



Attachment 3

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

First Reading of Noise Code Amendments to Ban the Use of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

**City Council Legislative Meeting
May 13, 2025**





Summary

Staff Request

- Consider Noise Code amendments to phase-out (ban) the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

City Council Action

- Approve the introduction and first reading of Noise Code amendments to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, with a two-year phase-out period (July 1, 2027).
- Set the ordinance for public hearing and final passage on Saturday, May 17, 2025.

Key Elements of this Discussion

- Complete ban of gas-powered leaf blowers
- Phase-out range, recommended over 2 years.
- City phase-out will be completed in 1 year (July 1, 2026).

Agenda



- ✓ **Summary**
- ✓ **Background**
- ✓ **Benefits of Proposed Ban**
- ✓ **Community Outreach Approach**
- ✓ **Community & Landscape Company Feedback**
- ✓ **Other Jurisdictions**
- ✓ **Staff Recommendations**
- ✓ **Proposed Timeline**
- ✓ **Summary**



Background

- August 2024 Virginia Attorney General opinion that Sec. 2.0-4 of the City Charter provides sufficient authority to ban leaf blowers.
- Currently, lawn and garden equipment regulated by hours of operation, and staff is not proposing a change.
- Studies by the US Environmental Protection Agency and others have highlighted the negative impacts on noise levels and the environment.
- Electric leaf blowers are quieter, even at the same decibel levels
- Gas-powered leaf blowers emit volatile organic compounds and smog-forming pollution
 - Running a gas-powered leaf blower for 1 hour is comparable to driving a new car from DC to Miami – about 15 hours or 1,100 miles



Benefits of Proposed Ban

Reduce Noise Levels in the City

- Quality of life and health issue.
- Reduces noise exposure to the operator.

Reduce Air & Water Pollution

- Gas-powered engines are a significant source of air pollutants, particularly 2-cycle engines.
- Reduces exposure to air pollutants to the operator.
- Reduces nitrogen pollution in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions.



Community Outreach Approach

Intent of outreach

- Notify Alexandria businesses & residents on proposed regulation/ban of gas-powered leaf blowers.
- Receive feedback & comments on proposed changes.

Outreach format

- Two hybrid meetings: March 13th and 26th with approximately 85 participants.
- Staff call/email landscaping companies.
- Social media, eNews, website, dedicated email.
- Survey provided in English and Spanish.



Community Feedback

Strong support for total ban from residents, boards & commissions, and civic organizations.

- Supported shorter phase-out time (1-year or less).
- Included concerns with quality of life, excessive use, enforcement needed, and alternative options/education programs.



Landscape Company Feedback

57 landscape businesses were identified to be contacted.

- 100% were called and/or emailed.
- 12 provided comments.
- Overarching concerns.
 - Operational costs (takes longer, need more workers)
 - Technology (blowing power and battery life)
 - Upfront costs for transition: \$3,600 to \$100,000+.
- Staff also had use presentation on April 28 & 29 to receive feedback.



Other Jurisdictions

Washington DC

- Ban on use with 4-year phase-out period.
- Ban on use effective January 1, 2022.

Montgomery County

- Ban on sale and use with 1 & 2-year phase-out period, respectively.
- Ban of sale effective July 1, 2024.
- Ban of use effective July 1, 2025.

City of Annapolis

- Ban on use with 1-year phase-out period.
- Ban on use effective December 30, 2024.



Staff Recommendations

Adopt a total ban on use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

- Approve the introduction and first reading of Noise Code revisions to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, with a two-year phase-out period
- Set the ordinance for public hearing and final passage on Saturday, May 17, 2025.

Incorporate Phase-Out Period

- City government would have a one-year phase-out.
- Community would have a two-year phase-out.

Develop possible incentive programs



Timeline





Summary

Staff Request

- Consider Noise Code amendments to phase-out (ban) the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

City Council Action

- Approve the introduction and first reading of Noise Code revisions to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers with a two-year phase-out period for the community.
- Set the ordinance for public hearing and final passage on Saturday, May 17, 2025.