

Ryan Osada

From: Steve Burns
Sent: Friday, July 7, 2023 8:41 AM
To: Council
Subject: Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Brief
Attachments: Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Brief - Open House and Survey Results.docx; Leaf Blower Written Comments.pdf; Leaf Blower Open House Comment Cards.pdf; Seattle Resolution Leaf Blowers.pdf; Kirkland Resolution Leaf Blower.pdf

Mayor and Councilmembers –

I wanted to provide you with the Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Brief that will be covered during City Business at the Monday, July 10, 2023, Medina Council Meeting.

I have included copies of the comment cards from the open house, citizen comments received by staff, and the resolutions passed by Seattle and Kirkland.

This information will be included in the Council Packet.

If you have any questions or comments, please let me know.

Steve

Stephen R. Burns
City Manager - City of Medina
501 Evergreen Point Road
Medina, WA 98039
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sburns@medina-wa.gov



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CITY OF MEDINA

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Date: July 3, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Stephen R. Burns, City Manager

Subject: Gas-Powered Leaf Blower

The Medina City Council provided City Staff with direction to provide residents with educational material regarding the hazards of gas-powered leaf blowers while soliciting feedback from residents about possible restrictions on gas-powered leaf blowers. This brief is an update to the Council regarding this topic.

CITY STAFF ACTIONS

Education

In March 2023, City Staff created an education page on Engage Medina to provide information to residents about the hazards of gas-powered leaf blowers. The page is located at <https://engagemedina.com/gas-powered-leaf-blowers>.

Open House

The City hosted an Open House on Thursday, May 11, 2023, to solicit feedback from residents and professional landscapers about possible restrictions for gas-powered leaf blowers. Over 15 people showed up and spoke to staff about their concerns. Most filled out comment cards which are included at the end of this brief.

Written Feedback/Input

During this process, City staff received several written recommendations and comments from residents and businesses. These have been included in this report.

Survey

A citywide survey was sent out in June to solicit additional feedback from residents regarding gas-powered leaf blowers. The survey was sent out both electronically and through the United States Postal Service.

With sincere appreciation to Councilmember Gokul for her help in putting together the survey, the questions that were asked include:

1. Gas-powered leaf blowers cause both noise and air pollution. What aspect of leaf blowers most concerns you?
 - a. Noise
 - b. Pollution
 - c. Nothing
 - d. Other, please specify.
2. If you had to select a gas-powered or electric leaf blower, what would you pick?
 - a. Gas-Powered
 - b. Electric
 - c. None
3. Medina Municipal Code reads that “professional yard maintenance and landscaping may take place only between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturdays, professional yard maintenance and landscaping may occur between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No such work is allowed on Sundays or legal holidays.”

Do you find the code to be effective?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If no, why?
4. Would you favor further restrictions on hours of operation for leaf blowers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers Survey Results

231 mailed in postcards received.

1. Gas-powered leaf blowers cause both noise and air pollution. What aspect of leaf blowers most concerns you?

Noise	Pollution	Nothing	Other
122	70	67	Length of time they blow. Frequency. Health hazard. What professional landscapers rely on. Blows away debris – Not picked up and removed. Hours and duration.

2. If you had to select a gas-powered or electric leaf blower, what would you pick?

Gas-Powered	Electric	None
54	142	17

3. Medina Municipal Code reads that “professional yard maintenance and landscaping may take place only between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturdays, professional yard maintenance and landscaping may occur between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No such work is allowed on Sundays or legal holidays.”

Do you find the code to be effective?

Yes	No	If no, why?
127	81	Yard work and construction takes place 7 days a week. Should be no noise on Saturdays. Yard work on holidays. Work is done on Sundays. Could we amend to only allow quiet work before 8 AM? People don't follow the code. Code should also apply to homeowners. Too much noise. Why can't professional yard works use a brush or rake? Too much noise. Minimize hours of use. Not enforced. People don't know about it.

		No enforcement mechanism other than calling the police. 7 AM is too early. Never on Sunday. Window is too long. Commercial should be limited to weekdays. Too early for gas blowers. No Sundays is remnant on the past. Some work longer. Golf course maintenance begins at 6 AM. No enforcement. People violate it. Could shorten hours. Needs enforcement on weekends. Ignored by landscapers.
--	--	---

4. Would you favor further restrictions on hours of operation for leaf blowers?

Yes	No
104	96

Additional comments:

- Please enforce decibel code.
- Favor banning leaf blowers.
- There should be no noise on Saturdays.
- Sunday ban harms Medina residents.
- Impacts climate change.
- Ban on Saturdays too.
- Limit noise 9:00 am to 5 pm six days a week.
- Wait a couple of years for electric to improve – not yet as capable as gas.
- Add weed whacker.
- Change code from 7 AM to 8 AM.
- Any work with noisy machines should be between 9 AM and 5 PM, not on weekends.
- Sundays are noisy with homeowners using gas blowers.
- Only favor restriction on hours if against the homeowners, not the contractors.
- There should be strict enforcement 8 AM – 5 PM except Sun and holidays.
- Gas-powered for landscapers and electric for homeowners.
- Ban blowing into the street.
- Isn't it a hardship for landscapers to require them to buy new equipment?
- Yard crews keep our neighborhoods beautiful. We should not make their jobs harder.
- 7:00 am is too early. 8:00 am is more tolerable.
- Medina homeowners should have the right to work on their yards on Sunday.
- Focus attention on other matters.

