standalone chapter for better visibility by the public. Staff were also directed to include assignment of liability to the property owner for issued violations. Additional direction was provided by the City Council for implementation of the Leaf Blower Regulations but did not necessitate amendments to the municipal code. The final ordinance was adopted by the City Council on July 11, 2023.

In November 2022, Los Altos Code Enforcement which was previously carried out by one (1) Community Services Officer (CSO) in the Police Department was transferred to the Development Services Department to be completed by a newly created Code Enforcement Officer position. The new Code Enforcement Officer in Development Services began enforcement effects on April 11, 2023.

ANALYSIS

1/1/2020 to 4/10/2023 (1,194 calendar days)

- Community Services Officer, Police Department
- 44 New Cases Opened (Leaf Blower Only)
- 30 Citations Issued/Paid

4/11/2023 to 12/31/2023 (365 calendar days)

- Code Enforcement Officer, Development Services Department
- 702 New Cases Opened (Leaf Blower Only)
- 18 Citations Issued/Paid

1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 (365 calendar days)

- Code Enforcement Officer, Development Services Department
- 480 New Cases Opened (Leaf Blower Only)
- 3 Citations Issued/Paid

1/1/2025 to 5/5/2025 (125 calendar days)

- Code Enforcement Officer, Development Services Department
- 90 New Cases Opened (Leaf Blower Only)
- 0 Citations Issued/Paid

4/11/2023 to 5/5/2025 (855 calendar days)

- Code Enforcement Officer, Development Services Department
- 1,272 New Cases Opened (Leaf Blower Only)
- 21 Citations Issued/Paid

Code Enforcement within the City of Los Altos was previously carried out by one (1) Community Services Officer (CSO) in the Police Department until November 2022 when enforcement of the Municipal Code was transferred to the Development Services Department. In April 2023, the City's new Code Enforcement Officer began working, and enforcing all applicable rules and regulations contained within the Los Altos Municipal Code. As outlined above, since Code Enforcement was moved to the Development Services Department cases opened within the City of Los Altos have increased exponentially.

For comparison purposes, the City of Los Altos has reached out to our partners in the City of Palo Alto to understand Code Enforcement activities as their approach to enforcement of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers is frequently referenced. For metric purposes, Palo Alto has approximately 66,000/population and just under 26 square miles, where Los Altos has approximately 30,000/population and just under 7 square miles. The following data was shared regarding Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers in the **City of Palo Alto since 2024:**

- Total complaints received: 1,063 unique cases
- Additional related complaints: 374 (duplicate cases at the same address)
- **Total complaint volume: 1,437**

- Educational warnings issued: 523
- **Citations issued: 4**
- Multiple Complaint Properties:
 - 5 properties received 10+ complaints
 - 18 properties received 5-9 complaints
 - 48 properties received 3-4 complaints
 - 129 properties received 2 complaints

DISCUSSION

Regulations regarding Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers are contained within Chapter 11.15 of the Los Altos Municipal Code. The following are contained within Chapter 11.15:

- Permitted Hours of Operation
 - Monday – Friday 7:00am to 7:00pm
 - Saturday – Sunday 8:00am to 7:00pm
- Violations
 - First Violation – Written Warning
 - Second Violation – \$100
 - Third Violation – \$200
 - Fourth Violation – \$500
- Assignment of Liability
 - Property Owner shall be cited for any violations

As directed by the City Council in 2023, the City of Los Altos Code Enforcement Division takes an education first approach. The adopted ordinance requires the Code Enforcement Officer to provide a written warning to a property owner regarding the use of a gas-powered leaf blower on their property. The formal written warning would be followed by progressive enforcement in the form of increased Administrative Citations. In order to receive an administrative citation for a violation of the Los Altos Municipal Code the violation must be seen by the citing officer. No photographs or video evidence of the use of a gas-powered leaf blower can substitute this requirement.

As discussed above, the City of Los Altos has opened 1,272 Code Enforcement cases that have been opened specifically for Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers; of those cases, all have received written warnings. The Code Enforcement Officer has reported that they have noticed multiple prior violators utilizing electric leaf blowers after receiving a written warning. The Code Enforcement Officer has acknowledged that the education first approach is not a perfect process and often repeat offences to occur, but progress has been made.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Adopted Ordinance