



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Potential Ban On The Use of Gas-Powered Landscaping Equipment or Two-Stroke Gas Engines

1. Motion providing direction to staff regarding the scope of a potential ban on the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment or two-stroke gas engines and direction on ordinance enforcement.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for February 28, 2023 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Small Off-Road Engines (SOREs) emit high levels of air pollutants. They are commonly found in landscaping equipment, golf carts, and airport equipment. Thus Assembly Bill 1346 passed prohibiting the sale of such engines in 2024 in California. In October 2022, City Council directed staff to investigate a ban on gas-powered two-stroke engines, ordinance enforcement, and a rebate and incentive program.

Staff conducted research and contacted other cities about implementing an ordinance banning the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment and leaf blowers. Staff also developed an outreach plan and is partnering with the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) to have an electric landscaping equipment demonstration event on February 23, 2023.

Upon research, Staff need further direction from City Council regarding the scope of a ban and enforcing the ordinance. Staff recommends that City Council pursues an initial ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. As electric landscaping equipment alternatives improve and funding becomes available, City Council can expand the ban to other gas-powered landscaping equipment.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Environmental Stewardship:

Gas-powered landscaping equipment, two-stroke engines, and other gas-powered Small Off-Road Engines (SOREs) produce high levels of air pollutants that contribute to climate change and affect community health. Action regulating the use of such equipment would impact Glendale's environment and the health of its community.

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council provide direction on the scope of a ban on the use of gas-powered two-stroke engines and landscaping equipment. If City Council wishes to pursue a ban, staff recommend a phased approach starting with a ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

If City Council wishes to pursue a ban, staff recommend direction on ordinance enforcement including proactive or reactive enforcement, who receives the citation, and the grace period for enforcement.

BACKGROUND

On October 10, 2022, staff presented to City Council seeking direction on whether to investigate a ban on the use of gas-powered small-off road engines (SOREs) and on the scope of such a ban if City Council wanted to pursue a ban. (Exhibit 1).

City Council's directed staff to investigate a ban on the use of gas-powered two-stroke engines, share an overview of how to enforce a ban, explore the development of an incentive program, and form an outreach and education campaign.

The investigation of a ban on the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment and SOREs is due to the environmental and community impacts of such equipment. SOREs are [highly polluting engines](#)¹ emitting oxides of nitrogen (NOx), reactive organic gases (ROG), and blowing up particulate matter (PM). One hour of lawn mower use emits as much smog-forming pollution as a 2017 Toyota Camry driving 300 miles, and one hour of leaf blower use is equivalent to driving 1,100 miles². Equipment use impacts the health of operators, such as asthma and hearing loss. Thus, [Assembly Bill 1346 \(AB1346\)](#)³, bans the sale of gas-powered SOREs, spark-ignition engines rated at or below 19 kilowatts like landscaping equipment, golf carts, and airport equipment, in 2024. Additionally, many cities in California, such as South Pasadena, Berkeley, and Pasadena, [ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers](#)⁴, while other local cities like

¹ <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/fact-sheets/sore-small-engine-fact-sheet>

² California Air Resources Board Small Off-Road Engines (SORE) fact sheet

³ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB1346

⁴ https://hdsupplysolutions.com/s/leaf_blower_noise_regulation

the [City of Ojai](#)⁵ and the [City and County of San Francisco](#)⁶, ban the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment.

ANALYSIS

Scope of a Ban

Gas-Powered Two-Stroke Engines

At their October 10, 2022 meeting, City Council directed staff to investigate a ban on the use of gas-powered two-stroke engines with exceptions for specialty equipment. Two-stroke engines fire once every revolution, while four-stroke engines fire every other revolution. Four-stroke engines are common in combustion-powered vehicles, such as motorcycles, cars, and lawnmowers. Two-stroke engines are in a wide range of equipment and tools⁷. In Table 1, two-stroke engines can be found in the following, but are not limited to:

