

MEMORANDUM

July 23, 2025

TO: Transportation and Environment (TE) Committee

FROM: Ludeen McCartney-Green, Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

PURPOSE: Worksession – to receive Committee recommendation

Expected Attendees

Representatives from the Department of Protection (DEP)

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption sponsored by the Lead Sponsor Councilmember Alborno and Co-sponsors Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz was introduced on June 17, 2025. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 15 at 1:30 p.m. A Transportation and Environment (TE) Committee worksession is tentatively scheduled for July 28.

Expedited Bill 19-25 would:

- (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year;
- (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and
- (3) generally amend the law regarding noise control.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Expedited Bill 19-25 is to provide a seasonal exemption for professional landscaping companies on the ban of gas-powered leaf blower equipment, effective July 1, 2025. Commercial landscapers argue that the ban will significantly harm the industry and pose an undue hardship for businesses to comply with the law. Some concerns raised by landscapers include: (1) the lack of battery-powered equipment on the market with comparable power and runtime as gas-powered equipment, especially during the fall season; (2) the high cost of transitioning to a fleet of electric blowers, including batteries, chargers, and possibly generators; (3) increased emissions

and noise from gas or diesel-powered generators needed to charge the batteries; and (4) higher costs for customers and potential workforce reductions.

BACKGROUND

The Council passed Bill 18-22, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments, back in October 2023, which implemented a ban on the sale (effective June 1, 2024) and a complete ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers (effective July 1, 2025).¹ The ban was implemented due to significant noise complaints from County residents regarding the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, as the noise can easily travel through windows and doors, which impacts a person's ability to enjoy their home. In addition, the ban provided co-benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increased clean air, and further support for the County's Climate Action Plan.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) discussed its challenges with enforcing environmental noise because leaf blowers no longer have original manufacturer labels that indicate the level of decibels.² County law permits a maximum allowed decibel level during the daytime is 67 dBA. Based on industry standards, a leaf blower's noise level can range from 65-92 dBA, based on each leaf blower's specifications. Research has shown that beyond being distracting, the noise level could have adverse health effects, both auditory (such as hearing loss and tinnitus), systemic vascular disease, and mental illness³ for workers.

A 2015 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study estimates that there are 11 million leaf blowers in the United States.⁴ Using this nationwide information and extrapolating using the County's population estimates, there could be more than 35,000 leaf blowers in Montgomery County. Montgomery County is also home to one of the largest landscaping companies in the region, Ruppert Landscape, which employs nearly 2,000 employees.⁵

Jurisdictions with a seasonal ban

In the cities of Winnetka, Illinois, and Morristown, New Jersey, the use of gas-powered lawn equipment is restricted with a seasonal ban. In Winnetka, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers is prohibited in April, October, and November.⁶ In Morristown, use is prohibited January through September each year, with an exception to the ban from October through December each year.

¹ The Montgomery County Code Section 31B-9(f) does not currently reflect the codified language adopted by the Council under Bill 18-22. The enacted language for subsection (f) will appear in the Code after the effective date, July 1, 2025.

² Montgomery County Council, Introduction of Bill 18-22 (June 28, 2022), [Montgomery County Council - Legislative Information Management System – bill details](#).

³ Id. at Page 3.

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/banks.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.lawnandlandscape.com/page/top-100/>

⁶ Section 9.16.021 of Winnetka Village Code Ordinance No. MC-06-2023

BILL SPECIFICS

Expedited Bill 19-25 would provide a seasonal exemption for landscaping companies that own or operate a business in the County that provides services such as lawn care, tree care, or horticultural services for residential homes or commercial properties.

The seasonal exemption allows the use of combustion-powered leaf blower equipment by a professional landscaping company for 3 months during the fall, starting October 1 until December 31, limiting use to weekdays (Mondays – Fridays) between the hours of 8 am – 8 pm. The exemption does not apply to weekends; landscapers would still need to comply with the ban.

Lastly, the bill would sunset the seasonal exemption, and it would no longer be effective 3 years after the bill becomes law.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT STATEMENTS

Fiscal Impact. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) found that **Expedited Bill 19-25 is “not expected to impact County revenues or expenditures.”** Specifically, OMB found that “Reducing the amount of time the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers is in effect will not materially impact Department of Environmental Protections (DEP) operational costs because DEP staff can easily update public communication procedures to reflect the changes brought about by the bill. DEP does not anticipate additional staff necessary to enforce the ban, so there will be no increase in personnel costs.” (© 4).

Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact. OLO “anticipates **Expedited Bill 19-25 will have a negative impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County.** Latinx-owned businesses may disproportionately benefit from a seasonal exemption to the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers by avoiding costs to transition to electric leaf blowers. This could also help avoid job instability or landscaping employees who are disproportionately Latinx. However, these benefits would likely be outweighed by the health risks to landscaping employees of continuing to operate gas-powered leaf blowers.” To mitigate these health risks, OLO recommends that the Council “Engage with BIPOC landscaping employees to determine appropriate workplace protections to include in Bill 19-25.” (© 10).

Climate Assessment. OLO “anticipates **Expedited Bill 19-25 will likely have a small, negative impact on the County’s contribution to climate change as it would allow for gas-powered leaf blowers to be used by commercial landscapers during peak leaf season.**” However, this exemption would last three years, so it would have a small impact on the County overall.” To reduce this negative impact, “**OLO recommends that the Council could shorten the time of the professional landscaper exemption period and/or set an earlier sunset date.**” (© 5).

Economic Impact. The Economic Impact Statement was not available at the time of publication of this staff report. It can be found on OLO’s website when available: [Economic Impact Statements - Office of Legislative Oversight- Montgomery County, Maryland \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/legislativestatement/)

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

The County Council held a public hearing for Expedited Bill 19-25 on July 18, 2025, where 43 individuals and organizations testified in support and opposition of Bill 19-25. Additionally, we received written testimony from over 60 individuals and organizations. See public hearing testimonies on © 49 - © 138.

Testimony in **support of Expedited Bill 19-25** could be categorized into three main components:

- 1) **Economic Impact:** Landscapers argue that the temporary seasonal exemption is necessary to prevent significant financial burdens on landscaping businesses. They highlight that the current battery-powered equipment is not yet capable of handling the heavy workload during the fall season, especially with wet leaves. The high cost of transitioning to battery-powered equipment, including the need for multiple batteries and chargers, is a major concern for small businesses. Estimates stated that purchasing a new high-performance leaf blower costs around \$500, with batteries ranging from \$900 to \$1,600 each. Those in support of the bill testified that batteries last between 30 minutes and one hour, needing to be replaced numerous times a day, requiring many batteries for each crew.
- 2) **Employee Safety and Efficiency:** Proponents emphasize that gas-powered leaf blowers are more efficient and less physically demanding for workers. They argue that battery-powered blowers are heavier and require frequent battery changes, which can lead to increased physical strain and potential injuries for workers.
- 3) **Technological Limitations:** Many supporters pointed out that the current battery technology is not yet advanced enough to meet the demands of commercial landscaping. They believe that a temporary exemption would provide time for technology to improve and become more cost-effective.

Testimony in **opposition to Expedited Bill 19-25** could be categorized into three main components:

- 1) **Environmental and Health Impact:** Opponents express concerns about the environmental and health impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers. They highlight that gas blowers contribute to air and noise pollution, which can have adverse effects on both the environment and public health. The use of gas blowers is associated with harmful emissions and high noise levels, which can disturb residents and harm workers' health.
- 2) **Commitment to Transition and Reduction of Noise:** Critics argue that the exemption undermines the county's commitment to transitioning to cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable landscaping practices. They believe that allowing a temporary exemption would delay progress and send the wrong message about the county's environmental goals.

- 3) **Fairness to Compliant Businesses:** Some opponents emphasize that many landscaping businesses have already invested in battery-powered equipment and have adapted to the new regulations. They argue that providing an exemption would be unfair to these businesses that have made the effort to comply with the law. Additionally, many in opposition to Bill 19-25 stated that landscaping companies have had sufficient time to become compliant with the gas leaf blower ban, enacted in 2023.

In addition, Tricia Swanson, on behalf of the CE, testified in opposition to the bill and discussed the possibility of amending the “enforcement” section of the law.

ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE’S DISCUSSION

1. Rebate program overview.

As required by law, DEP must provide the Council with an annual report that summarizes the effectiveness of the leafblower law and rebate program. See page © 15 for the full report. The TE Committee may want DEP to discuss highlights regarding its report.

A few key points noted in the report are:

- **Total monies allocated.** Approximately \$325,176 in rebates were distributed during the first year.
- **Total number of rebates distributed.** In total, 766 rebate vouchers were issued; 513 were redeemed, of which 308 were distributed to residential and 205 were distributed to commercial businesses. *See Table 1: Summary of Rebate Activity* (© 16).
- **Challenge (transition and timing of ban).** The County’s law implemented a year-round restriction with only one fall season between the passage of the law and implementation. Businesses had little time to experiment with using electric leaf blowers before switching to new tools. Companies that have been making the change, along with industry experts, indicate that during heavy leaf cleanup, battery-operated equipment struggles to keep up with leaf demand. Since customers still expect “tidy” landscapes or have large parking lots or heavy leaf loads, landscapers struggle to meet expectations while also incurring significant capital costs to purchase enough leaf blowers to handle the workload.
- **Recommendation.** DEP may consider requesting an extension of the rebate program to accommodate more businesses, especially small landscaping companies.

2. How efficient are electric leaf blowers, and what is their power capacity in the field compared to a gas-powered leaf blower?

DEP’s annual report states that operators will be required to manage multiple batteries (2 to 3 backpack batteries with a watt-hour range of 900 to 1,400 or 8 to 10 onboard batteries with a watt-hour range of 250 to 900) versus refueling gas leaf blowers with one or two 5-gallon gas cans. (See © 30).

The above is consistent with public testimony by landscaping businesses:

- Paul Kolanowski from Collins Landscaping emphasized that battery-powered blowers only run for about 40 minutes and require frequent recharging, which is not feasible for their operations.
- Keith Gage from Landscape Management Systems and Chuck Whealton of Ruppert Landscape LLC highlighted that battery-powered blowers are significantly heavier than gas blowers, which can cause physical strain and injuries for workers.
- Eric Wenger from Complete Plant Health Care, Inc. mentioned that the increased weight of battery-powered blowers makes the job harder for workers, especially during the fall season.
- Bradley Klein from Montgomery County Green emphasized that while battery technology is improving, it is not yet sufficient to handle the heavy workload during the fall season.
- Jason Kilmore from JB Kline Landscaping mentioned that the cost of transitioning to battery-powered equipment is substantial, and the technology is not yet reliable for commercial use.

3. What are the investment costs switching from gas-powered to electric leaf blower?

- DEP indicated that the cost of battery electric blowers could be up to five times higher than that of gas leaf blowers. Specifically, a crew of 3 trucks, each with 2 leaf blowers, may now face over \$30,000 in capital expense to purchase electric leaf blowers and multiple batteries. The cost-benefit pays off after 2 to 3 years. (See, © 31).
- According to the comprehensive analysis in “*The Economics of Switching to Battery-Powered Leaf Blowers: A Cost Comparison*,” authored by Santa Cruz Coalition for Healthy & Safe Environment (See, © 33):
 - **Mid-sized properties (3 hours of use per day):** The initial cost of battery equipment is \$772, with a positive return on investment (ROI) achieved in 9.7 months. By the end of the second year, switching to battery blowers would save \$1,142. The average annual rate of return for switching to battery equipment is 91%.
 - **Large properties (5 hours of use per day):** The initial cost of battery equipment is \$2,261, with a positive ROI achieved in 10.5 months. By the end of the second year, switching to battery blowers would save \$2,904. The average annual rate of return for switching to battery equipment is 94%.

4. Amendment by Councilmember Albornoz

Councilmember Albornoz may introduce an amendment to change the hours of operation for leaf equipment used by a professional landscaping company, from 8 am to 8 pm, to 8 am to 6 pm. Essentially, reducing use by two hours earlier. The amendment is on page © 48.

Decision Point: Whether the Committee adopts the amendment to reduce the hours of operation for the use of leaf blower equipment?

5. Technical Amendment

Council staff recommends, for clarity, that lines 17 and 18 of the Bill should include “provides” inserted at the beginning of the line.

Amend page 2, as follows:

Professional landscaping company means an individual or group of individuals who own or operate a company in the County that:

- (1) provides lawn care;
- (2) provides tree care; or
- (3) provides horticultural services for residential homes or commercial properties.

Decision Point: Whether the Committee agrees to adopt the technical amendment?

Next Steps: Whether the TE Committee recommends Expedited Bill 19-25 for enactment, as amended?

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Expedited Bill No. 19-25
Concerning: Noise Control – Leaf
Removal Equipment – Seasonal
Exemption
Revised: 6/23/2025 Draft No. 3
Introduced: June 17, 2025
Expires: December 7, 2026
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: 3 years after the effective
date
Ch. [#], Laws of Mont. Co. [year]

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Alborno
Cosponsors: Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz

AN EXPEDITED ACT to:

- (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leafblower equipment during certain months of the year;
- (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and
- (3) generally, amend the law regarding noise control.