- End hours during the week by 6 PM.
- Maintenance professionals need gas blowers.

NOTE: Council can review each individual survey response at City Hall, if requested.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

There are several options for Council to consider on gas-powered leaf blowers. Below are a few options to consider:

Option 1: Council could not act and wait until either King County or the State of Washington pass legislation banning gas-powered leaf blowers.

Option 2: Council could refer to the Planning Commission by providing specific guidance to review and provide recommendations regarding gas-powered leaf blowers.

Option 3: Council could direct staff to prepare a resolution like other jurisdictions which could include the following items:

- Recommend or require Medina City Public Works to replace gas-powered leaf blowers with electric or battery operated within a time period or when phasing out old equipment.
- Encourage residents and businesses to voluntarily replace gas-powered equipment with electric or battery operated.

Option 4: Council could reduce the hours of leaf blower use through updating the code.

Option 5: Council could pass an ordinance to ban gas-powered leaf blowers.

Existing Medina Code Sections

As a reference, the current MMC language regarding landscaping hours for professional and residential use.

8.06.160. - Work hours for commercial construction and development activities and professional yard maintenance and landscaping.

A. *General.* Commercial construction and development activities and professional yard maintenance and landscaping may take place only between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturdays, commercial construction and development activities may occur between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and professional yard maintenance and landscaping may occur between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No such work is allowed on Sundays or legal holidays set forth in RCW 1.16.050(1).

8.06.140. - Exemptions—Sounds exempt during daylight hours.

The following sounds are exempt from this chapter between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekdays, and between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekends, unless different hours are specified:

- A. Sounds created by bells, chimes, or carillons not operating for more than five minutes during any one-hour time frame;
- B. Sounds created by blasting, provided their operations are between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, and between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.
- C. Sounds originating from lawful pickets, marches, parades, rallies, and other similar public events.
- D. Sounds created by powered equipment when used by a resident or by the Overlake Golf and Country Club for the temporary or periodic maintenance or repair of their property or its appurtenances, including lawnmowers, leaf blowers, powered hand tools, and snow-removal equipment, provided such use is between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays and between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekends.
- E. Sounds originating from the required testing of emergency equipment such as generators.

Attachments:

- 1. Open House Comment Cards
- 2. Written feedback, input, and comments
- 3. Gas-powered Leaf Blower Resolutions from the City of Seattle and the City of Kirkland



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: Cathy Bauler DATE: 5/11/2023

Email oakleafproductions@msn.com

Comments: _____

Buy a rake!!!!
Seriously, it's so loud all day
every week day.

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscaper:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Company Name: _____

Contact: _____



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: Steven Breyer DATE: 5/11/2023

Email steven_breyer@hotmail.com

Comments: First step should be for Medina Public
Works to switch to electric, including mowers.
Should have a total ban on all equipment that
phases in over 3-5 years to allow residents
and landscape companies to more easily transition.
Should provide report to Council + Residents on

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscape:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Company Name: _____

Contact: _____

expected incremental costs.

Perhaps provide charging facility that gardeners can use for their equipment (with sign-up to avoid extra traffic) - at Medina Parks Maintenance Facility.

Ensure

that Medina Nursery, Chevron, and Overlake (and any other businesses) are included in any restrictions.

Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: MICHAEL HIGGINS DATE: _____

Email: MHIGGINS2003@MSN.COM

Comments: I WOULD LIKE TO SEE GAS
BLOWERS EITHER ELIMINATED
OR EXTREMELY RESTRICTED

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscaper:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Company Name: _____

Contact: 425 450 4045



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: Ching-Pi Wang DATE: May 11, 2023

Email: chatcolet@gmail.com

Comments: Request an exemption for home-
owner use of gas-powered blowers.

Homeowner to use during reasonable
work hours. Any future resolution, code,
ordinance should allow for homeowner
use.

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscaper:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Company Name: _____

Contact: _____



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: Daniel Lipkie DATE: 5/11/23

Email: daniel.lipkie@outlook.com

Comments: Gas-No Electric yes- We have
landscapers that use electric- but multiple
neighbors that don't. The sound & smell are
the reasons we prefer electric

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscaper: ~~Britscope~~ ~~Britscope~~ ~~Britscope~~

Yes ☒ No ☒ NO

Company Name: Britscope

Contact: _____



Comment Card: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

NAME: Roberta Goodnow DATE: 5/11/23

Email roberta.goodnow@outlook.com

Comments: I realize homeowners need to have their
yards maintained, however, the gas-powered
blowers are so loud! I would like to be able to
walk without hearing the gas-powered ones.

