

ATTACHMENT 2: LEAF BLOWER STUDY ISSUE COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETING SUMMARIES

Sunnyvale Neighborhood Association Quarterly Meeting at Community Center (November 17, 2014)

General Comments:

- Suggestion to restrict leaf blower use on Spare the Air days
- Question regarding enforceability of a ban, whether enforcement is feasible, and how successful enforcement has been in other communities
- Suggestion that noise is likely the most common complaint among residents
- Suggestion that the smell of gasoline engines is a concern
- Recommendation to reach out to commercial property owners for inclusion in discussion

Leaf Blower Community Outreach Meeting for Residents at Community Center (January 7, 2015)

Approximately 31 community members in attendance.

Comments in favor of restrictions:

- City should ban gas blowers, which are noisy and unhealthy
- City should ban all leaf blowers
- Bikers and pedestrians are frequently hit by dust and debris from leaf blower operators
- City could place restrictions on the frequency of gardening service to address concerns
- City should lead by example and not use leaf blowers in Parks
- Commercial landscapers always use their leaf blowers at full throttle to hasten service
- Commercial leaf blower operators are most affected by the hazards of leaf blower
- Commercial operators use very old and highly polluting leaf blower models that should be retired from service
- Dust from leaf blowers gets everywhere – indoors, on buildings, on clothes, on plants
- Gasoline is often spilled when gas powered blowers are refueled
- Leaf blowers are constant source of disruptive noise in residential areas; especially disruptive in higher density area such as apartments or townhomes where leaf blowers may be in use throughout the day
- Leaf blowers are especially harmful and a nuisance to people who stay at home during the day including the young, the elderly, and telecommuters
- Leaf blowers are ineffective, and same results could be achieved with rakes and brooms without the harmful effects
- Leaf blowers produce a bad smell
- Leaf blowers produce particulate matter and dust, which is harmful to health
- Leaf blowers should be registered and certified to verify compliance
- Restrict leaf blower use on weekends and/or specific days of the week

Comments opposed to restrictions:

- Ban on leaf blowers will cause increased use of hose and water to clean landscapes
- Ban would constitute government over-reach
- Comparisons between gas blower and on-road vehicle emission rates are deceiving
- Continue to allow use of electric blowers
- Do not ban or restrict leaf blower use
- Electric blowers are not suitable for use on commercial properties, and a ban on gas blowers would be harmful to businesses
- Emissions are small compared to other sources, such as on road vehicles
- Gas blower alternatives are cost prohibitive, especially for large properties and commercial operators
- Individuals should have the right to operate gas-powered leaf blowers
- Noise level is measured at full throttle, but leaf blowers are rarely operated at full throttle
- People should try to resolve their issues by appealing to their neighbor who is operating the leaf blower rather than creating new laws
- There is a very small environmental benefit to placing a ban on leaf blowers

Additional comments:

- If a ban on two-stroke leaf blowers is being evaluated, the City should consider bans on other two-stroke engines in use in Sunnyvale
- Leaf blowers have vacuum mode that is less harmful
- Stronger enforcement and greater awareness of existing ordinances is needed
- Sunnyvale and Silicon Valley should encourage or incentivize technological advancements in leaf blower design through a contest or other means
- The primary issue that should be addressed is education and awareness on the proper use of leaf blowers

Leaf Blower Community Outreach Meeting for Businesses and Professional Landscapers (January 8, 2015)

Three community members in attendance including one landscape professional.

Comments in favor of restrictions:

- Restrictions will incentivize industry to develop leaf blowers that address concerns

Comments opposed to restrictions:

- For commercial landscapers, battery models are insufficient in power and battery life to serve as a replacement for gas blowers
- Gas ban would harm landscaping industry due to high price of replacement equipment and reduced service efficiency
- Residential ban would hurt neighborhood aesthetics, cause leaves to accumulate on lawns and exacerbate storm drain blockage issues

- Risk of electrocution with electric blowers around pools

Additional comments:

- City will have difficulty using electric blowers in the large, open spaces that it maintains
- Disagree with any ban but amenable to enhanced time of use restrictions
- Education programs targeting commercial operators, if used, must be ongoing initiatives in order to be effective
- Instead of a ban of gas-powered blowers, City should encourage use of new, low-noise gas models, which are just as quiet as electric and battery models
- Sunnyvale should offer an exchange program to assist commercial landscapers in covering equipment change costs