By amending

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 31B, Noise Control
Sections 31B-2, 31B-9, and 31B-10

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

Sec. 1. Sections 31B-2, 31B-9, 31B-10 are amended as follows:

31B-2. Definitions.

In this Chapter, the following words and phrases have the following meanings:

* * *

Leafblower means any portable device designed or intended to blow, vacuum, or move leaves or any other type of unattached debris or material by generating a concentrated stream of air. Leafblower includes devices or machines that accept vacuum attachments.

* * *

Person means an individual, group of individuals, corporation, firm, partnership, or voluntary association; or a department, bureau, agency, or instrument of the County or any municipality, or of any other government to the extent allowed by law.

Professional landscaping company means an individual or group of individuals who own or operate a company in the County that:

(1) provides lawn care;

(2) provides tree care; or

(3) provides horticultural services for residential homes or commercial properties.

31B-9. Leaf removal equipment.

* * *

(e) *Sale of combustion leaf removal equipment – prohibited.* A person must not sell or offer for sale a combustion engine-powered handheld, backpack, or walk-behind leaf blower or leaf vacuum.

(f) *Use of combustion leaf removal equipment – prohibited.* Except as provided in Section 31B-10, [A] a person must not use a combustion

engine-powered handheld, backpack, or walk-behind leaf blower or leaf vacuum.

31B-10. Exemptions.

* * *

(d) Seasonal exemption - use of combustion leaf removal equipment. A professional landscaping company is exempt from the prohibition under Section 31B-9(f) during the following days of each year: October 1 to December 31, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Sec. 2. Expedited Effective Date. The Council declares that this legislation is necessary for the immediate protection of the public interest. This Act takes effect on the date on which it becomes law.

Sec. 3. Sunset. This Act must sunset and have no further force and effect 3 years after this Act becomes law.



Fiscal Impact Statement

Office of Management and Budget

Bill 19-25

Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

Bill Summary

Expedited Bill 19-25 would: (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leafblower equipment during certain months of the year; (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and (3) generally amend the law regarding noise control.

Fiscal Impact Summary

The bill is not expected to impact County revenues or expenditures.

Fiscal Year	0	0	0	0	0	0	Total
Personnel Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Operating Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Impact	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Fiscal Impact Analysis

Reducing the amount of time the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers is in effect will not materially impact Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) operational costs because DEP staff can easily update public communication procedures to reflect the changes brought about by the bill. DEP does not anticipate additional staff necessary to enforce the ban, so there will be no increase in personnel costs.

Staff Impact

An additional 10-20 staff hours will be needed to update information to reflect the seasonal exemption. DEP can absorb this increase at current staffing levels.

Actuarial Analysis

The bill is not expected to impact retiree pension or group insurance costs.

Information Technology Impact

The bill is not expected to impact the County Information Technology (IT) or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.

Other Information

Later actions that may impact revenue or expenditures if future spending is projected

The bill does not authorize future spending.

Contributors

Stan Edwards, Department of Environmental Protection
Jodi Rose, Department of Environmental Protection
Mary Travaglini, Department of Environmental Protection
Payne Tarkenton, Office of Management and Budget



Climate Assessment

Office of Legislative Oversight

EXPEDITED BILL 19-25: NOISE CONTROL – LEAF REMOVAL EQUIPMENT – SEASONAL EXEMPTION

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 19-25 will likely have a small, negative impact on the County's contribution to climate change as it would allow for gas-powered leaf blowers to be used by commercial landscapers during peak leaf season. However, this exemption would last three years so it would have a small impact on the County overall.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 19-25

The County Council passed a Bill in September 2021 which (1) established a ban on the sale of gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on June 1, 2024 and (2) completely banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on July 1, 2025.¹ The purpose of this legislation was to decrease noise pollution and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.²

Expedited Bill 19-25 would create a seasonal exemption for landscaping companies that either own or operate a business in the County. Specifically, the Bill would:

- Establish an exemption for professional landscaping companies between October 1 – December 31 with a limit on use between 8 AM – 8 PM for weekdays only; and
- Sunset this exemption three years after the Bill becomes law.³

Expedited Bill 19-25 was introduced by the County Council on June 17, 2025.

METHODOLOGIES, ASSUMPTIONS, AND UNCERTAINTIES

Methodology. OLO reviewed research on gas-powered leaf blowers related to emissions, noise pollution, and other environmental impacts.

Assumptions. The assessment assumes at least some landscaping businesses would continue to use gas-powered leaf blowers during the exemption period.

Uncertainties. OLO cannot determine how many landscaping businesses would continue to use gas-powered leaf blowers until the proposed exemption expires.

EMISSIONS AND NOISE POLLUTION ASSOCIATED WITH COMMERCIAL LEAF BLOWER USE

While leaf blowers may be used year round to blow away light snow, grass trimmings, and other debris, heavy leaf blower use is during the fall season, when leaves start to fall from trees.⁴ The exemption would allow commercial landscapers to use gas-powered leaf blowers during peak leaf season, between October 1 – December 31.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) estimated using a commercial gas-powered leaf blower for one hour produces as many emissions as a car driving 1,100 miles, approximately 440,000 grams (.49 tons)⁵ of carbon dioxide.⁶ Gas-powered leaf blower emissions also include particulate matter which contributes to decreased local air quality and is a key component of smog.⁷

A report conducted by the U.S. Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) which used data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Emissions Inventory found that in 2020, Montgomery County was ranked 23rd out of the 100 top counties in the U.S. for emissions from lawn and garden equipment.⁸ An estimated 172,840 tons of carbon dioxide were released from lawn and garden equipment usage in the County, which includes gas-powered leaf blowers.⁹

Commercial gas-powered leaf blowers also cause significant noise pollution. A Harvard study found gas-powered leaf blowers greatly exceeded the World Health Organization's (WHO) Daytime Sound Standards of 55 decibels (dB(A)). It found that at 100 feet away from a running leaf blower, noise levels averaged 82.8 dB(A) and at 50 feet away, noise levels averaged 85.5 dB(A).¹⁰ Prolonged exposure to this level of noise can lead to hearing loss. Long, sustained exposure to noise pollution can also affect human health and lead to heart problems, high blood pressure, stress, anxiety, and other health issues.¹¹

WHO ruled noise as the second largest environmental factor contributing to health problems in Europe (the largest environmental factor being air pollution).¹² The CDC also recognizes the dangers of noise pollution on human health and the recommended exposure limit for work-related noise exposure to be below 85 (dBA) over an eight-hour shift.¹³ Decreasing noise pollution can improve health outcomes, and subsequently increase community resilience.¹⁴

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Commercial, gas-powered leaf blowers cause air and noise pollution in communities. The Bill proposes an exemption from October 1 – December 31 to allow commercial landscape businesses to use gas-powered leaf blowers, which includes peak leaf season in the fall.

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 19-25 will likely have a small, negative impact on the County's contribution to climate change as it would allow for gas-powered leaf blowers to be used by commercial landscapers during peak leaf season. However, this exemption would last three years so it would have a small impact on the County overall. The specific impacts on the County's greenhouse gas emissions and community resilience are as follows:

Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Using a commercial gas-powered leaf blower for one hour produced as many emissions as a car driving 1,100 miles, approximately 440,000 grams of carbon dioxide (.49 tons). Assuming multiple landscaping businesses in the County will use gas-powered leaf blowers during the proposed exemption, this would contribute negatively to the County's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

Community Resilience. Usage of commercial gas-powered leaf blowers can impact an individual's health by exposure to air and noise pollution. Usage of these leaf blowers can impact the health of both landscape workers and residents in a community where equipment is being used. Health outcomes of a community are tied to a community's resilience – improving health outcomes can increase community resilience and vice versa.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Climate Assessment Act requires OLO to offer recommendations, such as amendments or other measures to mitigate any anticipated negative climate impacts.¹⁵ OLO anticipates Expedited Bill 19-25 will likely have a small, negative impact on the County's contribution to addressing climate change.

To reduce the climate impact of this bill, OLO recommends that the Council could shorten the time of the professional landscaper exemption period and/or set an earlier sunset date. Any reduction in the usage of gas-powered leaf blowers would reduce the negative impact on the County's contribution to climate change.

CAVEATS

OLO notes two caveats to this climate assessment. First, predicting the impacts of legislation upon climate change is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and the broad, global nature of climate change. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to inform the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the Climate Assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on the County's contribution to addressing climate change. These climate assessments will provide the Council with a more thorough understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed legislation, at the County level. The scope of the Climate Assessments is limited to the County's contribution to addressing climate change, specifically upon the County's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and how actions suggested by legislation could help improve the County's adaptive capacity to climate change, and therefore, increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed County bills may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Kaitlyn Simmons drafted this assessment.

¹ ["Leaf Blowers", Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Accessed July 8, 2025.](#)

² ["Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption", Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025.](#)

³ [Ibid.](#)

⁴ ["Leaf Blowers Today", Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Accessed 7/7/2025.; "The Debate Over Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers Gusts into Federal Court", Georgetown Environmental Law Review, April 3, 2025.](#)

⁵ Calculated from ["Greenhouse Gas Emissions from a Typical Passenger Vehicle", US EPA](#)

⁶ ["SORE - Small Off-Road Engines Fact Sheet", California Air Resources Board, Accessed 7/7/2025.](#)

⁷ ["Greenhouse Gas Emissions from a Typical Passenger Vehicle", US EPA, Accessed 7/7/2025.; "Particulate Matter \(PM\) Basics", U.S. EPA, Accessed 7/7/2025.](#)

⁸ Lawn and garden equipment includes lawn mowers, leaf blowers, string trimmers, chainsaws, and other gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

⁹ ["Lawn Care Goes Electric:", U.S. Public Interest Research Groups, October 2023.](#)

¹⁰ ["Characteristics of Lawn and Garden Equipment Sound: A Community Pilot Study", Walker, E. and Banks, J. L., Journal of Environmental Toxicology Studies, August 23, 2019.](#)

¹¹ ["Too Loud! For Too Long!", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Accessed 7/8/2025.](#)

¹² ["Noise". World Health Organization, Accessed 7/8/2025.; "Could everyday noise be affecting your health?", UC Davis Environmental Health Sciences Center, March 3, 2023.](#)

¹³ ["Understand Noise Exposure: Noise and Hearing Loss", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 16, 2024.](#)

¹⁴ ["What are the lessons from COVID-19 for creating healthy, sustainable, resilient future cities?", Giles-Corti, et. al., Nature - NPJ Urban Sustainability, June 2, 2023.; "Perceptions Of Community Resilience: A Maryland Community Pilot Study", Akerlof, K., et. al.,](#)

[Natioanl Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2016.; "Environmental Noise Pollution in the United States: Developing an Effective Public Health Response", Hammer, M. S., Swinburn, T. K., and Neitzel, R. L., Environmental Health Perspectives, December 5, 2013.](#)

¹⁵ Bill 3-22, Legislative Branch – Climate Assessments – Required, Montgomery County Council, Effective date October 24, 2022

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

EXPEDITED BILL 19-25: NOISE CONTROL – LEAF REMOVAL EQUIPMENT – SEASONAL EXEMPTION

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Bill 19-25 will have a negative impact on racial equity and social justice (RESJ) in the County. Latinx-owned businesses may disproportionately benefit from a seasonal exemption to the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers by avoiding costs to transition to electric leaf-blowers. This could help prevent widening the profit gap between Latinx and White-owned businesses. This could also help avoid job instability for landscaping employees who are disproportionately Latinx. However, these benefits would likely be outweighed by the health risks to landscaping employees of continuing to operate gas-powered leaf blowers.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

RESJ impact statements (RESJIS) evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. RESJ is a **process** that focuses on centering the needs, leadership, and power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and communities with low incomes. RESJ is also a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities. Applying a RESJ lens is important to achieve RESJ.¹ This involves seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social inequities that cause racial and social disparities.²

PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 19-25

In September 2023, the County Council passed Bill 18-22.³ This Bill established a ban on the sale of gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on June 1, 2024. It also completely banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers beginning on July 1, 2025.⁴ This Bill aimed to reduce noise pollution and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.⁵

The purpose of Expedited Bill 19-25 is to create a seasonal exemption to the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. The exemption would apply for landscaping companies that own or operate a business in the County. If enacted, Bill 19-25 would:⁶

- Establish an exemption for professional landscaping companies to use gas-powered leaf blowers between October 1 and December 31 only between 8 AM and 8 PM on weekdays; and
- Sunset this exemption three years after the Bill becomes law.

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 19-25 on June 17, 2025.

This RESJIS builds on the one for Bill 18-22, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments, which OLO published in August 2022.⁷ Please refer to this RESJIS for background on entrepreneurship, landscape contracting, leaf blowers, and racial equity.