Every Friday, I hear a gas-powered blower nearby
our home for a couple hours & I'm inside our house --
we move our activities to the other side of our house
indoors during that time.

Resident:

Yes ☒ No ☐

Landscaper:

Yes ☐ No ☒

Company Name: _____

Contact: _____

Steve Burns

Subject: FW: Gas Blowers

From: Alex Morcos <alexmorcos@hotmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 10:42 AM

To: Aimee Kellerman <akellerman@medina-wa.gov>

Cc: Steve Burns <Sburns@medina-wa.gov>; Steve Wilcox <swilcox@medina-wa.gov>; Ryan Osada <rosada@medina-wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Gas Blowers

Thank you Aimee. I registered at the Engage Medina site that you suggested.

As for my comments regarding gas powered leaf-blowers, please consider this as my input on the subject (which was also discussed numerous times when I was on council).

"Medina is a Sylvan City that puts a lot of emphasis on green spaces and protecting trees. As a result, it is a collection of mostly large properties with an expansive amount of grass, shrubs, green spaces, and trees. It is of high importance to most Medina residents that their properties are well-maintained, whether through mowing grass, pruning trees and bushes, or removing landscape debris resulting from trimming or just naturally falling leaves. Raking leaves manually is impractical and close to impossible in many large properties. Thus, the use of leaf-blowers is necessary. Banning leaf-blowers, like a very small number of cities have attempted to enforce around the country, is not reasonable or realistic. A compromise can be achieved that would satisfy most residents. Some gas-powered leaf-blowers are noisy and produce noxious gases. Yet many newer models are built with environmental considerations in mind. What I would propose is a collection of ideas that can make the city a more enjoyable place while still allowing residents to manage their lawns by themselves or with the help of landscape professionals.

1. Since leaf blowing mostly occurs AFTER landscapers or homeowners have trimmed and mowed their lawns, it is acceptable to restrict any leaf blowers not to be used earlier than 9 am. Other types of construction as well as lawn mowing and pruning can still happen after 7 am weekdays based on the current MMC. Just leaf blowers to be restricted to after 9 am.
2. Consider a code revision that regulates the decibel rating on leaf blowers not to exceed 70 dBA. There are gas-powered leaf blowers like the Echo PB-255LN at a noise rating of 64 dBA. A 70 dBA maximum is reasonable and results in the noise at a neighboring property to be in the 60 dBA range, not much louder than existing AC units and generators.
3. If item 2 (restricting the dBA rating) was to be applied, allow for a couple of years' notice to permit landscapers and homeowners to plan accordingly at replacing their existing machines.
4. Recommend but do not enforce only battery-powered leaf-blowers; current technology may not have the necessary blowing power when using a battery-operated leaf blower compared to gas models, not to mention the shorter lifetime due to battery charges. Battery-powered leaf blowers may be reasonable to use on small properties such as properties in the R16 zones, but remember that Medina includes R20 and R30 zones with properties larger than 20,000 SF and 30,000 SF respectively which makes a battery-powered leaf blower quite an inconvenience."

Thank you all for your good work at the city.

Alex Morcos

Steve Burns

From: Bruce Freed <bruce.freed@me.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 6:39 AM
To: Steve Burns
Subject: Re: blowers

Good morning Steve—thanks for the reply. Just in to be clear...chainsaws, weed eaters, mowers large and small, power hedgers, blowers, bobcats, small tractors, etc.... They all pollute via air and noise. The tool you choose to fit your narrative was the blower. So you convince the public that if we can eliminate the blower air and sound quality will improve. The only problem I see isthe problem..the blower....the answer is banning...so the desired result will follow. The desired result of clearer air....doesn't seem to have any documentation to support the case. You were unable to produce a single example of improved air quality to any city who has banned the gas power blower. Actually you have proved the blower is not the problem we thought it was otherwise the evidence would be obvious. I agree the electric blower is somewhat quieter but, not as effective. So really as far as banning a gas blower it is not really a game changer for any city unless the desired result was to "feel better" about the cause/narrative. Please remember I have no real opposition to electric cars and equipment but, I am also think if you are going to ask the greenest industry to make such a large change you should have solid reasons.

Speaking of offsets...can you think of an industry...gardening and landscape...which is the job of planting trees and shrubs not to mention the care of the greenery in the community. Interesting..... Thanks, Bruce Freed

Bruce Freed
bruce.freed@me.com

On Apr 24, 2023, at 3:33 PM, Steve Burns <Sburns@medina-wa.gov> wrote:

Bruce –

You asked a great question, and I cannot find any scientific studies that have compared pre-gas powered leaf blower bans versus post ban.