Table 1

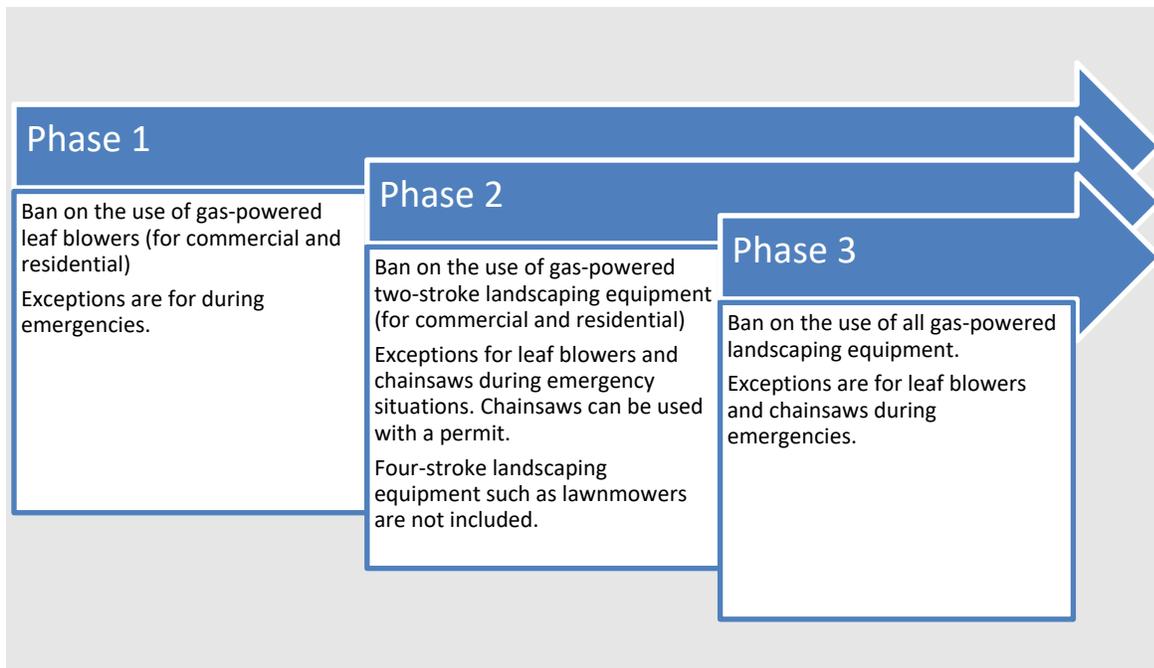
Two-Stroke Landscaping Equipment	Other Two-Stroke Engines
Leaf Blowers	Mopeds
Hedge Trimmers	Generators
Edgers	Golfcarts
Chainsaws	Dirt Bikes
	Jet Skis
	Radio-controlled model planes
	Water pumps

Given wide applications of two-stroke engines, regulating the use of gas-powered two-stroke engines would be very difficult. If Council wishes to regulate the use of such equipment citywide, staff recommend a phased approach, regulating the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment, starting with gas-powered leaf blowers.

⁵ <https://ojai.ca.gov/reminder-city-of-ojai-bans-use-of-most-gas-powered-landscaping-equipment-most-construction-prohibited-on-weekends/#gsc.tab=0>

⁶ <https://sfbayca.com/2022/03/04/san-francisco-targets-fossil-fuel-powered-landscaping-tools-for-extinction/>

⁷ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/transport/engines-equipment/two-stroke.htm>



Gas-Powered Landscaping Equipment

According to the California Air Resource Board (CARB)⁸, as of 2021, [61% of SOREs](#) are used in residential lawn and garden use compared to 8% in commercial lawn and garden use. During summer, residential lawn and garden use accounts for 33% of SOREs emissions compared to commercial use producing 20% of SOREs emissions. Thus, regulating the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment can greatly reduce air pollution emissions from SOREs in Glendale.

Still, a ban on all gas-powered landscaping equipment is currently not recommended. There are electric alternatives to many commonly used landscaping equipment, such as leaf blowers, lawnmowers, trimmers, edgers, and chainsaws. However, it is currently unknown regarding the financial impact and feasibility for businesses to convert their entire equipment suite to electric. For instance, it took under 3-years for the City of Glendale’s Community Services & Parks to transition all parks to handheld electric equipment. However, specialty equipment like sod cutters and ride-on lawnmowers would still be gas-powered. If City Council wishes to pursue such a ban, staff recommend allowing a 2-3 year grace period to provide commercial entities and organizations sufficient time to transition. Additionally, staff recommend that City Council allow for exemptions, such as chainsaws in the use emergency situations, sod cutters, and ride-on lawnmowers.