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 19-25

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

Bill 19-25 would exempt landscaping companies from the County's ban on gas-powered leaf blowers between October 1 and December 31. While leaf blowers can be used year-round, they are most frequently used during the fall to gather leaves. Thus, the exemption period proposed in this Bill aligns with the peak usage period of leaf blowers.

To consider the anticipated impact of Bill 19-25 on RESJ in the County, OLO recommends the consideration of two related questions:

- Who would primarily benefit or be burdened by this bill?
- What racial and social inequities could passage of this bill weaken or strengthen?

OLO identified the following groups who would be impacted by Bill 19-25:

- **Landscaping business owners** would benefit from avoiding costs to transition to electric leaf blowers. By allowing them to continue the status quo of their operations during the peak usage period for leaf blowers, the Bill would likely help landscaping business owners avoid a considerable amount of transition costs for at least three years.

A 2011 study commissioned by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce found that, nationally, compared to their share of business ownership across all sectors, Latinx-owned business were overrepresented in the landscaping industry.⁸ More recent local data suggests Latinx-owned businesses may also be overrepresented in the County's landscaping industry. As shown in Table A (Appendix) Latinx-owned employer businesses in the County are overrepresented in the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry that includes landscaping businesses. Notably, White-owned businesses are also overrepresented in this industry.

As noted in the RESJIS for Bill 18-22, there is a wide revenue gap between White-owned and BIPOC-owned businesses,⁹ which also leads to a wide profit gap after accounting for costs. Table B (Appendix) shows that in the local Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry, Latinx-owned businesses only account for 12 percent of revenue. Conversely, White-owned businesses account for 87 percent of revenue in the industry. If Latinx-owned businesses are overrepresented in the local landscaping industry, reducing costs to transition to electric leaf blowers could prevent widening the profit gap between Latinx and White-owned businesses.

- **Landscaping employees** could benefit from avoiding job instability if leaf blower transition costs otherwise cause landscaping business owners to lay off workers. However, this would likely be more than offset by the burden of their continued exposure to health hazards associated with operating gas-powered leaf blowers.¹⁰ Landscaping employees would continue to be exposed to these hazards during the peak usage period for leaf blowers for at least three years.

Similar to business ownership, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 2011 study found that Latinx people were also overrepresented among landscaping employees in the U.S.¹¹ More recent local data suggests Latinx community members may also be overrepresented among landscaping employees in the County. While 6 percent of all community members work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations that include landscaping, 20 percent of Latinx community members work in these occupations. Of note, only 3 percent of Black, Asian, and White community members respectively work in these occupations.¹²

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 19-25

As noted in the RESJIS for Bill 18-22, direct exposure to noise and air pollution from gas-powered leaf blowers puts landscaping employees at increased risk of serious health conditions.¹³ A 2000 study by the California Air Resources Board observed landscaping employees who are “in the immediate vicinity of a [gas-powered] leaf blower during and shortly after operation are exposed to potentially high exhaust, fugitive dust, and noise emissions from leaf blowers on a routine basis.”¹⁴ This puts them at increased risk of a range of health concerns, including respiratory issues and hearing loss.¹⁵

- **Community members at large** would be burdened by continued exposure to health hazards associated with gas-powered leaf blowers, though to a lesser extent than landscaping employees. Community members would continue to be exposed to these hazards during the peak usage period for leaf blowers for at least three years. Community members would also be burdened by the negative environmental impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers.¹⁶

OLO does not have sufficient data to determine if there are usage patterns for leaf blowers that differentially impact community members by race and ethnicity. Assuming the use of leaf blowers is consistent throughout the County, OLO anticipates all community members would proportionately be burdened by the continued use of gas-powered leaf blowers by race and ethnicity.

OLO anticipates Bill 19-25 will have a negative impact on RESJ in the County. Latinx-owned businesses may disproportionately benefit from a seasonal exemption to the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers by avoiding costs to transition to electric leaf-blowers. This could help prevent widening the profit gap between Latinx and White-owned businesses. This could also help avoid job instability for landscaping employees who are disproportionately Latinx. However, these benefits would likely be outweighed by the health risks to landscaping employees of continuing to operate gas-powered leaf blowers.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Racial Equity and Social Justice Act requires OLO to consider whether recommended amendments to bills aimed at narrowing racial and social inequities are warranted in developing RESJ impact statements.¹⁷ OLO anticipates Expedited Bill 19-25 will have a negative impact on RESJ in the County. Should the Council seek to improve the RESJ impact of this Bill, OLO offers one policy option for Council consideration:

- **Engage with BIPOC landscaping employees to determine appropriate workplace protections to include in Bill 19-25.** Bill 19-25 will cause landscaping employees, community members who are disproportionately Latinx, to continue to be exposed to the health risks of gas-powered leaf blowers during their peak usage period. The Council could engage with local landscaping employees – with a particular focus on Latinx and other BIPOC workers – to understand what workplace protections could be included in the Bill to help protect against the health hazards of operating gas-powered leaf blowers. For instance, this could include a requirement for employers to provide additional protective equipment to employees or mandatory paid breaks during the workday to reduce employee exposure to noise and air pollution from gas-powered leaf blowers.

RESJ Impact Statement

Expedited Bill 19-25

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this racial equity and social justice impact statement should be noted. First, predicting the impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJ impact statement is intended to inform the legislative process rather than determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

APPENDIX

Table A. Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (NAICS 56) Employer Firms by Race and Ethnicity, Montgomery County

Race or ethnicity ¹⁸	% Business Owners (NAICS 56)	% All Business Owners (NAICS 00)	% Adult Population
Asian	5.7	21.8	16.0
Black	8.3	7.6	18.3
Native American	-	1.4	0.5
Pacific Islander	-	0.1	0.0
White	80.9	69.1	46.6
Latinx	26.6	10.0	18.7

Source: OLO Analysis of [AB2200CSA01, 2022 American Business Survey](#) and [Table S2101, 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#), Census Bureau.

Table B. Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue of Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (NAICS 56) Employer Firms by Race and Ethnicity, Montgomery County

Race or ethnicity	% Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue (NAICS 56)
Asian	5.6
Black	4.9
Native American	-
Pacific Islander	-
White	86.6
Latinx	11.7

Source: OLO Analysis of [AB2200CSA01, 2022 American Business Survey](#), Census Bureau.

¹ Definition of racial equity and social justice adopted from [Marlysa Gamblin et al., "Applying Racial Equity to U.S. Federal Nutrition Programs," Bread for the World](#) and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

² Ibid.

³ [Bill 18-22, Legislative Information System, Montgomery County Council](#).

⁴ ["Leaf Blowers", Department of Environmental Protection](#).

⁵ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 19-25, Montgomery County Council, Introduced June 17, 2025](#).

⁶ Ibid.

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⁷ [RESJIS for Bill 18-22, Office of Legislative Oversight, August 11, 2022.](#)

⁸ RESJIS for Bill 18-22, pg. 3 citing [“The Economic Impact of the Landscape and Lawn Care Services Industry on U.S. Latinos,” Inter-University Program for Latino Research, University of Notre Dame, November 2011, pg. 5.](#)

⁹ RESJIS for Bill 18-22, pg. 2.

¹⁰ RESJIS for Bill 18-22, pgs. 3-4.

¹¹ Ibid, pg. 3.

¹² [Table S0201, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Census Bureau.](#)

¹³ RESJIS for Bill 18-22, pg. 3.

¹⁴ [“A Report to the California Legislature on the Potential Health and Environmental Impacts of Leaf Blowers,” Air Resources Board, California Environmental Protection Agency, February 2000, pg. 49.](#)

¹⁵ [“Gas Leaf Blowers are Health Hazards,” Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, July 22, 2024.](#)

¹⁶ [“Electric of Gas Leaf Blowers...Neither?,” Sustainability, Washington University in St. Louis, November 17, 2020.](#)

¹⁷ [Bill 27-19, Administration – Human Rights – Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice – Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee – Established, Montgomery County Council.](#)

¹⁸ For Tables A and B, race is inclusive of Latinx origin. Estimates for Native American and Pacific Islander community members are not available for all data points. Margins of error for these data points may be large.

Leaf Blower Law and Rebate Program

Annual Report
April 2025



Report Outline

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1.2 Success and Challenges	Pg 2
1.3 Structure and Launch of the Rebate Program	Pg 3
1.4 Rebates Redeemed	Pg 7
Section 2 - FY24 Leaf Blower Law Outreach Summary and Challenges	
2.1 Public Outreach and Messaging About the Law	Pg 11
2.2 Challenges for Constituents with Compliance and DEP Recommendations	Pg 16
2.3 Enforcement	Pg 18
2.4 Question	Pg 18

Section 1 - FY24 Leaf Blower Rebate Program Summary Report

1.1 Rebate Program Overview

This report summarizes the first year of the Montgomery County Leaf Blower Rebate Program (LBRP) implemented by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The LBRP was developed under a requirement of 2024 Bill 18-22 that bans the sale of gas powered (GPLB) backpack, handheld, and walk-behind leaf blowers beginning July 1, 2024, and the ban on the use of these GPLBs beginning July 1, 2025. The LBRP was designed to coincide with the ban on sale of GPLBs to begin with assisting those making new investments in electric leaf blowers (ELBs). The LBRP program is intended to assist in reducing the economic impact to businesses and residents transitioning from gas-powered leaf blowers to electric leaf blowers.

This was the first LBRP in the County and was made available to the public three months after regulations were approved. Due to high demand and limited funding, the program was closed to applicants within 85 days of the portal opening. In total, the LBRP distributed \$325,176 in rebates in its inaugural year. This was an exemplary effort by staff and consultants to deliver the program to the public in a very short time. The following summarizes the timeline for implementation of the program:

- February 22, 2024 - Regulations for the rebate program were submitted to Council
- April 2, 2024 - Regulations were approved
- April 17, 2024 – Budget approved for LBRP
- July 31, 2024 – The rebate portal opened to the public to apply for a rebate
- August 6, 2024 – First rebate for FY 2025 was issued
- October 14, 2024—Rebate Portal is closed to new applicants
- January 31, 2025 – Final rebate for FY 2025 was redeemed (one order was on hold at the dealer until March 18)

A total of \$300,000 was appropriated for the LBRP, and an additional \$425,000 was appropriated for outreach to educate the public about the law and to design and administer the LBRP. DEP ultimately reallocated some of the outreach funds to the rebate program due to high demand for rebates:

- FY24 - \$395,000 Budget Supplemental Approved for Outreach and LBRP Research
- FY25 - \$300,000 Budget for FY25 Rebates (\$325,176 redeemed)¹
- FY25 - \$425,000 Budget for Outreach and LBRP Program Design and Administration

Rebates were sub-divided into three categories, per the regulations:

- Residential - \$100, one rebate per household for life of program
- Revenue Qualifying Commercial - \$1,500 for businesses with 5 or fewer employees and annual revenues of less than \$250,000, one rebate per year
- Revenue Non-Qualifying Commercial - \$1,000 for businesses with more than 5 employees and annual revenues of \$250,000 or more, one rebate per year

In total, 513 rebates were issued, of which 308 were residential and 205 were commercial. A summary of the rebate totals is provided in Table 1 below, and more details are included in the report on program outreach, structure, demographic data of recipients, successes and challenges, and related information about outreach regarding the new law and more.

Table 1: Summary of Rebate Activity

	Residential Rebates \$100	Revenue Qualifying \$1,500	Revenue Non-Qualifying \$1,000
# Approved Rebates	517	228	21
# Redeemed Rebates	308	187	18
\$\$ Redeemed	\$30,800	\$276,968	\$17,878

1.2 Success and Challenges

The LBRP has been incredibly successful and will have little need for programmatic changes in FY26.

Successes and challenges included:

- Successes
 - The portal was closed within 85 days with enough applications to utilize allocated rebate funds. All FY25 rebate funds were distributed by the end of FY25 Q3.
 - Outreach strategies including in-person “boots on the ground” outreach and targeted outreach drew target audiences to the LBRP.
 - The key audience, those with small landscaping companies, accessed most of the rebates as demonstrated by 85% of rebate funding being distributed to Revenue-Qualifying businesses.
 - Businesses led/owned by persons of color utilized 62% of rebate funds distributed.
 - Most commercial applicants (72%), reported an income of less than \$150,000, demonstrating that rebate funding was primarily distributed to small companies.
 - Development and rollout in a short time frame was highly successful due to dedicated DEP staff with some pre-existing knowledge of leaf blowers as well as skills to expand their knowledge. They applied program management skills and expertise to shepherd the changes to the law, develop outreach plans, and oversee the rebate program.
 - Success was also due to highly experienced contractor, DEP IT team’s expertise, cooperation from the manufacturers and retailers, and the County’s procurement, legal, and DEP team’s fast work.

¹ \$300,000 was originally allocated for rebates. DEP used \$25,000 from outreach funds to increase the allocation to \$325,000. The overage is within range of expected final invoicing from redeemed rebates.