There are a lot of studies that identify gas-powered leaf blower hazards for noise and air pollution.

I will continue to search and if I find one, I will let you know.

Thanks, Steve

Stephen R. Burns
City Manager - City of Medina
501 Evergreen Point Road
Medina, WA 98039
Office (425) 233-6412
Cell (206) 510-7942
sburns@medina-wa.gov

<image001.png>

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From: Bruce Freed <bruce.freed@me.com>
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 8:28 AM
To: Steve Burns <Sburns@medina-wa.gov>
Subject: blowers

Is there any study that shows air pollution has vastly improved due to the banning of leaf blowers in that city for which they were banned??? After all I read it is low hanging fruit....so I assume there is plenty of documentation which influences the decision making. So for example the city of Del Mar is now experiencing much better air quality because they have banned leaf blowers. Thanks, Bruce Freed

Bruce Freed
bruce.freed@me.com

Steve Burns

From: Huan Bui <cardiper@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 10, 2023 7:16 PM
To: Steve Burns
Subject: swilcox@medina-wa.gov, rosada@medina-wa.gov

Dear Council Members,

I understand you are to discuss on banning gas-powered leaf blowers within the City of Medina to reduce air emissions and noise pollution. Base on those reasons, some may argue a ban on all ICE vehicles is more effective but is a much harder task. Also, the most effective ban of any products that deems harmful or unfriendly to the enviroment is to ban from its source.

It should have a grand father clause for those residents who had own one prior to this proposal as similar to others jurisdiction in the article attached.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Huan Bui



Gas leaf blowers and lawn mowers
are shockingly bad for the planet.
Bans are beginning to spread.
USA TODAY

Steve Burns

From: Allison Frey <awfrey@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 9:46 AM
To: Steve Burns
Subject: Fwd: Survey - Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers in Medina

Hi there. Just took this but am uncomfortable with the unintended consequences of asking maintenance and yard people, whose margins are already slim, to make capital investments to accommodate our community. Also, it's a bit of hypocrisy to ask external maintenance crews to give up the gas when our parks team is booping around on loud, gas powered atvs.

Is there an opportunity for a buy-back program thru the city where landscapers could trade in their gas blowers for cash or electric ones?

My two cents (that I couldn't put into the survey)

A

Begin forwarded message:

From: City of Medina <wamedina@service.govdelivery.com>
Date: May 30, 2023 at 8:02:59 AM PDT
To: awfrey@yahoo.com
Subject: Survey - Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers in Medina
Reply-To: wamedina@service.govdelivery.com



Steve Burns

From: Doug Hutson <airbear1@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 9:55 AM
To: Steve Burns
Subject: Gas blower survey

Good morning Steve,

I just took the gas powered blower survey and found that it was very minimal in allowing me to express my ideas on the subject. Can you explain what your role in this policy will be going forward? I intend to comm w/ the council as well, but wanted to touch base with you.

I am strongly opposed to a ban. I fully understand opposition to the blowers, I also wish I didn't have to hear them as often as I do in the forest I live in. However, by far the biggest maintenance issue I have at my residence is cleaning the CONSTANT debris that my trees drop onto my roof, gutters, and grounds. Gas powered blowers are the only thing that make it bearable. I don't believe that electric will prove adequate to the task.

Finally, I wish to point out the incongruence of the City's policy and tree code which severely restricts tree removal, but then would not allow homeowners the means to deal with their effects in a reasonable manner. It really seems to me that the City cannot have it both ways.

Much thanks,
Doug Hutson
101 Overlake Dr E

To Medina City Council Members:

A Public Comments on Leaf Blower Regulation:

The leaf blower survey was missing several critical questions. If the City really wanted resident's input on blower regulations, the survey should have asked, do you support the city's efforts to ban leaf blowers? Then list the alternatives and ask residents to show their preferences. Based on the rather random questions on the survey, it appears that the survey purpose is simply so that the City could "say" it sent out a survey that informed their regulations.

The city webpage on Leaf Blower regulation does not have information about the environmental impact of electric blowers, how much noise electric blowers make and the *cumulative* noise impacts of electric blowers since they take longer to do the job. It also lacks information on the impact of gas powered leaf blower regulation on the cost to yard service companies, the decrease of yard service company availability in cities that have banned leaf blowers and the increase in price for yard services in cities that enacted bans. The City and council members have an obligation to understand all the consequences before making a decision.

The City's webpage on leaf blowers lacks information on what their phased approach to banning is. That information should be clearly available so that residents can comment on it and it should have been included in the survey.

I would encourage the City Council members to understand all the consequences of a gas powered leaf blower ban. In order to stay in business, smaller yard service companies and family run companies will likely take their services elsewhere where they can complete enough jobs per day to stay in business and not increase their overhead by having to purchase multiple electric blowers to get them through the day (batteries don't last all day). This will increase the cost of yard service, which for some is not an issue but is a problem for the fixed income crowd living. Blower noise may end up being more extensive as it just takes longer to do a job with an electric blower. I do wonder if the City feels strong enough about banning gas powered blowers because of their noise and environmental impact, why wouldn't you also ban gas powered boats, power washers, lawn mowers, chain saws, hedge trimmers and edgers? Or does the City just want to ban gas powered leaf blowers for the optics?

