

SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE*

Department:	Dept. Contact/Phone:	CBO Contact/Phone:
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** Note that the Summary and Fiscal Note describes the version of the bill or resolution as introduced; final legislation including amendments may not be fully described.*

1. BILL SUMMARY

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

Summary and Background of the Legislation: Gas-powered leaf blowers are noisy and create localized air pollution that can impact the health of both the equipment’s operator and people nearby. In the 2014 Adopted Budget, the Council requested that the Department of Planning and Development (DPD, now the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections) consider strategies to reduce or eliminate noise and emissions caused by gas-powered leaf blowers in Seattle (SLI 70-1-A-1). In response, DPD provided an analysis of relevant regulations, an inventory of the City’s gas-powered leaf blowers by departments, and assessed various options to reduce the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in the city. DPD did not recommend any regulatory or substantial programmatic changes at that time due to the limitations of electric leaf blower technology and concerns about racial equity impacts that could result from restricting the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

Since 2014, electric leaf blowers have become increasingly more powerful, with longer battery life, making them a viable alternative to gas-powered models for City, commercial, and institutional use. Further, recent research has found that prolonged exposure to the noise and emissions produced by gas-powered leaf blowers can cause hearing damage and increase an individual’s risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions, premature death, and effects on prenatal development.

To address these issues, this resolution would declare the City Council’s commitment to the following goals:

- By January 2025, or later if necessary, the City and its contractors will phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers; and
- By January 2027, or later if necessary, institutions located in Seattle, businesses operating in Seattle, and Seattle residents will phase out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

A variety of City department are requested to develop and begin implementing actions to achieve these goals, most notably Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), which currently owns the largest number of gas-powered leaf blowers in the City (approx. count = 360). SPR is currently planning a gradual transition to electric leaf blowers, with the goal of achieving 50 percent electrification by 2026. The later target date for implementing the phase-out for businesses and institutions is intended to provide the City with additional time for outreach to

residents and businesses and to develop strategies to mitigate financial impacts that will ensure that the policy does not cause disproportionate racial equity impacts.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Does this legislation amend the Adopted Budget? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle that are not reflected in the above, including direct or indirect, short-term or long-term costs?

The resolution calls for expediting the City's transition from gas-powered leaf blowers to all-electric, which would accelerate the timeline for planned expenditures and require additional resources in the short term. The upfront expenditure will diminish the need to invest in electric leaf blowers and the necessary infrastructure to support their use over the long term. Departments may require additional resources to develop and implement the work as requested and fund any financial incentives the City might offer to reduce the burden of the planned phase-out for landscaping businesses and low-income residents.

Additionally, there could be workforce impacts for the City, such as increased time needed to clear leaves, if available electric leaf blowers prove to be less powerful than gas-powered alternatives. The resolution requests that City departments reevaluate their use of leaf blowers to reduce their reliance on leaf blowers (both gas-powered and electric) generally, which could reduce the impacts of this change. Finally, resources may be needed to support enforcement of the restriction on gas-powered leaf blowers. These costs are currently not quantifiable as City departments would need to more fully develop the proposal as requested in the resolution.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation?

Failure to implement the work outlined in this resolution would result in the continued use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Seattle and exposure of workers and others in the vicinity to the associated health risks as described previously.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

a. Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department?

The resolution would request that work be conducted by SPR, Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), Seattle City Light, and Seattle Department of Transportation to evaluate their practices related to leaf blower use and take the measures necessary for City staff to fully transition to electric leaf blowers by January 2025. Seattle Public Utilities, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), the Office of Labor Standards, and the Department of Neighborhoods would develop and implement an outreach and engagement strategy for the proposed phase-out, with a particular focus on landscaping businesses that operate in Seattle. FAS and SDCI would also be engaged in developing a

proposal to phase-out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers by residents, landscaping businesses and institutions in Seattle by January 2027.

b. Is a public hearing required for this legislation?

No.

c. Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required for this legislation?

No.

d. Does this legislation affect a piece of property?

No.

e. Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative. Does this legislation impact vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities? What is the Language Access plan for any communications to the public?

Workers in the landscaping services industry disproportionately identify as Hispanic/Latino (nationally, 46 percent of workers in the landscaping services industry as compared to 18 percent of all workers). Phasing out the use of gas-powered leaf blowers would reduce these workers' risk of exposure to the noise and emissions produced by the equipment.

While this would benefit the health of workers, landscaping businesses may be financially impacted by the proposed prohibition against the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Seattle. The businesses would have to purchase electric leaf blowers and adjust their operations to ensure that leaf blowers can be charged (or have sufficient charge) throughout the day as landscaping crews move from one work site to another. Additionally, low-income residents could be financially burdened by the proposed ban, which may require them to purchase an electric leaf blower or could result in them being disproportionately subjected to enforcement action if they are unable to replace their gas-powered leaf blower prior to the ban going into effect. The City could consider mitigating these impacts by creating financial incentives, such as a rebate and/or buy-back program.

f. Climate Change Implications

1. Emissions: Is this legislation likely to increase or decrease carbon emissions in a material way?

No. Gas-powered leaf blowers produce minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Resiliency: Will the action(s) proposed by this legislation increase or decrease Seattle's resiliency (or ability to adapt) to climate change in a material way? If so, explain. If it is likely to decrease resiliency in a material way, describe what will or could be done to mitigate the effects.

No.

- g. If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program's desired goal(s)?**

Not applicable.

Summary Attachments:

None.