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# 191653

Ordinance

## Add Leaf Blowers Code to phase out the use of gasoline leaf blowers to reduce public health impacts (add Code Chapter 8.80)

Passed

The City of Portland ordains:

Section 1. The Council finds:

1. The City has authority to adopt policies to protect and promote public health.
2. Since 2001, the City has regulated the operational hours and noise decibels of all leaf blowers (Ordinance No. 177767).
3. In 2017, Council established a goal to meet 100 percent of community-wide energy needs, including gasoline consumption in equipment, with renewable energy by 2050 to help reduce the public health impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect vulnerable communities already facing existing socioeconomic and health inequities (Resolution No. 37289).
4. Studies from the Environmental Protection Agency indicate gasoline leaf blowers produce toxic and carcinogenic exhaust emissions that include volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and fine particulate matter, and can pose health risks to the operators and the public, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions, premature death, and effects on prenatal development.
5. Gasoline leaf blowers most commonly have two-stroke engines that incompletely combust their fuel, resulting in the emission of benzene and additional carcinogenic substances.
6. The use of gasoline leaf blowers can cause direct harm to people within the vicinity by contributing to localized air pollution, creating excessive noise, and causing other negative health impacts to their operators who disproportionately identify as Latinx or Hispanic.
7. Electric leaf blowers do not emit toxic emissions, reducing harm to operators and other people nearby. Electric leaf blower battery technology is improving but may present technical limitations during the wet leaf season.
8. In response to the considerable negative impacts from gas-powered leaf blowers, over 100 cities across the nation have instituted policies limiting

Introduced by

[Commissioner Carmen Rubio](#)

Bureau

[Planning and Sustainability \(BPS\)](#)

Contact

Sonrisa Cooper

Sustainable Economy and Just  
Transition Analyst

✉ [sonrisa.cooper@portlandoregon.go](mailto:sonrisa.cooper@portlandoregon.go)

Requested Agenda Type

Regular

Date and Time Information

Requested Council Date

March 13, 2024

Changes City Code


or banning them from use.

9. In 2019, Council directed all bureaus to transition from gasoline to electric leaf blowers and committed to convening a work group to explore an equitable community-wide phase out of gas-powered leaf blowers (Resolution No. 37463).
10. From March to October 2022, Commissioner Carmen Rubio and Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson convened a Leaf Blower Policy Work Group (Work Group) including representatives of Quiet Clean PDX, Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon, Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund, Oregon Landscape Contractors Association, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, plus two landscape contractors, and staff from the Portland Parks Bureau, Portland Bureau of Development Services, Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Multnomah County Office of Sustainability.
11. The Work Group recommended a ban on the use of gasoline leaf blowers because the health impacts resulting from dangerous emissions fall disproportionately on hired landscape maintenance workers from communities of color, low-income communities, and other historically marginalized populations.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council directs:

- A. Title 8 of the City Code is amended by adding Chapter 8.80 Leaf Blowers as shown in Exhibit A.
- B. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability will coordinate administration and enforcement of this ordinance with the Bureau of Development Services and the Multnomah County Health Department and Office of Sustainability.
- C. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability will evaluate the technological feasibility of replacing gasoline leaf blowers with electric leaf blowers year-round and recommend any code amendments to Council no later than September 30, 2028.

## Documents and Exhibits

 [Exhibit A \(https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/council-documents/2024/exhibita\\_ch8.80\\_new.pdf\)](https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/council-documents/2024/exhibita_ch8.80_new.pdf) 90.88 KB

An ordinance when passed by the Council shall be signed by the Auditor. It shall be carefully filed and preserved in the custody of the Auditor (City Charter Chapter 2 Article 1 Section 2-122)

Passed by Council  
March 13, 2024

Auditor of the City of Portland  
Simone Rede

## Impact Statement

### Purpose of Proposed Legislation and Background Information

This project proposes an amendment to add Chapter 8.80 to Title 8 of the Portland City Code to improve public health by transitioning away from using handheld or backpack gasoline leaf blowers to electric leaf blowers on public and private property. Switching from gasoline to electric equipment will benefit our local environment and improve quality of life for workers and neighbors.

Beginning January 1, 2026, the proposed ordinance would prohibit property owners from using, or hiring contractors that use, GLBs between January 1 and September 30 each year. Although electric lawn equipment technology is rapidly advancing, the City recognizes that electric leaf blowers are not yet powerful enough to practically move wet leaves during the winter season. Therefore, from October 1 to December 31, the use of gasoline leaf blowers would still be allowed until 2028. Effective January 1, 2028, gasoline leaf blowers would be prohibited all year.