- Dedicated translation work by DEP and contractors allowed us to ensure that communication to the landscaping community was clear.
- The program model and systems made applications and processing of vouchers seamless, with very few complaints from rebate recipients or dealers.
- Dealer feedback reflected they had a positive experience during the program and are interested in being a participating dealer again in FY26, along with interest from new dealers.
- Challenges
 - Funds for rebates are limited, and there are many more applicants than rebates available.
 - Short longevity of the program (85 days) due to limited funds was discouraging for hopeful applicants.
 - The County's law implemented a year-round restriction with only one fall season between passage of law and implementation. Businesses had little time to experiment with using electric leaf blowers before switching to new tools. Companies that have been making the change, along with industry experts, indicate that during heavy leaf cleanup the battery-operated equipment struggles to keep up with leaf demand. Since customers still expect "tidy" landscapes or have large parking lots or heavy leaf load, landscapers are struggling to meet expectations while at the same time up fronting significant capital to purchase enough leaf blowers for the workload.
 - The short time period to implement the program after regulations were approved was a tremendous challenge for staff and consultants.
 - DEP has received numerous vitriolic emails from constituents regarding their dislike of the legislation.
- Recommended Adjustments for Consideration
 - Currently there is \$300,000 allocated for rebates in FY26 and \$150,000 allocated for rebates in FY27, after which time the program will end. After the second year, DEP will evaluate if the program may need to be extended to allow for more rebates to be provided to the industry.
 - While DEP felt there was a good distribution of rebates among smaller and more fiscally impacted businesses, the rebate program is a first come-first served, program. This limits our ability to specifically target smaller landscapers that are more heavily reliant on leaf blowers for their revenue. Adjustments are being considered that would enable staff to encourage applications from small landscapers.
 - DEP will be pivoting its messaging from the law itself to increased education on alternative leaf management options like mowing, mulching, and other landscape practices in response to landscaper feedback about customer expectations/demands.

1.3 Structure and Launch of the Rebate Program

Funding. DEP developed a budget for 2.5 years of LBRP funding, including FY24, FY25, and FY26 funds. As the bill was passed mid-way through FY24, DEP had to submit a request for supplemental funding to cover expenses to develop and administer the LBRP and provide outreach and education about the law itself. DEP also had to rapidly develop budget requests for FY25 and FY26 funding.

Rebate Amounts. The regulations established three funding levels for the rebates, as mentioned above: residential, non-revenue qualifying commercial, and revenue qualifying commercial. Rebate amounts were

chosen that closely matched average industry numbers to purchase one electric leaf blower with one battery and charger. Considerations were also taken for how many rebates might be made available based on funding levels DEP projected might be appropriated for rebates over the course of two years.

- Residential rebates were set at \$100 and only one could be redeemed per property over the life of the program.
- Commercial rebates were divided into 2 categories. Commercial applicants are allowed one rebate per fiscal year that the program is in place. Applicants answer questions about their employee numbers and income at the time of the application in order for DEP to determine their eligibility for one of the following commercial rebates.
 - Non-Revue Qualifying Commercial - If a commercial operation had more than 5 employees and had an annual income of \$250,000 or more, they were eligible for a \$1000 rebate.
 - Revenue Qualifying Commercial - If a commercial operation earned less than \$250,000 or had 5 or fewer employees, they were designated as income-qualifying and were eligible for a \$1,500 rebate.

Staff and Contractors. DEP allocated staff from various divisions to manage programming, program design, contract oversight, and implementation of the LBRP. Approximately 2/3 FTE of one employee's time was dedicated to the program to ensure successful development and launch of the program and public outreach efforts. Additional staff time was devoted to the effort for administrative and oversight roles including the Watershed Restoration Division (WRD) Chief, WRD Stewardship Section Chief, Deputy Director, procurement staff, and IT department. Contributions from the DEP IT Department were instrumental as they developed a unique online portal and database to collect and manage rebate applications. This was executed in a compressed timespan to meet County goals to open the application portal in July of 2024.

DEP hired three contractors to develop and implement the LBRP. The first was Arcadis, which researched LBRPs across the Country, developed a model for the County's LBRP and guided the development of the LBRP Regulations. The second was a contract with McAndrew Company, a marketing and graphic design firm which handles outreach about the law itself, with ancillary outreach about the LBRP. The third contract is with American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA), a national expert in electric landscape equipment and associated rebate programs. AGZA was hired to oversee development, implementation, and administration of the rebate program alongside DEP. AGZA identified qualified electric leaf blower equipment, the manufacturers that produce it, and the authorized dealers that sell it. AGZA pre-qualified equipment and manufacturers, organized dealer logistics, provided advice to DEP on best practices and systems, reviewed and approved applications in accordance with the regulations, and managed program administration details and activities.

Program Design Parameters. DEP wanted to minimize barriers to participation in the LBRP such as landscapers operating on a cash economy that would not be able to outlay the expensive purchase and wait for reimbursement, or those without bank access or capital. DEP's approach was to implement the program as a point-of-sale rebate program whereby the rebate would be applied at the register so that small landscapers could immediately benefit from the program. DEP established a portal for dealers to record the sales and be reimbursed for the discounts after the sale. The program was designed to minimize fraud, including the following measures taken:

- The port collected information from applicants and each application was reviewed individually.
- Dealers were provided approved voucher information prior to the sale so that cross-verification of the voucher could be conducted at the time of sale.

- Dealers were required to enter the voucher data into the DEP database at point of sale and then invoice DEP. DEP cross-checked the voucher database against each invoice.
- The program did not allow equipment returns/credits.

While this created a unique set of challenges, the dealers were cooperative, and DEP and its contractor were able to manage the system needs.

Manufacturers. Manufacturers produce electric leaf blowers for dealers to sell. Manufacturers were the first entity contacted to assist in determining what equipment would be eligible for rebates and recommended in-County dealers for distribution. Manufacturers know their equipment best: equipment availability during the rebate period, equipment with the least recalls, which equipment is popular with consumers, equipment run times and charge times, and more. AGZA was responsible for prequalifying manufacturers and contacted all the county-suggested manufacturers. AGZA evaluated the manufacturers' interest in participating, inventory and inventory forecasts for specific models, battery recycling/retrieval mechanisms, product recalls, and their suggested dealers in the County. Six manufacturers committed to participating in the program within the fast turnaround requested (EGO, Greenworks, Husqvarna, Makita, Milwaukee, Stihl). One other manufacturer that committed did not have a dealer in Montgomery County at the time of program launch. The manufacturers were asked to supply the names of local dealers that would have supply chains and would be interested in participating in the LBRP program.

Dealers. AGZA then helped the County prequalify local dealers. The dealers were evaluated for their interest in participating in the rebate program, inventory of commercial and residential models, willingness to undergo training on how to properly facilitate rebate redemption, and their ability to ensure that program parameters were met. Program parameters included ensuring staff on duty were familiar with the LBRP program and equipment, being capable of providing point-of-sale discounts, ensuring their staff could enter sales and voucher data into DEP's database, and cooperation with signing legal agreements with the County. Five dealers with eight locations committed to participating in the LBRP within the fast turnaround time requested (Commercial Mower, Ewing Landscape Supply, Site One, Strosniders Ace, Zimmermans Hardware). DEP established AP 2-4 contracts with all five dealers. The contracts have a term of one year and will be renewed annually with new or returning dealers.

Equipment. Best practices from successful rebate programs nationwide offer one handheld and one backpack option within residential and commercial product lines, rather than allowing all equipment to be eligible. Eligible equipment was listed in the form of a "kit" (a blower and its associated charger and battery), but applicants were allowed to apply their voucher to any eligible equipment combination, whether it be a full kit, tools, batteries, or chargers only, or a combination.

Application Process and Portal. An application portal was designed to accommodate data collection and control voucher distribution and management. The application portal was developed by DEP's IT team that allowed for the County to collect application data, assign dealers to applicants, email auto-responses to applicants, and issue vouchers. The system also tracked data on redemption dates, rebate amounts, invoice dates, and more.

To apply, applicants began on DEP's website where eligible equipment and participating dealers were listed, and parameters for vouchers were detailed. From there, applicants were directed to the application portal. When applicants applied, they chose their equipment and dealer, were issued a voucher number, and received an immediate email in English and Spanish stating their application was received and under review.

Eligibility criteria for rebates were as followed:

1. Address must be in Montgomery County, and cannot be a P.O. Box
2. Residential applications at apartment addresses are not eligible
3. Residential condominium/townhome addresses are only eligible if they reply they do their own leaf removal and intend to use the leaf blower only at their property
4. Commercial applicants with the same address must confirm they are separate businesses

Each applicant was reviewed to verify eligibility. Inquiries were made into properties that appeared to be maintained by HOAs to ensure the applicant was using this for their property. Commercial applications were screened for rebate level eligibility and assigned the appropriate rebate amount. Once an application was approved the applicant received a voucher in English and Spanish with directions on how to redeem the voucher.

During the program, 52 residential and 63 commercial applications were rejected due to one of the following reasons:

- Residential applications were an apartment address
- Residential applications at an HOA did not respond that they perform their own landscaping
- Applications were from an address outside of the County
- Duplicate addresses or duplicate company applications (duplicates were approved if commercial operations were separate but used the same address)
- Application contained incomplete information, and the applicant did not respond with the needed information (e.g. no last name, missing address)

Applicants received their voucher via email and had 30 days to redeem it. Dealers were provided with a shared Google sheet populated with information on the applicant and the status of their application. These sheets collected data on the date redeemed, the amount redeemed, and the brand purchased, along with other information. Dealers were trained on the Google system so at the time of voucher redemption they verified that the voucher was valid and unexpired, entered the date redeemed, amount redeemed, brand purchased, and updated the status of the voucher to “redeemed.” DEP staff checked this Google system nearly daily and entered the redemption information into the application portal to track vouchers. This system ensured applicants could not use the same voucher for two purchases.

Once DEP issued enough vouchers to fully utilize the allotted LBRP budget and calculated estimates on how many could be held on a waiting list based off expiration rates to date, the portal was closed. This occurred within 2.5 months of the program being open. At the time of portal closure, 55 commercial and 109 residential applications were held on a waiting list. Applications from this list were approved as previously issued vouchers expired, until funds were depleted. DEP reallocated \$25,000 from the program’s outreach and administration budget to the rebate budget to increase the available rebate funding from \$300,000 to \$325,000 to be able to issue more vouchers. In the end, only 6 commercial vouchers from the waiting list could not be approved prior to full depletion of the allocated rebate funding.

1.4 Rebates Redeemed

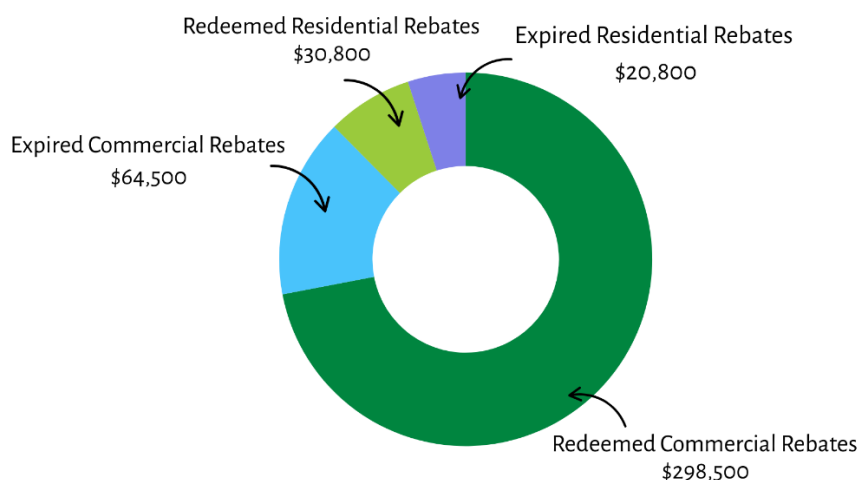
Total rebates requested and redeemed. DEP received 881 applications between July 31, 2024 and October 14, 2024. From these applications, 766 rebate vouchers were issued and ultimately 513 rebates were redeemed. The following charts summarize data related to the vouchers redeemed.

Table 2: Total Number and Dollar Amount of Redeemed Rebates Per Category

	Residential Rebates \$100	Revenue-Qualifying \$1,500	Non-Revenue Qualifying \$1,000
# Approved Rebates	517	228	21
# Redeemed Rebates	308	187	18
\$\$ Redeemed	\$30,800	\$276,968	\$17,878

Expired rebates. Rebates expired within 30 days to provide opportunity for others to access the funds (requests for extensions were honored when requested). Of the total number of rebates that expired, the highest rate of expirations was in the residential category. Only 44 commercial rebates expired while 209 residential rebates expired.