Of course the city should work to encourage companies and individuals to voluntarily move to equipment that is less impactful to the environment as the technology improves and becomes available. No argument there. Through education, publications, the press's focus on climate impacts and better electric technology, the industry already is and will naturally migrate to cleaner tools. In the meantime, appropriate regulations on hours of use helps limit the noise. In addition, any individual resident could purchase an electric blower for themselves and for the landscapers that work at their home. This allows those that have the means and desire to start the migration to do so, while allowing those without the means to do it later as they naturally need to replace equipment. Forcing the issue through city regulation is not necessary.

Unfortunately because of the likelihood of being "cancelled" by a few of the more vocal residents in our community, I am not comfortable signing my name. I wonder how many others feel the same way!

Sincerely,

A Medina Resident

Steve Burns

From: Stephie Borgförd <borgfords@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 25, 2023 5:14 PM
To: Steve Burns
Subject: Gas powered leaf blowers

Dear City Manager Burns,

My name is Stephenie Borgford and I live at 7841 NE Tenth St here in Medina. I have lived here since 1975 and my parents, Richard and Sheryl lived here since the early 70s when my grandfather purchased this property at an estate auction.

In your introduction on Medina's page you write "I want to welcome you to the City of Medina – a tremendous place to live, play, and work." Unfortunately, this statement reflects the Medina I knew ten some years ago but is not reflective of today. One of the main reasons I state this is that gas powered blowers have made for an absolute miserable existence here in Medina ruining the special feel of this city.. From dawn to dusk, there is hardly a quiet moment here as there is always the LOUD noise from gas powered blowers. They make living in this beautiful area hell honestly.

For the past two years I have been mainly residing in Eastern Europe and I can safely say that even in giant dirty polluted cities like Bucharest in the center, it is quieter than Medina. In the past two years I have stayed at literally hundreds of different places, from small houses on islands in Croatia to hotels in wartime Kyiv and in some of Eastern Europe's biggest cities and I can safely say none of those places have had the absolute horribly intrusive noise of these gas powered blowers.

I have written the council quite often. I have made my view known. In fact, this is honestly one main reason I chose to live elsewhere for the majority of the year. The noise is so bad, it's not worth staying here for a long period of time. I find this sad as my property used to be peaceful.

Big cities like Vancouver BC, Washington DC and the entire state of California have all banned these. I fail to understand why medina cannot act. The time for talking and input is over!! At what point does this start to affect home values? Who wants to purchase a 4 million dollar home only to hear blowers all day???? I would be disappointed if I were a buyer.

This situation is unbearable, unacceptable and cannot continue. It will only get worse. Action is needed. Words won't make this area more peaceful.

I am looking forward to returning to Bucharest and Chişinău, Republic of Moldova where I can enjoy tranquility!!! Who would imagine a person would say Romania and moldova are more peaceful but they are.

I hope someday the city will act responsibly and put an end to this nightmare. Thank you for your attention. Sincerely,

Stephenie A. Borgford

--

Stephenie Borgford

RESOLUTION R-5585

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND
AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO IMPLEMENT AN ELECTRIC LEAF
BLOWER INITIATIVE TO TRANSITION THE CITY'S GAS-POWERED
HAND-HELD AND BACKPACK LEAF BLOWERS TO ELECTRIC,
ADMINISTER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO SUPPORT PRIVATE SECTOR
AND RESIDENT EQUIPMENT CONVERSION, AND EXPLORE
LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT USE OF GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS IN
THE CITY OF KIRKLAND BY DECEMBER 31, 2025.

1 WHEREAS, the Kirkland City Council has prioritized preserving
2 the environment by adopting the 2023-2024 Council Sustainable
3 Environment goal to "Protect our natural environment through
4 sustainable goals and practices to meet the needs of community
5 members for a healthy environment and clean energy without
6 compromising the needs of future generations"; and
7

8 WHEREAS, on December 8, 2020 the Council adopted Resolution
9 R-5457 approving Kirkland's Sustainability Master Plan which establishes
10 environmental goals for the City and 200 actions including SG-1.10, "the
11 City will explore [the] reduction of or elimination of gas-powered
12 landscaping equipment in City operations"; and
13

14 WHEREAS, on February 21, 2023 the Council adopted Resolution
15 R-5578, adopting the 2023-2024 City Work Program, including a work
16 plan item to "prioritize and continue to fund Sustainability Master Plan
17 actions to further equity, energy efficiency, public health, and a clean
18 energy economy that promotes a sustainable and resilient environment
19 to further the Sustainable Environment goal"; and
20

