



# City of Sunnyvale

## Agenda Item

25-0145

Agenda Date: 2/13/2025

### 2025 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

**NUMBER**

DPW 23-07

**TITLE** Evaluate the Feasibility of an Ordinance to Ban the Use of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers and Other Small Two-Stroke Motors Within the City Limits of Sunnyvale

**BACKGROUND**

**Lead Department:** Department of Public Works

**Support Departments:** Office of the City Manager  
Office of the City Attorney  
Environmental Services Department  
Finance Department

**Sponsor(s):** Councilmembers: Mehlinger, Sell, Klein, Din, Srinivasan  
Cisneros

**History:** 1 year ago: Deferred by Council  
2 years ago: Ranked, Below the Line

**Council Strategic Priority:** Accelerating Climate Action, the Active Transportation  
(At time of sponsorship) Plan and Vision Zero Plan

**SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

**What precipitated this Study?**

At the January 24, 2023, City Council meeting, Council sponsored a Study Issue to evaluate the feasibility of an ordinance to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and other two-stroke motor equipment. The state of California only bans the sale of new gas-powered blowers and other two-stroke equipment, and not use of said equipment, as of 2024.

**What are the key elements of the Study?**

Leaf blowers and other two-stroke motor equipment are commonly used to maintain landscape and hardscape by property owners or maintenance professionals. While they serve as a convenient tool for the quick removal of leaves and debris, they are also a source of air and noise pollution within the City and a minor contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Many communities have taken various actions to restrict the use of leaf blowers and two-stroke motor equipment, such as banning use of such equipment citywide, banning use of such equipment in specific areas, specifying allowable operating times, or requiring training and certification of operators.

This Study would examine local concerns about use of leaf blower and two-stroke motor equipment in Sunnyvale, and review actions taken in other communities, available alternatives, and impacts of potential actions.

**Estimated years to complete study:** 18 months

**FISCAL IMPACT**

**Cost to Conduct Study**

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): | Moderate                    |
| Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs:           | \$100,000                   |
| Funding Source                                     | Will seek budget supplement |

Many community members have expressed strong opinions about leaf blowers, either in support or opposition of their use. Gas-powered leaf blowers, especially older models, can be particularly noisy and highly polluting on a per-minute basis. Electric leaf blowers on the market today are quieter but have limiting factors including cost, the need to be connected to an outlet, short battery life, and less power compared to gas-powered blowers. The Study would require outreach and knowledge of City ordinances.

**Cost to Implement Study Results**

Unknown. The Study would include assessment of potential costs, including capital and operating, as well as revenue/savings.

**EXPECTED CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OR COMMISSION PARTICIPATION**

Council-Approved Work Plan: No  
Council Study Session: Yes  
Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Parks and Recreation Commission and Sustainability Commission

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Drop. This policy issue does not merit discussion at a Study Issues Workshop.

This Study Issue topic is now incorporated into the Climate Action Playbook (CAP). At the June 25, 2024, City Council meeting, updates to the CAP and Game Plan 2028 were unanimously adopted by the City Council. One update to the CAP was the inclusion of Play 3.4, Decarbonize off-road equipment and vehicles. To implement Play 3.4, Game Plan 2028 includes Move 3.P, Create a phased ordinance by 2026 to ban local operation of gasoline and diesel-powered offroad equipment by type, including banning local operation of gasoline and diesel-powered small off-road equipment (SORE) by 2028. SORE includes leaf blowers, lawn mowers, construction equipment, etc. Staff anticipate work on Move 3.P will begin in FY 2025/26. Staff's work to implement Move 3.P would fulfill the scope of this Study Issue.

Prepared by: Jim Stark, Superintendent of Parks and Golf  
Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Department of Public Works  
Reviewed by: Ramana Chinnakotla, Director, Environmental Services Department  
Reviewed by: Sarah Johnson-Rios, Assistant City Manager  
Approved by: Tim Kirby, City Manager