



# City of Sunnyvale

## Agenda Item

---

**23-0110**

**Agenda Date: 2/16/2023**

---

### 2023 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

#### **NUMBER**

ESD 17-01

**TITLE** Eliminate the Use of Chemical Pesticide on City Owned or Leased Property

#### **BACKGROUND**

**Lead Department:** Environmental Services Department

**Support Departments:** Office of the City Manager  
Office of the City Attorney  
Public Works Department  
Library and Recreation Services

**Sponsor(s):** Sustainability Commission

**History:** 1 year ago: Deferred by Council  
2 years ago: Ranked, Budget Supplement Not Approved

#### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

##### **What precipitated this study?**

The Sustainability Commission raised concerns that using chemicals to control weeds and pests may contaminate water and soil leading to negative long-term impacts to human health and non-targeted species (e.g., bees, aquatic life, birds, pets, and beneficial insects).

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

The purpose of this Study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the City's current Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy (Administrative Policy Manual, Chapter 6, Article 12), levels of pesticide use on City property, assess community support for eliminating pesticide use on City property and identify the potential impact on City operations. Additionally, the Study will also consider opportunities for educating residents about chemical pesticide alternatives.

Key Study elements include:

- Identify current costs to the City for purchasing and applying pesticides (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides) that are covered in the IPM Policy. Separately identify costs of "Pesticides of Concern" and other chemical pesticides (e.g., glyphosate) used that are not on the 'concern' list. Identify expected net costs of further reducing and eliminating all pesticide use on City property (e.g., increased cost of mechanical weed removal, physical barriers, etc. minus savings from not purchasing pesticides, using mulch etc.).
- Identify benefits to community and environment. These will not be monetized since it is beyond the scope of this Study to assess the value of environmental benefits.

23-0110

Agenda Date: 2/16/2023

- Identify cost of a pilot study in selected parks or City properties to measure costs/savings in a real application.
- Study cost of implementing a public outreach program to encourage pesticide elimination at homes, schools and businesses and provide information on alternative control means.
- Through a survey of residents and businesses, identify level of awareness and concern by the public on this topic and the desire for the City to devote attention to further pesticide reduction and eventual elimination.
- Benchmark and monitor progress of other cities in the region who have undertaken similar actions.
- Review the City's IPM Policy (effective June 1, 2010) and consider cost/benefit to:
  1. Provide public notification prior to the application of pesticides in public areas;
  2. Add reporting measures to allow the public to be informed on the quantities of each chemical pesticide used by the City (or associated contractors) on an annual basis;
  3. Eliminate use of specific synthetic pesticides that have significant known human toxicity and ecotoxicity impacts; and
  4. Eliminate use of synthetic pesticides within a certain distance of playgrounds and creeks/channels where they may pose a threat to human health and water quality.

**Estimated years to complete study: 2 years**

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

##### **Cost to Conduct Study**

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

The Study would be completed with a mix of staff time and additional consultant services as follows:

- Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for landscape management, including the application of pesticides and herbicides on City property.
- Environmental Services Department (ESD), with support from DPW, will take the lead in evaluating the public outreach aspects of the study and complete a survey of residents and businesses.
- The consultant, with management from ESD and support from DPW staff, will survey and monitor what other cities in the area have undertaken for similar projects, complete a cost analysis for current practices and possible changes, and identify options for a pilot project and costs associated with it.

Staff had previously indicated an intention to apply for grant funding. After evaluating grant funding opportunities, staff has determined that the California Department of Pesticide Regulations' (DPR) Alliance Grant Program is not a good match for funding this Study Issue. The Alliance Grant Program would be better suited to fund implementation of actions that the City may take as a result of this Study.

The cost does not anticipate a time-in-motion study to estimate potential cost impacts of chemical alternatives, such as mechanical weed removal. The determination of the net cost impact of chemical alternatives, as identified in the study scope, would be estimated based on research of cost impacts

23-0110

Agenda Date: 2/16/2023

experienced by the benchmarked communities. Additional funding beyond the \$100,000 may be needed to conduct time-in-motion studies and such costs will be included in the development of the potential pilot project to measure costs/savings in a real application as identified in this Study Issue.

### **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: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Sustainability Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Support. This policy issue merits discussion at the 2023 Study Issues Workshop.

Staff recommends supporting this Study Issue. Last year, staff recommended deferral, pending the outcomes of a planned application for the California Department of Pesticide Regulations' (DPR) Alliance Grant Program to implement the key elements of this Study. However, after further evaluation of the feasibility of applying for that grant and the grant requirements, staff have concluded that the Alliance Grant Program is better suited to fund implementation of actions that may result from this Study rather than the Study itself.

The City's current IPM policy has been in place since 2010. City DPW staff receives annual training on the IPM policy, and pest control contractors are required to also comply with the policy when working on City property. In accordance with the IPM policy, pesticides are used only after other controls have been considered and applied and data on pesticide usage are reported to ESD on a monthly basis. Additionally, the City provides education on IPM at environmental outreach events and participates in regional educational campaigns. ESD also hosts sustainable landscaping classes that promote alternatives to pesticides in partnership with the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) in the spring and fall.

Other cities in the region are implementing variations of limited pesticide use programs. Some examples are:

1. The City of Menlo Park eliminated the use of pesticides in a majority of city parks in 2018, excluding athletic fields. (Menlo Park action, February 2018, [www.menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/16607/12---Herbicide-Free-Parks?bidId=](http://www.menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/16607/12---Herbicide-Free-Parks?bidId=)). Some parks were included as potential sites for future pesticide elimination. Additional costs for FY 20/21 are estimated at approximately \$400,000 (Contract award to pest control contractor, July 2020, [www.menlopark.org/Archive/ViewFile/Item/11429](http://www.menlopark.org/Archive/ViewFile/Item/11429)).
2. The City of Los Altos discourages the use of synthetic pesticides in city-owned parks and open spaces, relying instead on certified organic pesticide products and IPM techniques (Revised IPM Policy, August 2020, [www.losaltosca](http://www.losaltosca)).
3. The City of Palo Alto limited the use of specific pesticides (e.g. glyphosate), designated pesticide-free locations, and eliminated use of pesticides within 100 feet of playgrounds and creeks (Revised IPM Policy, July 2020, [www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=71323.71&BlobID=79014](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?t=71323.71&BlobID=79014)).

---

**23-0110**

**Agenda Date: 2/16/2023**

---

This Study would provide valuable information to inform potential revisions to the City's IPM policy and also allow the City to pilot pesticide-free facilities. This is aligned with the City's stormwater management practices and goal of achieving a healthier, safer community.

In December 2020, Chair Wickham of the Sustainability Commission presented on best practices of pesticide management with a focus on local municipalities. The presentation noted that in all cases the transition from chemical pesticide use resulted in an increased operating cost. The presentation also noted that there are significant ecological and community health benefits associated with eliminating chemical pesticide use. A copy of the presentation is available here:

<https://sunnyvaleca.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=AO&ID=98034&GUID=dca43681-dda3-492b-972b-8acbed24bffc&N=QmVzdCBQcmFjdGljZXMGZm9yIFBlc3RpY2lkZSBNYW5hZ2VtZW50>

Prepared by: Madeline Willett, Environmental Programs Manager

Reviewed by: Ramana Chinnakotla, Director, Environmental Services

Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Public Works

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager