



City of Sierra Madre

Office of the City Clerk

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THE BROWN ACT PROVIDES THE PUBLIC WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PUBLIC COMMENTS AT ANY PUBLIC MEETING.

THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING AND WILL BE POSTED ONTO THE CITY'S WEBSITE FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND TRANSPARENCY.

THE COMMENTS ATTACHED ARE SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. THE CITY DOES NOT CONFIRM THE VERACITY OF THE STATEMENTS PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

23 February 2024

To: Mayor Kriebs, Mayor Pro Tem Parkhurst, and Sierra Madre City Council Members

From: Bill Patzert, Resident, [REDACTED]

Subject: Banning gas-powered leaf blowers in Sierra Madre

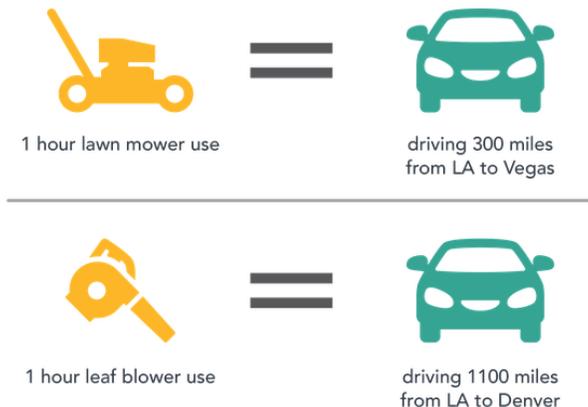
Issue: Why should we ban gas-powered leaf blowers in Sierra Madre?

First, their environmental and climate impacts are horrific.

This technology relies on a combustible mix of oil and gas. A typical leaf blower reportedly burns just 60 percent of its fuel—the rest is spewed into the atmosphere. The two-stroke gas engines that power most leaf blowers use is an antiquated technology that has been phased out in nearly all areas—except yard work.

Emissions are significant

Today, operating a commercial lawn mower for one hour emits as much smog-forming pollution as driving a new light-duty passenger car about 300 miles – about the distance from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, more than 4 hours of drive time. For a commercial leaf blower, one hour of operation emits smog-forming pollution comparable to driving a new light-duty passenger car about 1100 miles – about the distance from Los Angeles to Denver, over 15 hours of driving.



Simply, gas-powered leaf blowers contribute to climate change and harm public health. Worse yet, gas-powered leaf blowers also emit nitrous oxide. The EPA estimates that the impact of one pound of nitrous oxide on warming the atmosphere is almost 300 times that of an equivalent pound of carbon dioxide. EPA air quality scientists have testified that gas powered lawn equipment are one of the country's largest sources of pollution. Many communities all over the world have already banned these pollution emitting machines.

Second, gas-powered leaf blowers are loud.

Really loud. Some gas-powered leaf blowers generate a roar at 100 decibels while blasting air at 280 miles an hour. That 100-decibel roar is the same noise level as a passenger jet taking off.

Admittedly, electric leaf blowers still produce noise, but in most models at lower decibel levels than gasoline-powered blowers. In general, today electric leaf blowers are designed to meet a noise standard of 59 decibels at 50 feet away. Gasoline blowers, by comparison, typically produce 70 or more decibels at 50 feet. Because the decibel scale is logarithmic, similar to the Richter Scale for earthquakes, this amounts to four times as much noise 50 feet away from a gas-powered blower, compared to a typical electric leaf blower. Moreover, at 200 feet, gas blower noise is up to 22 times higher than a comparable electric blower. This is because it is not just the decibel level—the *kind* of noise is particularly pernicious. Gas powered leaf blowers operate at a low frequency that penetrates concrete walls and the inner sanctum of homes with ease. Some gas-powered leaf blowers can be heard nearly three football fields away.

- The broad impact of gas leaf blower noise on communities may be explained by a strong low frequency component, according to a recently published study. The study found low frequency noise from commercial gas leaf blowers persisted at high levels for 800 feet from the source. Low frequency sound travels over long distances and penetrates walls and windows. These are the types of sound poorly tolerated by humans and become amplified in indoor settings.

In contrast, electric blowers operate at higher frequencies, which do not carry as far and penetrate less into our homes. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that electric blowers may emit a high-pitched sound, which is particularly perceptible at close range.

That said, residents, where they are transitioning gardeners and residents away from gas-powered leaf blowers to electric models under a city ordinance similar to what is being proposed for Sierra Madre, increasingly comment that their neighborhoods are becoming quieter during the day as more gardeners and residents transition to electric blowers.

Third, gas-powered lawn care has been linked to debilitating health issues, such as cancer, asthma, heart disease, and hearing loss.

In the Los Angeles Basin, the AQMD estimates that lawn equipment and other offroad engines are contributing 10 to 20 percent of smog-forming emissions and have multiple negative impacts on public health. All of us are exposed to the air pollution from leaf blowers and over sustained periods of time.

Not only workers and residents that operate these tools are exposed to leaf blower noise at close range, this day time noise has become part of life in Sierra Madre and has long-term, negative impacts on all of us. The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention found that one-quarter of Americans between ages 20 to 69 already suffer from diminished hearing. This outcome is due in large part to ambient urban noise, including sirens, traffic, and leaf blowers. Permanent hearing loss can occur with just 15 minutes of exposure at the highest decibel level that gas-powered leaf blowers operate. Author James Fallows has noted that “noise is the secondhand smoke of the era.” Since electric blowers operate at higher frequencies, which do not carry as far and are blocked by walls and windows, the ambient neighborhood noise is lessened.

The health impacts of leaf blowers also pose equity health issues. Low-wage workers, gardeners, suffer the most. Tragically, they are almost assured to develop hearing and health issues if they are exposed to gas powered lawn equipment on a long-term, daily basis.

In summary, gas powered leaf blowers are a serious public health problem that also pose significant harm to the local and planetary climate. Let us regulate gas-powered leaf blowers out of Sierra Madre.

Sincerely, William C. Patzert

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William C. Patzert". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

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