21 WHEREAS, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in
22 2020, the City has received a high volume of noise complaints about
23 leaf blowers, and responding to these complaints was a key factor
24 prompting exploration of this initiative; and
25

26 WHEREAS, the Council included \$500,000 in American Rescue
27 Plan Act Funds in the adopted 2023-2024 budget to support
28 transitioning the City's equipment to all electric leaf blowers and
29 incentives for private sector and resident conversion; and
30

31 WHEREAS, initial research shows that current electric leaf blower
32 models produce similar noise levels to gas powered leaf blowers, but
33 that electric motors have more potential to reduce noise pollution and
34 electric leaf blower technology is anticipated to improve in the coming
35 years; and
36

37 WHEREAS, research also shows gas-powered equipment has
38 negative health impacts on operators and negative environmental
39 impacts from extracting natural resources and burning fossil fuels that
40 contribute to climate change; and

41 WHEREAS, this initiative would impact landscaping businesses
42 who are often small operations owned by culturally diverse members of
43 the community and who are also disproportionately exposed to
44 emissions at a higher rate than other community members; and
45

46 WHEREAS, providing financial incentives to support Kirkland
47 businesses through the transition will be important to maximizing the
48 benefit of offering an electric landscaping service to Kirkland clients and
49 reduce any associated burdens, especially on small businesses; and
50

51 WHEREAS, similar financial incentives may be strategic to
52 encourage adoption of electric equipment among Kirkland residents and
53 support community members that may be experiencing economic
54 constraints in making the transition; and
55

56 WHEREAS, research also shows an environmental trade-off by
57 converting to electric equipment, where the mining, extraction,
58 production, and recycling processes for batteries also causes significant
59 environmental harm; and
60

61 WHEREAS, acknowledging this complexity, policymakers around
62 the country are still choosing to act to reduce emissions, and potentially
63 noise pollution, in their communities and protect health and safety of
64 users by sunseting gas-powered equipment including in Washington
65 D.C., California, Multnomah County, Seattle, and other cities in the
66 Puget Sound region; and
67

68 WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature has considered
69 legislation in the past to incentivize purchase of electric equipment
70 through financial incentives and although the bills presented did not
71 pass out of the legislature, Kirkland's legislative delegation has
72 expressed that future action is likely; and
73

74 WHEREAS, the Electric Leaf Blower Initiative positions Kirkland
75 to be proactive and effective in anticipation of potential future State
76 decisions to sunset gas-powered equipment, in addition to reducing
77 emissions in Kirkland and protecting health of users; and
78

79 WHEREAS, the City's Parks and Community Services and Public
80 Works Departments have already purchased and use a combined total
81 of 18 electric leaf blowers and actively consider electric options when
82 the nearly 70 gas-powered leaf blowers in the fleet reach the end of
83 their useful life; and
84

85 WHEREAS, in early 2023 the City Manager met with staff from
86 the City's Parks and Community Services and Public Works Departments
87 and hosted a focus group with Kirkland landscaping businesses to learn
88 what impacts a transition to all electric equipment would have and how
89 to work together to make this initiative a success; and
90

91 WHEREAS, City staff met with staff from the Kirkland
92 Congressional delegation to discuss opportunities for funding and
93 partnerships and there was expressed support for the initiative and
94 interest in identifying collaboration opportunities in the future; and

WHEREAS, staff gathered key insights from the stakeholder engagement and incorporated the opportunities and key challenges into the proposed Electric Leaf Blower Initiative three-phased approach, including key milestones set forth in this Resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Kirkland as follows:

Section 1. The City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to implement an electric leaf blower initiative that would achieve the following goals:

- a. Sunset the use of gas-powered hand-held and backpack leaf blowers in Kirkland by a target date of December 31, 2025
- b. Reduce negative health impacts caused by emissions from gas-powered leaf blowers
- c. Ensure a responsive transition to electric leaf blowers that reduces the burden and maximizes the potential benefit to Kirkland landscaping businesses and residents
- d. Be proactive in anticipation of potential State decisions to sunset gas-powered equipment
- e. Develop mechanisms to effectively improve enforcement of existing city noise regulations (KMC 11.84A.070 and KZC 115.95) on all uses of gas- and electric-powered landscaping equipment to provide relief to residents prior to conversion or technological improvements

Section 2. The initiative shall develop strategies to address challenges identified throughout initial stakeholder engagement, including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Electric equipment is heavier than gas-powered equipment and with extended use, may create an ergonomics concern for users
- b. Limited availability of powerful, commercial-grade electric equipment currently available on the market.
- c. The potential impact of less powerful equipment on length of operations and service levels and the potential increase in costs to businesses and customers.
- d. Ethical disposal process for functioning gas-powered equipment.
- e. Ensuring sufficient charging infrastructure and exploration of alternative energy sources to charge equipment.
- f. Noise pollution produced by electric leaf blowers.
- g. Batter related challenges such as high acquisition cost for the quantity needed per day, concerns around the disposal/recycling process, less reliability in cold temperatures, and need for mobile recharging options that do not rely on gas-powered generators.
- h. Consideration of expanding the scope of the initiative or identify opportunities for future initiatives to address other gas-powered landscaping equipment or gas-powered equipment more broadly, should stakeholder and regional engagement and other learnings suggest opportunity for pragmatic scope expansion.
- i. Effectiveness and equity concerns with enforcement of a potential ordinance sunsetting gas-powered equipment, including enforcement plan options for future Council consideration.
- j. Minimize potential disruption to equipment replacement cycles for businesses and the City.