Figure 1: Redeemed and Expired Rebates by dollar amount



Ethnicities of applicants. Applicants were asked to report their ethnicity on the application. Residential applicants were given options to select multiple ethnicities for their households, and commercial entities were asked to select the ethnicity of the owner. Among residential applicants, the largest reporting groups were White at 53%, followed by Prefer to Not Answer at 14%, Asian at 13%, and Mixed Race at 11%. Among commercial applicants the two largest groups of ethnicities were Hispanic/Latino at 48%, followed closely by White at 36%. The breakdown of ethnicities are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Residential Applicants' Household Ethnicities reported by Percent of Total Applicants

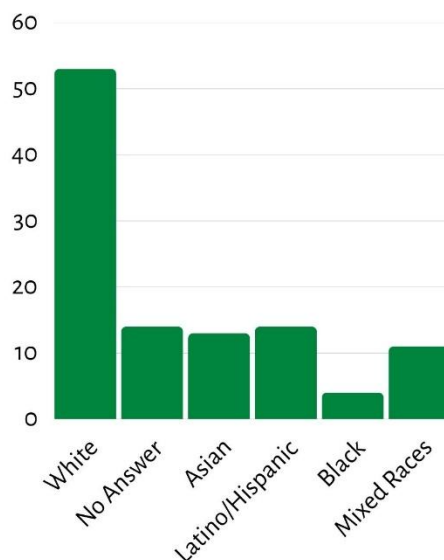
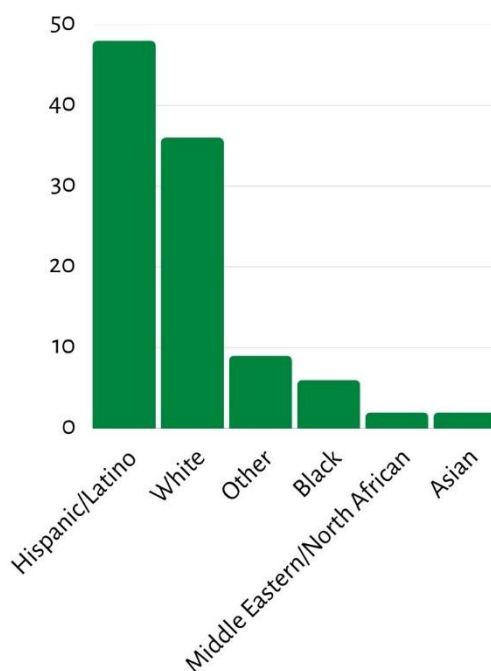


Figure 3: Ethnicities of Business Owner for Commercial Applicants



Income levels of Commercial Businesses. The following table quantifies commercial applicants by annual income based on self-reporting by the applicant. 72% of the businesses reported an income of less than \$150,000, demonstrating rebate funding was primarily distributed to small companies.

Table 3: Number of Rebates Issued by Business Income Level

Business Income Level	Number of redeemed Rebates
Under \$25,000	29
\$25,000-\$50,000	25
\$50,000-\$75,000	26
\$75,000-\$100,000	37
\$100,000-\$150,000	32
\$150,000-\$200,000	18
\$200,000-\$250,000	16
Over \$250,000	22

Years in Business. Commercial applicants were asked how many years they were in business. There were a surprisingly high number of businesses reporting they had only been in business 1 year. It is possible this response was more regularly selected due to applicants just entering information quickly. But there was a large range of years in business, and collectively a well-distributed number of experienced business owners. The following summarizes the data:

- 39% reported being in business less than 5 years
- 16% reported being in business 6-10 years
- 17% reported being in business more than 11-20 years
- 17% reported being in business 21-35 years
- 4% reported being in business 36-65 years
- 7% did not report

Number of Employees and Years in Business. Commercial applicants were asked to select from a dropdown menu the number of employees in their business. The results are quantified below along with the years they reported being in business:

- 65 reported having 1 employee and ranged in years in business from 1-43
- 110 reported having 2-5 employees and ranged in years in business from 1-55
- 22 reported having 6-10 employees and ranged in years in business from 3-37
- 5 reported having 11-20 employees and ranged in years in business from 8-32
- 3 reported having more than 20 employees and ranged in years in business from 20-65

Preferred language. Preferred language was collected for all categories of applicants. Residential applicants almost exclusively chose English as their preferred language (94%) and only 2 chose a language other than English with the remainder not answering. Among commercial applicants, 100% of non-revenue qualifying recipients reported English as the business owner's primary language. Among the revenue-qualifying recipients, 70% reported English as their business owner's primary language, and 24% as Spanish, with 6% not reporting. (As a reminder, communications were bilingual in English and Spanish, and DEP's contractor has primary support staff who communicated in Spanish.)

Equity Areas of Applicants. Community Equity Index (CEI) Scores² were calculated based off addresses of applicants. As shown in Table 4, the distribution of applicants in the CEI areas can be summarized as follows:

² <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/equity-agenda-for-planning/community-equity-index-analysis/>

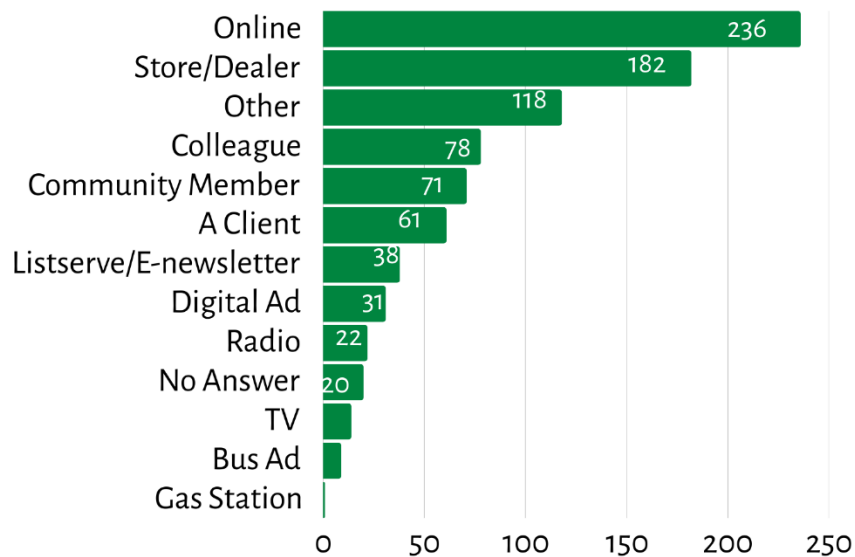
- Residential - The largest number of applicants were in the “Proportionate—Neither Advantaged or Disadvantaged” areas (40%) and “Slightly Disproportionate—Advantaged” areas of the County (20%).
- Commercial - The largest number of applicants were in the “Proportionate—Neither Advantaged or Disadvantaged” areas (40%), “Slightly Disproportionate—Advantaged” areas (21%) and “Slightly Disproportionate – Disadvantaged” (20%).

Table 4: Community Equity Index Score All Recipients

CEI Index Score	Commercial	Residential	Total
Highly Disproportionate – Advantaged	8	45	53
Moderately Disproportionate – Advantaged	10	36	46
Slightly Disproportionate – Advantaged	44	63	107
Proportionate – Neither Advantaged or Disadvantaged	83	126	209
Slightly Disproportionate - Disadvantaged	41	34	75
Moderately Disproportionate - Disadvantaged	15	5	20
Highly Disproportionate - Disadvantaged	4	1	5
Total	205	310	515

How did Applicants Hear about the Program. Applicants were asked how they heard about the rebate program. By far, online searches and their dealers were primary reasons for hearing about the program (see Figure 4). As explained in Section 2.1 below, a paid campaign using digital and radio ads focused on the law, not the rebate program.

Figure 4: How Did You Hear About the Program?



Vouchers redeemed by Council Districts. Figure 5 summarizes the number of redeemed vouchers for the various Council districts. Eight dealer locations were located in four Council Member districts, but recipients were distributed across all Council districts.

Table 5: Dollars Redeemed in Stores by Council District.

Council District	Dollars Redeemed at Dealers	Number of Dealers in District
Andrew Friedson	29,298	2 (2 Ace Strosniders)
Dawn Luedtke	88,940	2 (1 Site One, 1 Ewing)
Kate Stewart	137,734	2 (1 Ace Strosniders, Commercial Mower)
Kristen Mink	67,239	2 (1 Site One, 1 Zimmerman's Hardware)

Table 6: Total Rebates Redeemed by Council District

Council District	Amount Redeemed by Recipients
Dawn Luedtke	\$92,847
Natalie Fani-Gonzalez	\$63,645
Kristin Mink	\$40,988
Marilyn Balcombe	\$39,536
Sydney Katz	\$37,188
Kate Stewart	\$29,896
Andrew Friedson	\$20,611

Section 2 - FY24 Leaf Blower Law Outreach Summary and Challenges

2.1 Public Outreach and Messaging About the Law

Considerable investment was made to educate the public about the law, with particular emphasis on small landscaping companies. Messaging focused on the law itself, with little emphasis on the LBRP since funds for the rebate were limited. DEP spent \$91,279 on paid media buys (digital ads, gas pump videos, radio, bus ads, etc.) and \$158,000 on a postcard mailer that went to 412,630 addresses. There was a concentrated, paid outreach campaign between August and November of 2024 that delivered impressive results: more than 30 million people saw or heard a Leaf Blower message and there were 65,999 link clicks to the website during the campaign period. Media negotiations delivered an additional 12,740,089 media impressions at no cost for an added value of \$46,683 – almost a 50% increase of the original media budget.

The following are some examples of paid campaign materials:

Digital Ads:

FOX5 Live News Weather Inauguration Day 2025 Things To Do Contests More

By Sam Kosmas | Updated October 17, 2024 1:09pm EDT | News | FOX 5 DC |

Olympian Katie Ledecky honored in hometown Bethesda with official day, road naming



Olympian Katie Ledecky honored in hometown Bethesda with official day, road naming
Montgomery County honored Katie Ledecky, the most decorated female Olympian in U.S. history, by unveiling "Katie Ledecky Lane" and proclaiming Thursday as "Katie Ledecky Day."

BETHESDA, Md. - Montgomery County honored Katie Ledecky, the most decorated female Olympian in U.S. history, by unveiling "Katie Ledecky Lane" and proclaiming Thursday as "Katie Ledecky Day."

County officials presented Ledecky with the road marker and officially designated the day in her honor. "This is where I got my start, and it's something that I always remember," Ledecky said to applause.

**July 1, 2025 —
It's the law!**

**Gas leaf blowers are out
in Montgomery County.
Electric is in!**

LEARN MORE

El Tiempo

Política Economía Inmigración Salud Nacional Tierra Mia

OPINIÓN

Carta al editor
POR REDACCIÓN

Combustible para los sueños
POR BLUE JENKINS

Los desafíos de Kamala Harris
POR BEATRICE RANGEL

El plan de energía limpia de Biden-Harris está cumpliendo con los trabajadores sindicalizados como yo
POR RICARDO VILLAFAN

**Del 1.º de julio de 2025 en adelante —
¡Es la ley en el condado de Montgomery!**

Los sopladores de hojas a gas se van y los eléctricos toman su lugar!

¡OBTENGA MÁS INFORMACIÓN!

**Del 1.º de julio de 2025 en adelante —
¡Es la ley en el condado de Montgomery!**

Los sopladores de hojas a gas se van y los eléctricos toman su lugar!

¡OBTENGA MÁS INFORMACIÓN!

Gas Station Ads:



Direct Mail:



Bus Ads:



Some key highlights of the campaign include:

- The paid digital ad buy for this campaign delivered results much higher than is typical for a campaign with a similar budget and duration.
- The English and Spanish mobile banner ads delivered the highest number of website link clicks (62,343) accounting for 94% of all reported link clicks.
- DEP web pages related to the leaf blower law received 89,073 page views during the campaign period. This includes page views received from all sources – paid media, mailer, social media and word of mouth.

The breakdown of paid media impressions is summarized in Table 7 and the number of impressions and clicks generated are tallied in Table 8.

Table 7: Paid Media Impressions

Media	Delivered Impressions
<u>English Digital Advertising</u> : English banners and mobile ads were geo-targeted to Montgomery County using a combination of behavioral targeting, local news sites, and keywords that align with the campaign messages. Ads were also placed on WTOP.com.	2,871,691
<u>Spanish Digital Advertising</u> : Spanish mobile ads were geo-targeted to Montgomery County using a combination of behavioral targeting, local news sites, and keywords that align with the campaign messages. Ads were also placed on ElTiempo.com.	933,753
<u>Streaming/Digital Audio</u> : Radio spots along with digital ads were also geo-targeted on English- and Spanish-streaming radio/programming in Montgomery County.	1,490,102
<u>Broadcast Radio – WLZL</u> : Spanish radio spots ran on WLZL..	385,200
<u>Out-of-Home Advertising – Ride On</u> : DEP used its agreement with Vector Media to negotiate paid ad placement on Ride On buses. This reporting estimates added value of these ads remaining in place for weeks longer than the media buy.	24,224,980
<u>Out-of-Home Advertising – Gas Pump Topper Videos</u> : :15 second videos were purchased at 69 gas stations in Montgomery County.	790,774
Total:	30,696,500

Table 8: Digital Advertising Impressions and Clicks

Media	Purchased Impressions	Delivered Impressions	Link Clicks
Cross-Platform Banner Ads (English)	1,000,000	1,082,089	1,284
Mobile Banner Ads (English)	1,000,000	1,012,161	39,177
WTOP.com	600,000	777,441	592
Mobile Banner Ads (Spanish)	600,000	614,292	23,166
Banner Ads (ElTiempo.com)	250,000	319,461	1,296
Digital Audio (English)	800,000	869,777	484
Total	4,250,000	4,675,221	65,999

Social media from DEP included outreach not only about the law but about leaf management. During the campaign period there were multiple posts and direct engagement with constituents. The social media campaign earned 5,083 impressions (number of times the message was seen or heard) and 217 post engagements (likes, comments, shares).