⁸ <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/fact-sheets/sore-small-engine-fact-sheet>

Leaf Blowers

There are multiple alternatives to gas-powered leaf blowers, including electric leaf blowers, rakes, brooms, and leaving yard trimmings and leaving for mulch. Also, on [average electric blower](#)⁹ can be cheaper than a gas-powered leaf blower. Additionally, this follows the legislative patterns of nearby cities. Pasadena and South Pasadena banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. Los Angeles banned the use of leaf blowers. La Canada Flintridge is considering implementing a ban on the use gas-powered leaf blowers, and Burbank may be investigating a ban on the use gas-powered leaf blowers.

City	Ban on the use of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers	Ban on the use of All Leaf Blowers	Ban on the use of Gas-Powered Landscaping Equipment
Pasadena	Yes	No	No
South Pasadena	Yes	No	No
Los Angeles	Yes	Yes	No
Burbank	No	No	No
La Canada Flintridge	In Consideration	No	No

Additionally, by initially focusing on leaf blowers allows the City to test out its capacity to handle an increase in battery recycling. Many manufacturers offer warranties on their products varying from 1 to 5 years. Glendale residents can drop off batteries at the Household Hazardous Waste Center. The Small Business Program at the Household Hazardous Waste Center allows businesses to set up an account at a subsidized cost to dispose of hazardous waste¹⁰. LA County has four permanent collection centers for hazardous and electronic waste that businesses can access¹¹.

Ordinance Enforcement

Code Enforcement in Other Cities

Enforcing such an ordinance is a major challenge. The nature of landscaping maintenance work is transient, and landscapers provide services throughout various cities. Additionally, a lot of landscaping maintenance work – either done by a contractor or a resident- can be completed in under an hour or up to a couple of hours. Since Glendale’s current Code Enforcement system – and many other cities’- operates

⁹ https://www.diffen.com/difference/Electric_Leaf_Blower_vs_Gas_Leaf_Blower

¹⁰ <https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/fire-department/fire-prevention/environmental-management-center/household-hazardous-waste>

¹¹ <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/hhw/Permanent>

through violation reporting, a code enforcement officer is unlikely to reach the scene of the violation in time to witness the violation.

Here is how other cities approach enforcement.

City of Ojai

From 2020, the [City of Ojai](#) implemented a ban on the use of most-gas-powered landscaping equipment¹², including leaf blowers, hedge trimmers, lawn edgers, pole-hedgers trimmers, string trimmers, pole saws, and non-riding lawn mowers. The first citation is \$115 and then increases. The cited entity is the contractor or the homeowner using gas equipment. If there are discrepancies with the contractor, the officer sends the citation to the homeowner. The Code Enforcement team also works with Ventura County Sheriff's Department to run plates to send the citation to the appropriate person. The City of Ojai's Code Enforcement team utilizes a proactive and reactive approach. Their team patrols and investigates complaint-based violations. The City of Ojai's Code Enforcement staff reported positive reception to the ban from many businesses and residents viewing.

City of South Pasadena

The City of South Pasadena implemented a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers in [2021](#)¹³. The City decided to delay enforcement and focus on education and outreach due to a lack of resources available for landscapers and gardeners. Staff are focused on promoting statewide initiatives and rebates for businesses and individuals. Staff reported that once the City has sufficiently progressed through their outreach plan, they would consider enforcing the ban.

City of West Hollywood

The City of West Hollywood banned [gas-powered leaf blowers](#) in the City¹⁴ for over 20 years. The City of West Hollywood enforces the ordinance by utilizing reports from the community along with violations spotted while Code Enforcement Officers patrol. In West Hollywood, the responsible party cited is the legal property owner because the gardener is considered an agent of the property owner. West Hollywood's Code Enforcement team works with the County Assessor's office to identify the property owner. The citation fine ranges from \$175 to \$575 with a \$75 administrative fee.

¹² <https://ojai.ca.gov/city-of-ojai-bans-use-of-most-gas-powered-landscaping-equipment-effective-april-27-2020/#gsc.tab=0>

¹³ <https://www.southpasadenaca.gov/government/departments/public-works/environmental-programs/waste-reduction/gas-powered-leaf-blowers-ban>

¹⁴ <https://www.weho.org/Home/Components/News/News/10069/>

West Hollywood's Code Enforcement Team found citing the property more efficient than the gardeners. They found that property owners tend to comply with the regulation and will notify their gardeners to not use gas-powered landscaping equipment.