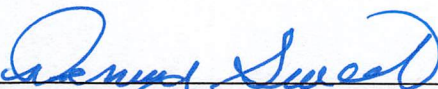
- k. Providing financial incentives to support of the transition of landscaping operations.
- l. Providing financial incentives, especially for low- and moderate-income residents, to support the transition of household equipment.
- m. Explore potential regional collaboration for the transition.
- n. Consider supporting County or State-wide action to transition to electric leaf blowers as part of the City of Kirkland legislative agenda.
- o. Evaluate any potential City budget implications that may result from changing service levels by using electric equipment.

Section 3. The City Manager is further authorized and directed to deploy a three-phased approach with key target milestones to accomplish the Initiative's goals. The City Manager may propose changes to these milestones based on new information, learnings, and opportunities:

- a. 2023: City pilots, evaluates, develops, and begins implementing a transition plan for the City's equipment; engages federal and state officials in support of the initiative; and initiates outreach to regional partners and key stakeholders in the community including, but not limited to, the Lake Washington Institute for Technology Horticulture Program, Quiet Clean Kirkland, the Washington State Nursery and Landscaping Association, and the Lake Washington School District; and deploys any Council approved improved enforcement of noise regulations to provide immediate relief to residents.
- b. 2024: City implements financial incentive programs to support private sector and resident transition to electric equipment; continues City transition and stakeholder engagement; and deploys an educational and information campaign for Kirkland residential households and businesses.
- c. 2025: Propose an ordinance for Council consideration sunsetting hand-held and backpack gas-powered equipment city-wide while continuing City, business, and resident transitions.

Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting this 18th day of April, 2023.

Signed in authentication thereof this 18th day of April, 2023.


Penny Sweet, Mayor

Attest:


Kathi Anderson, City Clerk

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____ 32064

A RESOLUTION declaring the City Council’s intent to phase out gas-powered leaf blowers; establishing goals and identifying actions to meet these goals.

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (“City”) has the authority to adopt policies to protect and promote public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the City Council (“Council”) adopted Statement of Legislative Intent OSE-003-B-001 requesting that City departments develop a plan to phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Seattle within two years and submit this plan to the Council by September 2, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Council is seeking to reinforce and elevate this request through this resolution by establishing goals and articulating specific actions the City should take to gradually phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the City’s Department of Planning and Development (now the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections) considered strategies to reduce or eliminate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in their response to Statement of Legislative Intent SLI 70-1-A-1 and recommended no new regulations or changes to City practices due to the lack of equivalent electric alternatives and other considerations at that time; and

WHEREAS, since then, new data have revealed more of the environmental and public health impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers; electric leaf blowers technology has improved; and other jurisdictions have moved to eliminate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers; and

WHEREAS, gas-powered leaf blowers most commonly have two-stroke internal combustion engines that incompletely combust their fuel, resulting in the emission of toxic and

1 carcinogenic substances, such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic
2 compounds, which contribute to the formation of ozone, smog, and acid rain; and

3 WHEREAS, best available data indicate that the use of gas-powered leaf blowers can cause
4 direct harm to people within the vicinity by contributing to localized air pollution,
5 creating excessive noise, and causing other negative health impacts to their operators,
6 who disproportionately identify as Latinx or Hispanic (46 percent) relative to overall
7 workplace demographics (18 percent); and

8 WHEREAS, operating a leaf blower results in particulate matter lifting into the air, which has
9 been shown to degrade localized air quality by increasing coarse and fine particles by
10 more than 60 percent relative to ambient air, and the smallest particles can remain in the
11 air for up to a week; and

12 WHEREAS, studies from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicate
13 that fugitive dust (i.e., particulate matter) and exhaust emissions from gas-powered leaf
14 blowers can pose significant health risks to operators and the public, including
15 “cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions,
16 premature death, and effects on prenatal development”; and

17 WHEREAS, gas-powered leaf blowers with two-stroke engines emit particularly low-frequency
18 sound waves, including ultra-low frequency, which cause the sounds to travel longer
19 distances and more easily penetrate walls and other barriers, magnifying the impacts of
20 nuisance noise; and

