



CITY OF MEDINA

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Date: July 10, 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.
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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