City and County of San Francisco

In 2022, the City and County of San Francisco passed the [Healthier, Cleaner, Quieter, Communities Act](#)¹⁵ banning the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment ([Article 21, Sec 2101](#))¹⁶ and established the Healthier, Cleaner, Quieter, Communities Fund ([Sec. 10.100-74](#))¹⁷. This act phases out the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment by the City and contractors by January 1, 2024. By January 1, 2026, the public and businesses need to phase out the use of such equipment. The Healthier, Cleaner, Quieter, Communities funds the purchase of replacement technology by City departments and a Buy-Back Program for San Francisco residents and businesses. The Buy-Back Program would start in 2026 when general compliance begins. Additionally, when enforcement begins, San Francisco would likely rely on complaint-based violations with some capacity for patrolling.

City of Burbank

In October 2022, the Sustainable Burbank Commission submitted a letter to their City council to consider a prohibition on gas-powered leaf blowers¹⁸. At the time of writing this report, Burbank was in the initial stages of investigating this prohibition. Currently, there is no ban on leaf-blowers, gas-powered leaf blowers, or gas-powered landscaping equipment in the City of Burbank.

City of La Canada Flintridge

In July 2022, the City of La Canada Flintridge introduced an ordinance banning on the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment¹⁹. However, staff we directed to investigate additional avenues, such as rebates, and present a revised ordinance at a future City Council meeting. The item returned to the Climate Action Plan Update Sub-Committee and may return to City Council in February or March of 2023. In its current stage, the ordinance would cite the property owner, and enforcement would be complaint driven.

¹⁵ <https://sfbayca.com/2022/03/04/san-francisco-targets-fossil-fuel-powered-landscaping-tools-for-extinction/>

¹⁶ https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_police/0-0-0-5787

¹⁷ https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_admin/0-0-0-68247

¹⁸ <https://myburbank.com/sustainable-burbank-commission-recommends-to-council-to-prohibit-gas-powered-leaf-blowers/#:~:text=News-,Sustainable%20Burbank%20Commission%20Recommends%20to,Prohibit%20Gas%20Powered%20Leaf%20Blowers&text=Last%20week%2C%20the%20Sustainable%20Burbank,prohibited%20for%20use%20in%20Burbank.>

¹⁹ <https://outlookvalleysun.outlooknewspapers.com/2022/07/18/lcf-edges-toward-leaf-blower-ban/>

Glendale Ordinance Enforcement Profile

Staff's recommendation is to cite the property owner, with a grace period that occurs before citation begins. During the grace period, Code Enforcement Officers give a courtesy notice for ordinance violations. After enforcement begins, cited entities are given a courtesy notice as a first warning.

An ordinance banning the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment would update the Municipal Code, such as in Chapter 8.36 Noise Control²⁰, specifying the regulation of such equipment. Citation fees can be the following: 1st Fine of \$100, 2nd Fine of \$200, and 3rd Fine of \$500. It follows the Ambient Noise Level fee in IV- Community Development, Section 6: Administrative Citations in the Citywide Fee Schedule.

City of Glendale Code Enforcement Practices

The City of Glendale's current Code Enforcement practices relies on the community reporting violations. Code Enforcement Officers then schedule a time to view the violation because Code Enforcement Officers are required to observe a violation in-person to give a citation. Also, Code Enforcement personnel are available Monday to Friday from 7 am to 5 pm and do not conduct patrols. Due to the transient nature of many landscapers and routine landscape maintenance can be done quickly, it will likely be difficult to enforce the ordinance.

There are other options for ordinance enforcement. First, City Council can direct Code Enforcement to treat this violation with immediate service. Then, staff could dispatch a Code Enforcement Officer within 30 minutes of a reported violation, rather than the standard two days. Second, if a Code Enforcement Officer arrives at the scene and does not witness a violation, the officer can provide a courtesy notice to the landscaper, business, and/or homeowner.

If City Council desires a proactive approach to enforcing such a ban, like patrolling, it requires a revisioning of Code Enforcement's current practices and ways of working.

Rebates and Incentives.

State Rebates and Incentives

Before the passage of AB 1346, rebates and incentives were available through local Air Quality Management Districts (AQMD). The South Coast (SCAQMD) has a Commercial Electric Lawn & Garden Equipment Exchange program. Currently, it is closed and anticipated to return in March 2023²¹. The Commercial Lawn & Garden Battery Buy-Down Rebate Program is open, and businesses can receive a rebate of up to 75% off

²⁰ https://library.qcode.us/lib/glendale_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_8-chapter_8_36-article_i

²¹ <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/programs/community/electric-lawn-and-garden-programs/lawn-and-garden-equipment>

the cost of the replacement battery for electric lawn and garden equipment previously funded by the Commercial Lawn & Garden Equipment Incentive & Exchange Program.

