



City of Palm Springs

Sustainability Commission – October 24, 2016

Study Session: Leaf Blower Strategy for the City of Palm Springs



Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers



Improving the quality of life in our Sustainable City

What's Wrong with Leaf Blowers?

- ❑ **They pollute the air** - A single gas-powered leaf blower can emit as much pollution in a year as 80 cars.
- ❑ **They're noisy** - A normal decibel level, considered acceptable in residential areas, is about 55 to 60 decibels (60 dB). Every increase in decibels means noise that is 10 times louder. Leaf blowers usually generate about 70-75 dB.
- ❑ **They worsen allergies and asthma and irritate the lungs** - Because they operate at such high velocities, leaf blowers stir up the mold, allergens, and dust particles that otherwise have been tamped down with rain and decomposition.

Pollutants Emitted

- ❑ Produce as much **Particulate Matter** as a 1999-2000 model car driven for 49 hours at 30 miles per hour (1,470 miles)
- ❑ Produce as much **Carbon Monoxide** as a car driven for 26 hours (780 miles)
- ❑ Produce **Hydrocarbons** as a car driven for 510 hours (15,300 miles)

Source: California Air Resources Board, "A Report to the California Legislature on the Potential Health and Environmental Impacts of Leaf Blowers,"

Leaf Blower Ban in California Cities

Summary of California Cities that have Leafblower Ban Ordinances

Ban Provisions	Ban on All Leaf Blowers (Gas & Electric)	Ban on Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers	Ban During Time Restrictions
Percentage	11%	47%	40%

Source: 2011 Consumer Report; Based on 55 California cities

Leaf blowers have an impact on Greenhouse Gas Emissions; currently contribute to emissions (statewide) in the following ways:

Hydrocarbons (reactive): 4.2 tons per day

Carbon Monoxide (CO): 9.8 tons per day

Fine Particulate Matter: 0.02 tons per day

Source: California Environmental Protection Agency/Air Resources Board

Leaf Blower Use: Other Cities

- ❑ **Indian Wells (1990):** “Leaf blowers shall be prohibited in all zones within the City except: (i) individual property occupants may operate a single **electrically powered** leaf blower with use confined to his/her property; (ii) golf course operators may operate gasoline powered leaf blowers during the month of September 15th through December 1st of each year.
- ❑ **Hermosa Beach:** It is unlawful to use within the city limits or cause to be used **electrical or gasoline** powered backpack/leaf blower. Such as commonly used by gardeners, landscapers and other persons.
- ❑ **Beverly Hills (1976):** It shall be unlawful for any person within the City to use or operate any portable machine powered with a **gasoline engine** used to blow leaves, dirt, and other debris off sidewalks, driveways, lawns, and other surfaces.

What are the Alternatives ?



- ❑ Rakes
- ❑ Brooms
- ❑ Outdoor vacuums
- ❑ Electric leaf blowers

Focus Questions for Study Session

- ❑ What *do* you like about gas-powered leaf blowers?
- ❑ What *don't* you like about gas-powered leaf blowers?
- ❑ How do you currently clean your property (grass/desert landscape/artificial turf) or your customers' property? How often?
- ❑ If gas-powered leaf blowers were banned, how would you clean your property or your customers' property? How often?
- ❑ What experience have you had with electric leaf blowers (corded or battery-powered)? Do they have enough blowing power? Are they quieter? How long does the battery last?
- ❑ What experience have you had with newer gas-powered leaf blowers? Are they quieter?
- ❑ Anything else?

Next Steps and Strategy

- ❑ Leaf blower subcommittee to review feedback from this study session
 - ❑ Determine if additional study sessions and information are necessary

- ❑ Develop plan of action to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all citizens in Palm Springs
 - ❑ Consider and confirm impact on the city, including residents, businesses, landscapers and their workers; conduct impact study if needed
 - ❑ Plan of action may include city ordinance or buy-back program for gas-powered leaf blowers
 - ❑ Include time-phased implementation plan
 - ❑ Include plan for educational outreach to residents, businesses, landscapers and their workers

- ❑ Make recommendation to full Sustainability Commission

- ❑ Sustainability Commission to vote on recommendation to City Council