DEP conducted direct outreach on the rebates through boots-on-the-ground outreach to landscapers in English and Spanish in the weeks prior to LBRP launch, and fliers provided to dealers throughout the County (including landscape supply dealers as well as rebate program dealers). A flier (see right) was made specifically for this outreach.

DO YOU KNOW A LANDSCAPER?
We have **ELECTRIC LEAF BLOWER REBATES**

PROPERTY OWNERS Up to \$100
Property owners with land are eligible for a one-time rebate of \$100.

LANDSCAPERS Up to \$1500
Landscapers are eligible for between \$1000 and \$1500 per year on leaf blowers, batteries, and chargers.

Participating dealers:
Commercial Mower Depot (Silver Spring)
Ewing Outdoor Supply (Gaithersburg)
Site One (Burtonsville, Gaithersburg)
Strosnider's ACE (Bethesda, Potomac, Silver Spring)
Zimmerman's Ace (Burtonsville)

Rebates available for:
Milwaukee STIHL greenworks EGO Makita

MontgomeryCountyMd.gov/LeafBlowers

¿CONOCE A ALGÚN PAISAJISTA?
Tenemos **REEMBOLSOS PARA SOPLADORES DE HOJAS ELÉCTRICOS**

PARA PROPIETARIOS Hasta \$100
Los propietarios con terrenos son elegibles para un reembolso único de \$100.

PARA PAISAJISTAS Hasta \$1500
Los paisajistas son elegibles para recibir entre \$1000 y \$1500 por año en sopladores de hojas, baterías y cargadores.

Distribuidores participantes:
Commercial Mower Depot (Silver Spring)
Ewing Outdoor Supply (Gaithersburg)
Site One (Burtonsville, Gaithersburg)
Strosnider's ACE (Bethesda, Potomac, Silver Spring)
Zimmerman's Ace (Burtonsville)

Reembolsos disponibles para:
Milwaukee STIHL greenworks EGO Makita

MontgomeryCountyMd.gov/LeafBlowers

DEP also produced a successful seminar and field day for landscapers on March 12, 2025 for landscapers about battery electric equipment. AGZA and a panel of experts engaged 130 participants during the seminar and 13 battery electric equipment manufacturers were present for the field day with demos and raffles for seminar participants as well as the public. Outreach for this event included flyers at landscape supply dealers, boots on the ground outreach in the field, and many hours of productive interaction with landscapers at the yard trim area of our transfer station.

2.2 Challenges for Constituents with Compliance and DEP Recommendations

DEP's consultant, AGZA, has worked across the country to support communities enacting legislation for gas-powered landscape tools. They contributed to the following section.

It is well known that businesses have an upfront cost to transition from gas leaf blowers to electric leaf blowers (ELBs). Some of these costs are operational and some are direct expenses. Replacing gas leaf blowers with electric is not simply a one-for-one swap out. Operators are replacing a gas leaf blower with a battery electric blower system which requires the blower tool, multiple batteries, chargers, and in some cases additional investment in charging infrastructure.

Key challenges adjusting to battery electric blowers for commercial operations include:

Transition and Timing of County Ban: The County's law implemented a year-round restriction change for industry with only one fall season between passage of law and implementation. While DEP had an extensive outreach campaign during the summer and fall of 2024, many businesses had little time to experiment using electric leaf blowers. Those that have been making the change are expressing concerns that they cannot sustain their businesses without an exemption for several weeks, during heavy leaf cleanup, and also want to use gas blowers that they have already heavily invested in while they make the transition and new investments.

Customer expectations: Many property owners are accustomed to and expect very "clean/tidy" landscapes whereby in the fall and spring, leaves and other landscape debris disappears in full. Wet leaves require more leaf-blowing capacity, and subsequently more backup batteries. Operationally, business have to adjust practices and property owners have to adjust landscape perceptions to accept better landscape practices, such as mowing and mulching leaves, leaving leaves underneath new bark mulch, or higher labor costs for businesses who cannot easily transition to electric tools.

Tool ergonomics. Differences between gas vs. electric include weight, balance, knowing where the triggers are located and new/different muscle fatigue.

Performance. Only a handful of battery electric leaf blower models have similar power and performance of the average gas leaf blower models used by industry. The more powerful electric leaf blowers will drain batteries faster and require additional batteries to maintain the accustomed power and performance levels of gas blower.

Power management in the field and overnight. Battery-to-gas tank ratios will factor in how much conventional gas workflow disruption occurs. Operators will be required to manage multiple batteries: 2 to 3 *backpack* batteries with a watt hour range of 900 to 1,400, or 8 to 10 *onboard* batteries with a watt hour range of 250 to 900 vs. refueling gas blowers with one or two 5-gallon gas cans. Managing batteries in the field requires operators to protect batteries and electric equipment from inclement weather, theft, and sometimes temperature control. Businesses need to be able to protect batteries from theft while on the job or during charging or may not have ways to store or charge batteries both on the job or between jobs. Managing the charging of multiple batteries requires more work physically and mentally. Some operators will need to carry several batteries from their work vehicles into their home, apartment, or workshop to charge overnight. This will need to be done after providing a full day of landscape maintenance services for clients.

Investment costs. The cost of battery electric blowers can be up to five (5) times higher vs. their gas counter parts. A crew of three (3) trucks, each with two (2) leaf blowers, can now face \$30,000 or more in up front capital expenses to replace leaf blowers and the multiple batteries needed to get through a busy workday. The transition essentially requires that businesses buy all of their “fuel” for the next few years up front. The cost-benefit of the transition pays off after two to three years, but the front-loaded investment is an economic challenge, particularly for small companies operating on tight margins. Higher costs are required if commercial operators are required to use battery electric leaf blowers in the Fall season with the pressures of deep-rooted accustomed aesthetic expectations of homeowners and property management companies.

Training needs. Landscape crews need training to maximize efficiency of new tools, learn about proper charging and storage, as well as power management of battery electric tools. While these machines seem to be just “pick up and go” and are easy to operate, there is a significant training component to using them properly. For example, one company shared that their workers assumed a louder leaf blower meant it was doing the work faster, but with battery-powered equipment, that is not the case and leads to the battery draining more quickly.

Technology Advancements. Currently, aerospace companies such as WhisperAero, who develop advanced quiet thrust technology for drone applications and the emerging electric aviation industry, are now applying their technology to battery electric leaf blowers. This type of technology development can further lower noise levels, produce higher CFM and performance, and improved energy efficiency use from the batteries which can lower battery weights and extend run times.

Market Volatility. As of mid-April 2025, tariffs and global disruption of rare earth metal supplies present an unknown in the market for lithium battery tools. Manufacturers have reported confidence in current supply for this year based on inventory, but the market volatility presents a challenge and concern for the industry to invest in battery tools, from both a cost and availability standpoint.

Prioritizing Commercial Recipients: Rebates were not exclusively available to landscaping companies, so any business could apply. While many businesses (masons, construction contractors, pool companies, businesses who manage their own grounds) may use leaf blowers, the workload demands on their machines are not equivalent to that of landscapers, and mostly they can manage their daily workload with a residential blower with one battery. Therefore, DEP wishes to encourage landscapers to be first at the table for the commercial level rebates. To do so, in the weeks leading up to the rebate launch, we will target landscapers as we did last year with boots on the ground outreach as well as at the transfer station, and by encouraging participating dealers to target their own outreach to landscapers.

Potential Adjustments in response to the challenges:

AGZA considers Montgomery County to be less punitive and more supportive than the average jurisdiction implementing a leaf blower ban. The County has held several industry workshops, conducted industry outreach and engagement, and are providing meaningful cost reductions to ease the upfront financial burden of more expensive battery electric leaf blower systems. Obstacles for small operations whose business models and profitability are more maintenance-based vs. maintenance and enhancement driven, rely on speed and volume of properties. Thus, for these types of maintenance-based business, the power and performance of gas blowers are directly linked to profitability.

T

Recommended changes to support industry on the transition:

- DEP will be pivoting its messaging from the law itself to increased education on alternative leaf management options like mowing, mulching, and other landscape practices in response to landscaper feedback that the customer base is still demanding “tidy” lawns.
- Rebate outreach will be increasingly targeted to small landscaping companies.
- DEP is exploring whether or not the outreach budget can accommodate field trainings for landscapers to support their transition.

After the second year of rebates, DEP will evaluate if the rebate program should be considered for extension to allow more rebates to be offered to the industry.

2.3 Enforcement

To date, only the ban on sales has gone into effect. Thus far for FY 25 the DEP Compliance Team has performed 27 inspections of facilities that sell or rent leaf blowers in Montgomery County. Gas leaf blowers for sale were found at two facilities, and gas blowers for rent were found at two facilities. Two \$500 citations were issued. The new online system for reporting the operation of gas-powered leaf blowers is being developed. The system will allow submittal of a complaint by one-party if supported by photographic or video evidence.

DEP’s enforcement team emphasizes educating residents and businesses in a supportive, not punitive manner. The level of enforcement action will be based on DEP’s history with the responsible party. If we have no history of prior leaf blower issues with an individual or landscape contractor, enforcement typically follows this general order:

1. Education
2. Warning
3. Notice of Violation (NOV)
4. Civil Citation and fine

2.4 Questions

Questions about this report can be addressed to Mary Travaglini at Mary.Travaglini@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov. More information about the LBRP can be found at www.MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/leafblowers.

The Economics of Switching to Battery-Powered Leaf Blowers: A Cost Comparison

June, 2022

Santa Cruz Coalition for a
Healthy & Safe Environment



contact@chasesantacruz.org
chasesantacruz.org

Contents

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Background

Most leaf blowers and other landscaping tools are still powered by the two-stroke engine, a lightweight but highly polluting machine with heavy impacts on air quality, the health of landscape workers, and communities at large.

In recent years battery-powered equipment has improved in many ways, including power output, battery capacity and longevity, and price. Its ability to fully replace gas-powered equipment for most jobs has led to their adoption by numerous commercial landscape companies, school districts, and municipal parks and public works departments and convinced many cities that there is no remaining reason not to ban their gas-powered predecessors. In 2022, at least 25 cities in California alone have full bans on gas-powered leaf blowers, and more are preparing to. Commercial and municipal landscape crews in these cities are already maintaining properties of all sizes effectively with cleaner and quieter battery-powered equipment.

Still, some policymakers considering whether to regulate gas-powered landscape tools in their city or to transition their municipal landscaping crews to battery power are concerned or uncertain about the cost. While the health and environmental benefits of switching to battery equipment are clear and large, there is little clarity on the economics.

(Gas-powered landscaping tools have battery-powered equivalents, but this study focuses on leaf blowers, due to their ubiquity and outsize impacts.)

Key questions for landscapers, cities, and policymakers include: How much does it cost to replace a gas blower with a battery-powered equivalent? How do their operational costs compare? Can the cost of switching pay for itself? If so, how long does it take, and how much money would it save over time?

A cost comparison could look at both the purchase and operational costs of both gas and battery leaf blowers and compare them. That would answer the question, If one is considering the purchase of a new (or extra) leaf blower, which would be cheaper over time? But this study asks the slightly different question, For landscapers who *already* own gas-powered leaf blowers, **what is the net cost of switching to battery-powered blowers and using them over time?**

Costs considered

Much of the cost of a power tool is paid not just at the cash register but also at the gas pump, throughout its entire working life. Just as printers require ink in order to print, power tools require energy and energy costs money.

So the question of whether switching to battery-powered leaf blowers will cost more money than continuing to use gas-powered ones requires also considering the *cost to operate* them, year in and year out.

Santa Cruz C.H.A.S.E. calculated the purchase and operational costs of two sets of commercial-grade leaf blowers of comparable power output in two different operational scenarios. The purchase price of the gas blowers was excluded, to reflect the assumption that the landscaper already owns the gas blower.

Costs Considered in Analysis		
	<u>Gas-powered</u>	<u>Battery-powered</u>
Purchase of new equipment:	—	Battery leaf blower
	—	Extra batteries, charger, etc.
Ongoing operational inputs:	Gasoline	Electricity
	Oil	Future battery replacement, if applicable
	Yearly maintenance	NA

Operational Scenarios

Professional and municipal landscapers maintain a range of property sizes, from small yards and city properties to office parks and large recreational parks, and use leaf blowers for different lengths of time each day. To capture this variation, we considered two scenarios: one in which the power of the gas and battery blower is suitable for mid-sized properties and the blowers are run for three hours per day, and another in which the power is suitable for large properties and the blowers are run for five hours per day.