In November 2022, the CARB announced \$27 million in voucher funds for professional landscape services operated by small businesses and sole proprietors to purchase discounted zero-emission landscaping equipment through the Clean Off-Road Equipment Voucher Incentive Project (CORE)²². \$10 million is available until May 2023 for micro businesses, and the remaining \$17 million will open for small businesses. To access these vouchers, landscaping businesses need to purchase equipment from a California CORE-approved dealer - none of which are in Glendale. The closest dealers are in Burbank, La Crescenta, Pasadena, and Los Angeles.

For residential incentives, SCAQMD has a residential rebate program to obtain an electric lawn mower²³. Residents can turn in their gasoline lawn mowers to an approved dismantler and receive a rebate to purchase a new battery-operated electric lawn mower.

City Rebate and Incentive Programs

Many cities refer to the SCAQMD rebate program, but some cities have incentive programs. The City of San Mateo has a rebate of up to 50% of the purchase of an electric leaf blower for residents, and commercial companies can receive a rebate of up to 75%²⁴. Redwood City offers rebates for electric leaf blowers for residents and businesses, and electric lawn care equipment for residents²⁵. The City of Burbank offers a rebate of up to \$475 for commercial landscapers to purchase an extra battery if they participated in the SCAQMD Equipment and Exchange program²⁶. The City of Santa Clara, through Silicon Valley Power's Marketplace, has an instant rebate of up to 25% off the purchase of electric landscaping equipment, such as electric leaf blowers and lawnmowers²⁷.

City of Glendale Rebates and Incentives Program

If the City Council wishes to pursue a rebate and incentive program, staff recommend that such a rebate and incentive program is managed through Glendale Water and

²² <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/news/point-sale-vouchers-now-available-small-business-landscape-professionals-purchase-discounted>

²³ <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/programs/community/electric-lawn-and-garden-programs/electric-lawn-mower-rebate-program>

²⁴ <https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/4544/Electric-Leaf-Blower-Rebate>

²⁵

<https://www.redwoodcity.org/departments/public-works/environmental-initiatives/environmental-initiatives-rebates>

²⁶ <https://www.burbankwaterandpower.com/conservation/commercial-programs-rebates/conservation-commercial-landscape-battery-rebate>

²⁷ <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/43483/>

Power (GWP) that has the infrastructure, systems, and practices in place to manage rebate and incentive programs. Currently, GWP does not offer rebates for leaf blowers or landscaping equipment. However, staff can work with GWP to investigate the feasibility of establishing a new rebate program for leaf blowers or landscaping equipment. If such a program is established, it would come to City Council as part of the FY 2023-2024 Public Benefit budgeting process for GWP. Thus, if a new rebate program is approved, it would not be available to the public until July 1, 2023.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

Staff connected with six cities to learn about their experiences and stages of implementing a similar ordinance. Staff also connected with the AGZA to share their experience of Cities implementing a similar ordinance, as well as Community Services and Parks staff on their experience transitioning to electric landscaping equipment.

At the City Council meeting in October 2022, eight members of the public gave comments on the item - the majority in support of a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. An electric landscaping equipment demonstration event in partnership with AGZA is planned for February 23, 2023, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM in the Isabel Parking Lot behind City Hall. Information about this event and the California CORE's voucher program was distributed to local business groups, local landscaping businesses, and community organizations, and shared with other cities to promote. It was posted on social media, included in newsletters, and posted in local community points around Glendale and California CORE-approved dealers. Staff also invested in digital marketing campaigns for this event and cold-called landscaping businesses and community groups for event promotion.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report at this time.

However, if an incentive or rebate program for electric landscaping equipment through GWP is developed, the costs associated with the program would be presented through the Public Benefit budgeting process for City Council.

If City Council directs staff to develop an ordinance, fines for the ordinance and any additional costs for Code Enforcement to enforce the ordinance would be presented to City Council at a future meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

This item is exempt from CEQA as it is not a project approval. Council will only be

providing direction to staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

This item is exempt from campaign disclosure requirements.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to prepare an ordinance banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.
2. Directs staff to prepare an ordinance banning the use of gas-powered landscaping equipment.
3. Directs staff to prepare an ordinance banning the use of gas-powered two-stroke engines.
4. City Council may choose any other alternative not recommended by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Prepared by:

Elizabeth Harris, Administrative Associate

Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit 1: CC_10112022_Report_8e