21 WHEREAS, the California Air Resources Board determined that operators of gas-powered leaf
22 blowers may be exposed to an average sound of 88–101.3 decibels (dBs), which exceeds
23 acceptable thresholds set by the World Health Organization, the United States

1 Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Washington
2 State; and

3 WHEREAS, regular exposure to sound levels higher than 70 dBS can cause hearing damage and
4 loss to operators, and studies have shown that high environmental noise pollution can
5 contribute to the incidence of arterial hypertension, myocardial infarction, tinnitus, and
6 stroke; and

7 WHEREAS, the City’s Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) established a Racial Equity
8 Toolkit (2012) analysis process, wherein the City committed to racial equity and justice
9 principles, including prioritizing stakeholder engagement throughout policy development,
10 especially stakeholders who are directly affected by a policy’s implementation; and

11 WHEREAS, in response to the considerable negative impacts from gas-powered leaf blowers,
12 over 100 cities across the nation have instituted policies limiting or banning them from
13 use, and California has passed Assembly Bill 1346, which requires the California Air
14 Resources Board to create a plan to phase out the sale of gas-powered leaf blowers in
15 California by 2024; and

16 WHEREAS, electric leaf blowers are quieter than gas-powered versions and do not emit low-
17 frequency sound waves or toxic emissions, reducing harm to operators and other people
18 nearby; and

19 WHEREAS, several City departments continue to use gas-powered leaf blowers, including
20 Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and Seattle City
21 Light; and

1 WHEREAS, transitioning away from fossil fuel-powered leaf blowers is consistent with the
2 City's electrification plans to phase out the use of fossil fuels for transportation and
3 buildings; and

4 WHEREAS, while Seattle Parks and Recreation has already committed to transition ten percent
5 of its gas-powered leaf blowers to electric models each year to reach 50 percent leaf
6 blower electrification by 2026, the harms to workers, residents, and the environment and
7 the wider availability of equivalent electric alternatives warrant a faster and more
8 thorough implementation; NOW, THEREFORE,

9 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE THAT:**

10 Section 1. The City Council recognizes that the use of gas-powered leaf blowers causes
11 significant adverse environmental and health impacts, including noise and air pollution, and
12 establishes the following goals to support an expeditious transition away from their use:

13 A. By January 2025, or later if necessary, the City and its contractors will phase out the
14 use of gas-powered leaf blowers; and

15 B. By January 2027, or later if necessary, institutions located in Seattle, businesses
16 operating in Seattle, and Seattle residents will phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

17 Section 2. To accomplish the goals in Section 1 of this resolution, the Council requests
18 that City departments (as suggested below) pursue the following actions:

19 A. Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Department of Finance and Administrative Services
20 (FAS), Seattle City Light, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and other departments as
21 appropriate, are requested to:

1 1. Evaluate their current practices related to the use of leaf blowers and explore
2 options to reduce reliance on leaf blowers, both gas-powered and electric, either by allowing
3 leaves to naturally decompose or clearing them using non-motorized methods; and

4 2. Develop and implement plans to ensure that City facilities and employees are
5 adequately equipped with infrastructure and equipment to use electric-powered leaf blowers
6 rather than gas-powered leaf blowers.

7 B. Seattle Public Utilities, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
8 (SDCI), the Office of Labor Standards, and the Department of Neighborhoods are requested to
9 design a culturally- and linguistically-appropriate education and outreach strategy that informs
10 City employees, businesses, and the general public of the negative health and environmental
11 impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers, and encourages residents to adopt alternatives that are
12 safer, quieter, and more environmentally friendly.

13 C. FAS, SDCI, and other departments, as appropriate, are requested to develop a proposal
14 that would phase out and ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers within Seattle. The proposal
15 should include, but not be limited to, the following:

16 1. A Racial Equity Toolkit analysis to identify benefits or burdens of the proposal
17 and gather feedback from key stakeholders, such as landscaping businesses that operate in
18 Seattle;

19 2. Whether the City should offer incentives, such as a buyback program or
20 rebates, to landscaping businesses that operate in Seattle and low-income Seattle residents;

21 3. What regulatory mechanism (e.g., amendment to the Noise Code) is most
22 appropriate to support enforcement of the ban; and

1 4. The potential benefits and reasonably quantifiable net costs (if any) to the City
2 of implementation and enforcement of the actions requested by this resolution.

3 Section 3. The Council requests that the Executive provide to the City Council's
4 Sustainability & Renters' Rights Committee or other committee as appropriate by December 2,
5 2022, a proposed work program, timeline, and budget to achieve the goals of this resolution.

6 Section 4. Nothing in this resolution should be construed to preclude or impede the City's
7 ability to more quickly phase out gas-powered leaf blowers.

1 Adopted by the City Council the 6th day of September, 2022,
2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 6th day of
3 September, 2022.

4 
5 President _____ of the City Council

6 Filed by me this 6th day of September, 2022.

7 
8 Elizabeth M. Adkisson, Interim City Clerk

9 (Seal)