These are the scenarios considered and the blower models analyzed:

	Gas-powered	Battery-powered
Scenario A		
Model	Husqvarna 525BX	EGO LB7654
Power output (at nozzle)	459 cfm, 192 mph	580 cfm, 200 mph
Battery	NA	2x BA2800T (280 Wh)
Usage	3 hours per day	3 hours per day
		
Scenario B		
Model	Stihl BR 500	Stihl BGA 200
Power output (at nozzle)	544 cfm, 207 mph	553 cfm, 188 mph
Battery	NA	1x AR 3000 L (1,522 Wh)
Usage	5 hours per day	5 hours per day
		

Results

The two charts below show the costs of switching to the battery-powered leaf blower (green line) and of continuing to use an existing gas-powered blower (red line).

The y-coordinate (height) of the green lines at year zero reflects the initial cost of the battery blower and battery equipment. The red lines begin at \$0, reflecting no initial cost for continuing to use the gas blower.

The height of the lines across time reflects the added cost of the operational inputs mentioned above. The steepness of the red lines reflects the significant ongoing cost of gasoline to the operation of a gas blower. The green lines slope up as well, but very gradually, as the cost of the electricity which charges the batteries is relatively small. The brief upturn in the green line at year three in Scenario A reflects the purchase of two new replacement batteries (which may not be necessary).

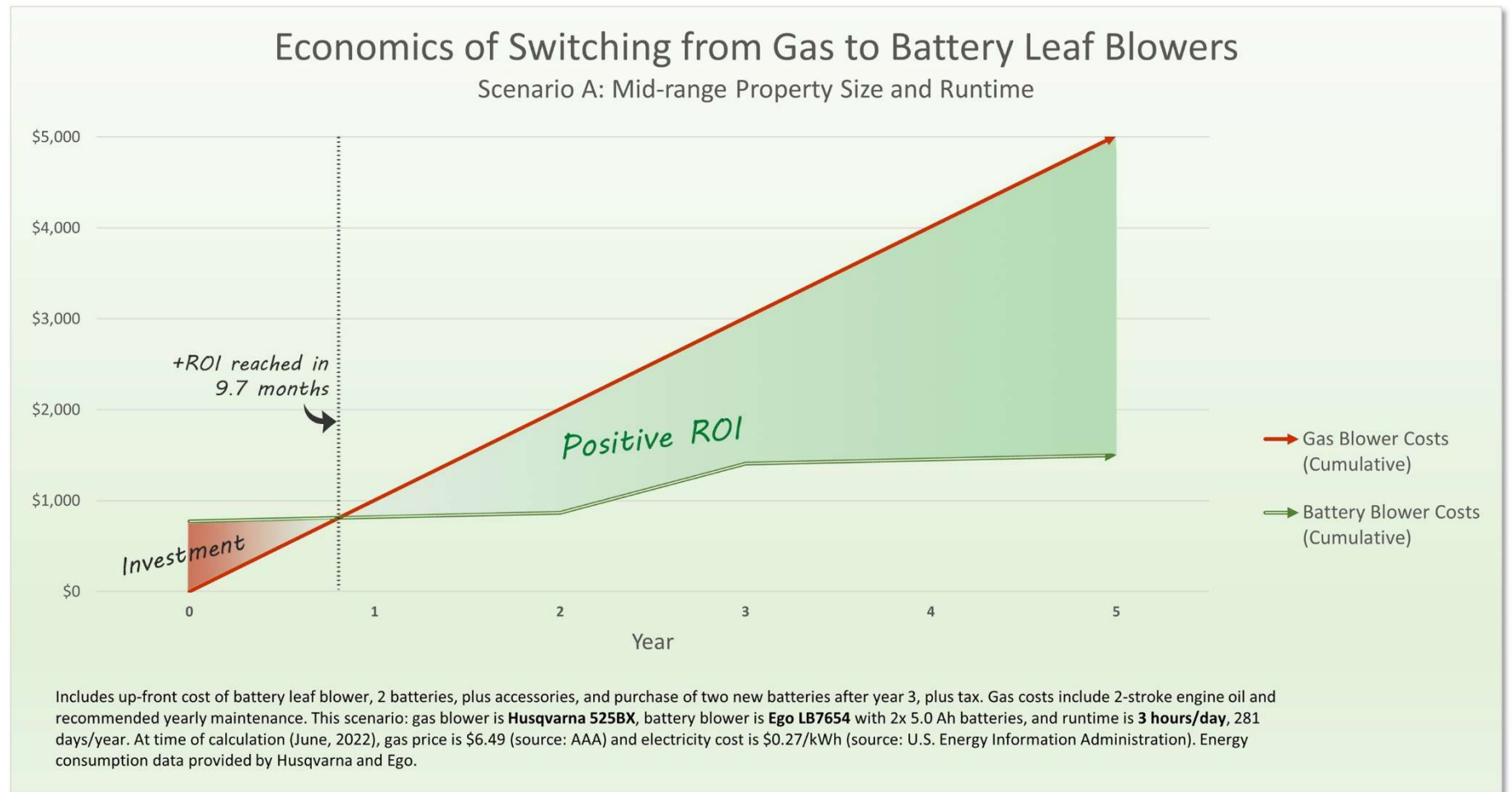
The costs reflected by the lines are cumulative. So the cost displayed at year two, for example, is not what the landscaper would have paid *in* year two, but in total after two years. This allows the visualization of the point in time at which positive return on investment (ROI) is reached.

The point of intersection of the two lines is when the overall cost of switching to the battery blower is *less* than the cost of continuing to use the gas blower. At that point, the purchase of the battery equipment has been recouped. And after that point, the growing gap between the lines reflects the increasing money saved by switching to the battery blower.

Scenario A: Mid-range Property Size and Runtime

In the first scenario, the up-front cost of the battery equipment is \$772, including tax. **Positive return on investment is achieved in 9.7 months.**

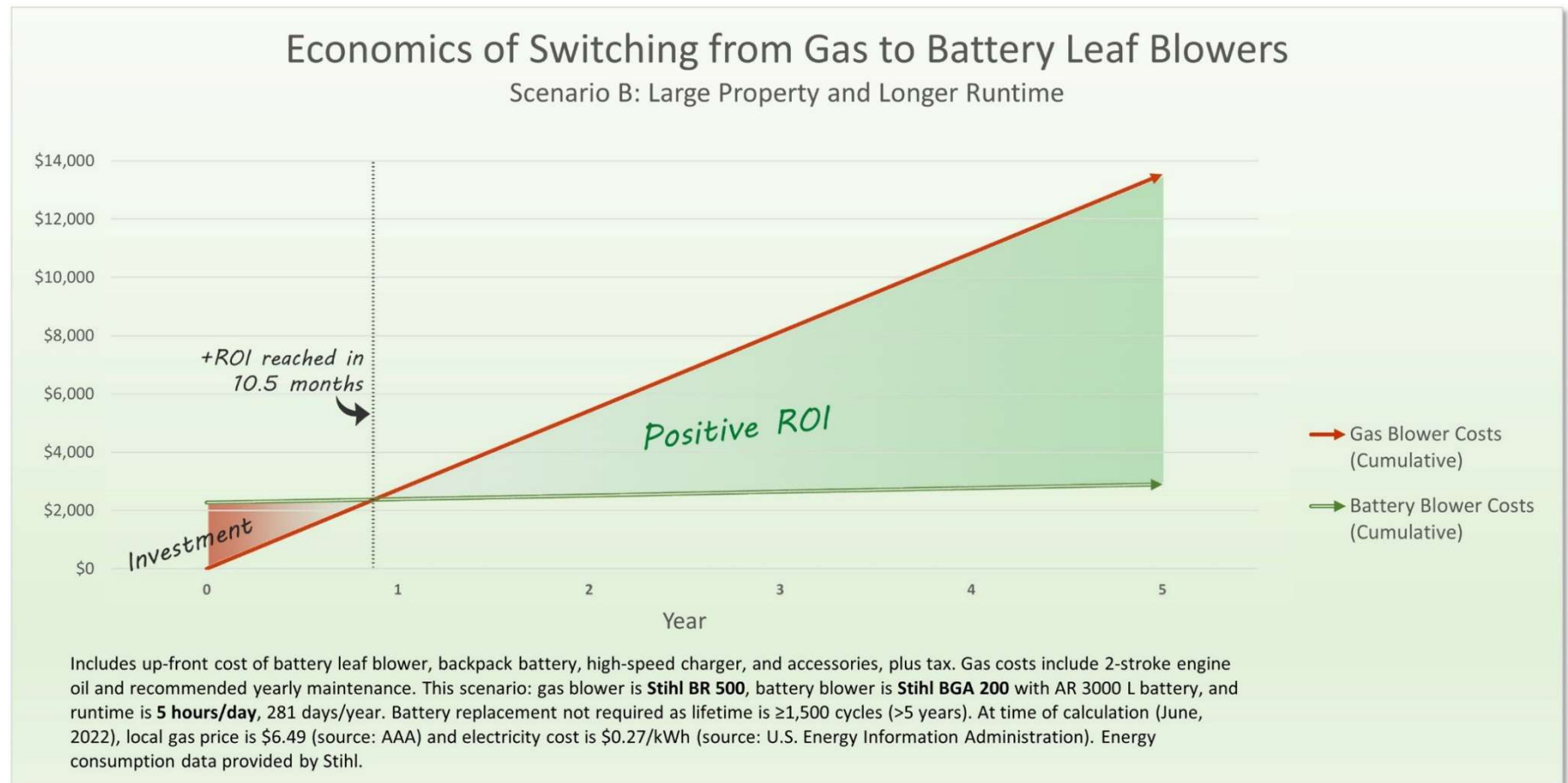
By the end of the second year, switching to the battery blower would already have saved \$1,142.



Scenario B: Large Property and Longer Runtime

In the second scenario, the up-front cost of the battery equipment is \$2,261, including tax. **Positive return on investment is achieved in 10.5 months.**

By the end of the second year, switching to the battery blower would already have saved \$2,904.



The Stihl battery blower and backpack battery selected for Scenario B are in many ways top-of-the-line, so their initial purchase price is high compared to most other battery equipment. But its power rivals that of the commercial backpack blower, the high-capacity battery lasts about five hours, and the battery is mounted on a backpack so the weight distribution is comfortable and familiar. Despite the higher up-front cost, it still achieves positive return on investment quickly—in 10.5 months. And after that, the savings (or increase in annual profits) is serious—over \$2,500 per year.

Summary of Results

	Leaf blower specs				Cost over 5 years				
	Air Volume (CFM)	Air Velocity (MPH)	Noise dB(A)	Equipment Price, New ¹	Scenario Usage	Total cost ²	\$/year, annualized	Time to Pos. Return on Investment (ROI)	Avg. annual savings after ROI
Husqvarna 525BX gas blower	459	192	92	(\$317)	3 hrs/day, 281 days/yr	\$5,017	\$1,003	-	-
EGO LB7654 battery blower + 2x 280Wh batteries	580 ³	200	64	(\$772)		\$1,501	\$300	9.7 months	\$858
Stihl BR 500 gas blower	544	207	65	\$590	5 hrs/day, 281 days/yr	\$13,541	\$2,708	-	-
Stihl BGA 200 battery blower + 1,522Wh backpack battery	553	188	59	\$2,261		\$2,889	\$578	10.5 months	\$2,583
¹ includes tax and all required accessories; cost of new gas blowers excluded from analysis, included here for reference									
² includes cost of new battery equipment; excludes cost of gas blower (assumes already owned)									
³ delivers 765 CFM on turbo									

Methods

As noted in the background section, the overall cost is comprised of the purchase price of equipment plus ongoing operational costs.

Initial purchase cost

Gas-powered

For the gas-powered leaf blowers, the current purchase price was excluded as the analysis calculates the cost of *switching* from gas- to battery-powered equipment; the gas-powered leaf blower is already owned.

However, for the sake of comparison, the cost of the two gas blowers in scenarios A and B were \$317 and \$590, respectively, including tax (see summary of results on prior page). If a landscaper has to replace a broken leaf blower with a new gas blower, or buy an extra one, this of course would need to be added in any comparison with battery-powered blowers.

Battery-powered

This amount includes the new battery-powered leaf blower, plus enough extra batteries to last a full day of use (three or five hours, depending on scenario) *without recharging*, plus required accessories, plus optional fast charger. (Many battery blowers are sold as part of a kit which includes one battery, a charger, and necessary accessories.)

The cost of equipment was the lowest price found locally or online at the time of the study (June, 2022), and includes sales tax.

Annual operational costs

Gas-powered

The annual cost to operate the gas-powered leaf blowers was found by first determining the hourly cost of consumable inputs (gasoline and oil).

The main operational input is gasoline, the cost of which depends on the amount used and the local price of gasoline. Oil is also required for two-stroke engines. The engines also require periodic maintenance (approximately annually) to keep them in working order, including replacement of the spark plug, air filter, and fuel filter.