### Financial and Budgetary Impacts

This proposal does not include a budget request for implementation at this time. BPS has existing staff positions to support rulemaking in 2024 and program development with Multnomah County through an Intergovernmental Agreement to cover the costs of implementation. The Parks and Recreation Bureau has a preliminary cost estimate from \$942,532 to \$1,578,352 to electrify backpack gasoline leaf blowers and upgrade electrical infrastructure in compliance with the proposal. The Portland Clean Energy and Community Benefits Fund recommended \$1.6 million to the Parks and Recreation Bureau to make the transition from gasoline backpack leaf blowers to battery powered.

### Community Impacts and Community Involvement

Electrification of lawn equipment provides health benefits to leaf blower operators and residents by significantly reducing noise and air pollution. Gasoline leaf blowers produce low frequency noise that can lead to negative health outcomes such as stroke, high blood pressure, heart attack, tinnitus and hearing impairment. The exhaust from gasoline leaf blowers emits air pollutants that pose health risks including stroke, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions and prenatal development issues.

The negative health consequences resulting from the use of gasoline leaf blowers disproportionately impact operators and landscape maintenance workers from communities of color. With 46% of landscape workers nationally identifying as Latino, the proposal addresses the health, equity and environmental justice impacts experienced by landscape workers of color.

Electric leaf blower technology is improving but some uncertainty about potential cost impacts exists. Electric leaf blower models are cheaper to

operate over time as they require less maintenance and remove the need to purchase fuels. However, the upfront costs of electric leaf blowers are currently higher than gasoline leaf blowers. To address the potential economic impacts on small landscaping businesses, the city will work with Multnomah County to develop incentives to offset costs for small landscaping businesses that would experience a disproportionate hardship.

The proposed complaint system for enforcement can disproportionately impact members of historically marginalized communities. Communities with a history of positive government experiences may be more willing to report – and may disproportionately report members of historically marginalized communities. Outreach and education in the community will be prioritized and the City would design an enforcement system with Multnomah County that considers potential impacts to all communities.

From March to October 2022, the City and Multnomah County convened a leaf blower work group (Work Group) that presented a recommendation to phase out the use and sale of gasoline leaf blowers within Portland. Work Group members included representatives from:

- Electrify Now
- Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon
- Multnomah County Office of Sustainability
- Oregon League of Conservation Voters
- Oregon Landscape Contractors Association
- Portland Clean Energy and Community Benefits Fund
- Portland Noise Control Officer
- Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau
- Precision Landscape
- Storm Landscape
- Quiet Clean PDX

In 2023, the City and Multnomah County reengaged Work Group members, as well as additional stakeholders, including representatives from community-based organizations, businesses, golf courses, and campus institutions. These stakeholders informed key decisions to equitably phase out the use of gasoline leaf blowers.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) released draft City Code for public comment in January 2024 and received 786 comments. Of the comments submitted, 86 percent were in support of the ordinance, 11 percent were opposed, and 3 percent were unclear. Comments centered around the following issues:

- Move forward the effective date for partial-year prohibition of gasoline leaf blowers (42% of comments)
- Move forward the effective date for full prohibition of gasoline leaf blowers (32%)
- Shorten or eliminate the wet leaf season exception (26%)
- Strengthen enforcement (24%)
- Concerns about cost to businesses (8%)
- Concerns that timeline is too short (4%)

- Environmental concerns related to battery mining, disposal, and added electricity use (2%)

BPS addressed concerns around gasoline leaf blower phase-out schedule, timing and duration of wet leaf season, inclement weather exceptions, and compliance enforcement. Some of the concerns raised are valid but outside of the scope of the City's Title 8 health code. This proposal is based on input from the public, private and non-profit stakeholders, and the original workgroup recommendations.

### 100% Renewable Goal

This action does not change the City's total energy use. It does increase the City's use of renewable energy by replacing fossil fuels with increasingly cleaner electricity. Gasoline leaf blowers contribute to our community's emission of greenhouse gases by consuming and combusting fossil fuels. Eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from gasoline-powered lawn equipment would support the City's 100 percent community-wide renewable energy by 2050 goal.

### Budget Office Financial Impact Analysis

No financial impact to adopt this ordinance. After gasoline leaf blowers are phased out, the plan is that PCEF will pay to electrify backpack gasoline leaf blowers and upgrade related infrastructure in compliance with the proposal.

### Agenda Items

210 Time Certain in [March 6, 2024 Council Agenda](https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/3/6)  
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/3/6>)

Passed to second reading

Passed to second reading March 13, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.

223 Regular Agenda in [March 13, 2024 Council Agenda](https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/3/13)  
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/3/13>)

Passed

Commissioner Carmen Rubio Yea

Commissioner Dan Ryan Yea

Commissioner Rene Gonzalez Yea

Commissioner Mingus Mapps Yea

Mayor Ted Wheeler Yea