

To: Los Altos Environmental Commission
From : GreenTown Los Altos Clean Air Advocates
Date: August 8, 2022

Who We Are

We are GreenTown Los Altos volunteers who formed a group in January 2019 to address the issue of gas leaf blowers in our community. The ordinance prohibiting gas leaf blowers was added to the Los Altos Municipal Code in 1991 and yet they continue to be in use throughout the City. (Municipal Code 6.16.070 – Prohibited Acts Section B.15).

What We Have Accomplished

We launched a public education campaign which is continuing.

- We created handouts for homeowners and notices for landscape workers which inform them of the gas leaf blower prohibition and fines for citations and which educate about the environmental effects and health hazards of gas leaf blowers. Volunteers have distributed over 800 of these flyers.

(See them and other resources on the GreenTown website: greentownlosaltos.org/gas-leaf-blowers.)

-Members of our group authored articles, letters-to-the editor, and opinion pieces in the Town Crier and the monthly GreenTown newsletter. Also, we have been active in conversations on Nextdoor.

-We applied for a \$25,000 grant from Bay Area Air Quality Management District for a gas/electric leaf blower exchange, but did not receive the grant.

-We met several times with Los Altos Police Code Enforcement, hired in March 2019, and with other officers and Chief of Police Galea.

-We partnered with Los Altos Hardware for an electric leaf blower promotion.

Where We Are Now

Complaint calls received by Los Altos Police concerning gas leaf blower violations:

2019: 403

2020: 478

2021: 384

Number of gas leaf blower citations issued:

2018: 12

2019: 40 (the first year of our Clean Air Advocate activities)

2020: 13

2021: 7

Why We Need to Curtail the Use of Gas Leaf Blowers

The use of gas leaf blowers adversely impacts community health and welfare.

Gas leaf blowers generate high noise levels which disrupt neighborhood tranquility, disturb residents, workers, and visitors, and thereby degrade the quality of life in Los Altos.

Gas leaf blowers generate significant amounts of toxic emissions which contribute to air pollution, thereby intensifying climate change.

The use of gas leaf blowers increases the volume of particulate matter in the air and thereby exacerbates allergies and respiratory ailments.

Despite the Los Altos Municipal Code Ordinance prohibiting gas leaf blowers and our years of public education, the use of gas leaf blowers has persisted to the community's detriment.

How to Curtail the Use of Gas Leaf Blowers

The persistence of this unlawful activity necessitates the adoption of more stringent measures, including holding business and property owners responsible for the illegal use of leaf blowers on their property.

In Los Altos, the operator of the blower receives the citation. We have researched gas leaf blower prohibitions in other cities and learned that when the homeowner is fined for a violation, enforcement is more effective. Some of the other cities that fine the property owner are Palo Alto, Cupertino, Saratoga, Menlo Park (in study session), Santa Monica, Laguna Beach, Redondo Beach.

We urge the Environmental Commission to support the efforts of the GreenTown Los Altos Clean Air Advocates by signing the attached statement.

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