The hourly cost of gas used was found by first taking the average fuel consumption rate of each gas blower (found in manufacturer-published data) and multiplying by the local cost of regular unleaded gasoline, which at the time of this report is \$6.49 per gallon in Santa Cruz County (source: AAA). (The gas price was divided by 128 to convert from gallons to ounces.) The product was then multiplied by 49/50 to allow for the addition of oil at a 1:50 ratio.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \textit{Hourly cost of gas} & = & \textit{Fuel consumption} & & \textit{Cost of gas} & & \\ (\$) & & \textit{rate (fl. oz./hr)} & \times & (\$/\textit{gal}) & \times & 49/50 \\ & & & & \div 128 & & \end{array}$$

Then the cost of oil was added; at a recommended 1:50 ratio, 1/50 of the fuel volume consumed was multiplied by the price of two-stroke engine oil.

$$\frac{\text{Hourly cost of oil}}{(\$)} = \frac{1}{50} \times \frac{\text{Fuel consumption rate}}{(\text{fl. oz./hr})} \times \frac{\text{Cost of oil}}{(\$/\text{fl. oz.})}$$

The resulting hourly cost of inputs was then multiplied by the number of hours of use per day (three or five, depending on the scenario), and the number of days of use per year (assumed a schedule of 5.5 days per week x 51 weeks per year = 281 days per year) to arrive at the annual cost of fuel and oil consumed.

$$\frac{\text{Annual cost of consumable inputs}}{(\$)} = \frac{\text{Hourly cost of gas}}{(\$/\text{hr})} + \frac{\text{Hourly cost of oil}}{(\$/\text{hr})} \times \frac{\text{Hours of operation}}{\text{per year}}$$

Finally, the cost of annual two-stroke engine maintenance was added (\$150/year at the local small-engine repair shop), resulting in the total annual cost of operation.

$$\frac{\text{Annual operational cost}}{(\$)} = \frac{\text{Annual cost of gas and oil}}{(\$)} + \frac{\text{Annual maintenance}}{(\$)}$$

Battery-powered

The main operational inputs are electricity, the cost of which depends on the amount used to charge the batteries and the local cost of electricity and, depending on the battery's expected longevity in terms of recharge cycles, potentially the purchase of new batteries after x years. (Battery blowers do not require significant maintenance as they have a simpler design and no carburetor or fuel filter.)

The energy consumption rate of the battery blowers was found by taking the battery content (in kWhs), dividing by manufacturer-published data on the runtimes of the battery/blower combination, and then adding 10% to account for the energy lost in the charging of batteries.

$$\frac{\text{Energy consumption rate}}{(kWhs/hr)} = \frac{\text{Battery content}}{(kWh)} \div \frac{\text{Battery runtime}}{(hrs)} \times 1.10$$

The hourly cost of consuming that electricity (running the battery blower) was then calculated by multiplying by the local cost of electricity. At the time of this report, this was \$0.27/kWh (source: U.S. Energy Information Administration).

$$\frac{\text{Hourly cost of operation}}{(\$)} = \frac{\text{Energy consumption rate}}{(kWhs/hr)} \times \frac{\text{Cost of electricity}}{(\$/\text{kWh})}$$

As with the gas blower calculations, the resulting hourly cost of operation was then multiplied by the number of hours of use per day (three or five, depending on the scenario), and the number of days used per year (281) to arrive at the annual cost of electricity consumed.

$$\frac{\text{Annual cost of electricity (\$)}}{\text{Hourly cost of electricity (\$/hr)}} = \text{Hours of operation per year}$$

Finally, because rechargeable batteries lose their ability to hold a full charge over time, the analysis treats them as a consumable operational input and considers the need to replace them with new batteries at a later date.

In Scenario B, the high-capacity backpack battery is rated by the manufacturer (Stihl) at 1,500 charge cycles. Even if its capacity dropped significantly after this point, the battery would have lasted longer than the span of this analysis (5 years).

In Scenario A, the batteries are rated by the manufacturer (EGO) at 1,000 charge cycles. At this work schedule, they would maintain their capacity for at least 3 ½ years. To be conservative, this analysis assumes no further usability and therefore adds the cost of (two) new batteries after year three. (This is why the green line on the chart turns upward at year three before resuming its previous slope.)

So the cost of replacement batteries (if indicated by work schedule and charge rating) is treated as an operational cost and is added to the cost of electricity.

$$\frac{\text{Annual operational cost (\$)}}{\text{Annual cost of electricity (\$)}} = \text{Cost of new batteries after } x \text{ years, if needed (\$)}$$

The annual operational cost was added to the up-front cost of new battery equipment to arrive at the overall cost of switching to battery leaf blowers, at each year up to year five.

Rate of Return

This study also calculated the rate of return of switching to battery blowers. This is a common metric to determine the level of success of an investment, and takes into account the difference between the initial investment amount and its ending value after a period of time. So if a property was purchased for \$1 million and was sold for \$1.5 million five years later, the profit (\$500,000) is a rate of return of 50%. And since it took 5 years to realize, it represents an average annual gain of 10%. (If the investment were one that compounds over time or pays dividends as a percentage of the invested amount, a geometric mean would be used and the annual growth rate would be lower than 10%; but the total gain would still amount to 50%.)

A similar calculation can be applied to the case of switching to battery-powered tools. The profit is the difference between what the landscaper would have paid to operate the gas tool and what they would actually pay to operate the new battery tool, totaled over the five-year time period. This is analogous to profit from the sale of an appreciated stock or property because it is money in the bank which would not

be there if the investment were never made. And the cost of the investment is the cost of the new battery equipment. The annual average is arithmetic rather than geometric because the expected gains (savings) are the same amount each year and do not compound.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Avg. annual} \\
 \text{rate of} \\
 \text{return (\%)}
 \end{array}
 =
 \frac{
 \begin{array}{c}
 \text{Five-year} \\
 \text{operational cost} \\
 \text{savings (\$)}
 \end{array}
 -
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 \text{Cost of new} \\
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 \text{equipment (\$)}
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 \text{Cost of new battery equipment (\$)}
 \end{array}
 }
 \div 5 \text{ years} \times 100$$

Assumptions

It should be noted that this analysis is conservative in many ways:

- Landscape businesses already anticipate needing to replace their existing gas blowers when they reach the end of their usable lifespan. But for simplicity, this analysis treats 100% of the cost of (battery) equipment as a new and unanticipated cost. In reality, whatever impact the cost of new battery equipment has on a landscaper's budget, it is effectively reduced by what the landscaper would have paid to replace the existing gas blower at the end of its service life. And the older the existing gas equipment is, the cheaper the true cost of the new battery equipment.
- The cost of new equipment is for one battery leaf blower (or kit) plus required accessories, but companies or cities that want to replace several gas blowers or their whole fleet can likely benefit from volume discounts.
- Electric motors are simpler than gas ones, and likely to last longer before needing replacement.
- It assumes the lithium-ion batteries will need replacing immediately after they have undergone the minimum charge cycles guaranteed by the manufacturer. In practice, they often perform well for much longer.
- Some landscapers already using battery tools recharge their batteries on the go, using customers' outlets or inverters in their trucks. We added the cost of a high-speed charger (\$129 plus tax) to the EGO blower in Scenario A, which would allow for even more blowing time if the first battery is charged while the second is in use. The 5Ah battery recharges in 40 minutes. (No advantage would be gained with rapid charging in Scenario B as only one battery is required.)
- The use of gas blowers requires extra time to mix the fuel and oil at the proper ratio and refill the tank periodically. This was not added to the cost of gas use.
- Battery technology continues to get better all the time—longevity increases and prices fall. So the economics of switching are likely to continue to improve at a significant rate. On the gas side, the price of gas is highly volatile (a common landscaper complaint), and is not assumed by economists to decline in the long term like battery prices are.

For all these reasons, the economics of switching to battery-powered leaf blowers are likely even better than this analysis suggests, today and into the future.

Discussion

In either scenario, landscapers recover the initial cost of purchasing a battery-powered leaf blower in less than a year, and achieve significant savings (higher profits) every year after.

The primary reason for this is the large difference between the cost of gasoline and battery power for the same resulting power output. The differential across time is large enough to dwarf the purchase cost of the battery equipment.

It should be noted that the short time to positive return on investment does not rely on historically high gas prices. Analysts don't expect oil prices to fall significantly any time soon, but even if the local price of gas were to drop by 40% tomorrow, it would delay the time to positive ROI for battery-powered blowers by only about four months.

(As mentioned, this study looks at the cost of switching from an existing, operable gas leaf blower to a new battery-powered one. The economics are even better in the case of adding another leaf blower, as when landscapers have to replace an inoperable gas blower or want to expand their fleet. In these cases, the time to positive ROI is even shorter and the savings higher as they would have to add the cost of a new gas blower to the gas-powered side of the equation.)

When considering the conversion to battery leaf blowers as an investment, the rate of return is far higher than can normally be obtained in other ways. The average annual rate of return for switching to battery equipment in the two scenarios is 91% and 94%, respectively. It is hard to find a better investment anywhere. Even the broad stock market, one of the best and most reliable investments for the last 25 years, has returned "only" about 10% per year, on average (or slightly higher using arithmetic mean).

The high rate of return and short time to positive ROI also make it easier for a landscaping business of any size to finance the initial cost and to spread it out over time (see section on financing below).

Switching to battery power benefits landscape companies in even more ways—economic and otherwise—beyond what is considered here. It reduces the significant health impacts of two-stroke engine exhaust and noise on the company's workers, who operate the machines for hours each day. This in turn means happier, more productive, and more reliable workers. It also increases the workers' comfort, since they don't have to suffer the noise and high vibration of gas blowers or return home each day smelling like gasoline. And it benefits the company's clients, who also no longer have to suffer the fumes and noise. It could even increase a company's pool of potential clients, as some people avoid hiring landscape maintenance companies because of the expected noise and fumes.

And when a company switches to battery-powered leaf blowers, it immediately improves the economics of switching to other battery-powered landscaping tools too, like string trimmers, edgers, hedge trimmers, etc. The major power tool brands make batteries that work across many of their electric tools. A landscaper can remove a battery from a leaf blower, insert it into a hedge trimmer, and continue working. Since there is no need to buy new batteries for every new battery-powered tool, the cost of buying other battery tools is lower and landscapers can expand their fleet of battery tools as the savings on fuel accumulates further cash reserves.

Despite the highly favorable economics of battery-powered blowers, most landscape companies have not yet made the switch. Reasons include the belief that power or battery longevity are insufficient (the most powerful leaf blowers available are still gas-powered, but even large properties don't require the highest output blowers); the reluctance to purchase equipment that is more expensive than previously-purchased gas blowers (when you include the cost of extra batteries), combined with an underappreciation of the magnitude of savings to be realized; and simple inertia—the tendency to embrace the status quo and avoid change until it is required.

However, many landscapers who are aware of the favorable economics of battery-powered leaf blowers have already made the transition. Santa Cruz C.H.A.S.E. maintains a directory on its website of several such companies. As time passes, and as more cities take proactive steps to reduce air pollution and fight climate change, more landscape companies and municipal maintenance crews are switching to battery power. But absent regulation or major campaigns, wider adoption of new technologies can be slow.

Financing the Transition to Battery Power

The economics of switching to battery equipment are in fact even easier than this analysis shows, for reasons beyond the conservative assumptions mentioned. This study assumes the cost of new equipment will be fully paid, out of pocket and up front, but there are many ways businesses of all sizes commonly finance new purchases and investments, enabling even the smallest of companies to acquire new equipment immediately.

Small business loans, for example, are perfectly suited for investments in equipment that is expected to lower costs or increase profits. Even a loan with terms of 13% interest (the upper end of the U.S. Small Business Administration's interest rates for microloans) could be easily repaid, with interest, within a year because the first-year savings from switching from gas to battery is greater than 113% of the cost of the equipment, in both of the scenarios analyzed. And all the savings after the loan repayment are essentially free money.

There are also financing options for companies unable or unwilling to apply for a loan. For example, large retailers like Home Depot commonly offer interest-free financing on new purchases for periods like six months. The savings at the end of six months would amount to more than half of the cost of the new equipment, so the landscaper would already have about 60% of the cost of new battery equipment in hand.

There are numerous other ways to smooth the transition for landscaping companies: manufacturer incentives; rent-to-own, low-interest offers, and other retail purchase incentives; and battery equipment rental, which allows the savings on gasoline to build until it reaches the purchase price of new equipment.

Landscapers can also add a temporary surcharge to customers' bills, and remove it when it has paid for the new equipment. Many businesses already add a temporary "gas surcharge" when gas prices are high, which customers are accustomed to and understand. And businesses are much more amenable to charging a temporary surcharge when there is a level playing field among their competitors, as there is when a policy applies city-wide. This also advances equity as it ensures that the people who are chipping in for the transition—the customers—are the ones who are benefiting from the landscaping service.

There are also non-commercial options for landscapers and municipalities.

California passed AB 1346 last year, which bans the sale of new small, off-road engines like gas-powered leaf blowers by 2024. (It doesn't ban their use, so without local regulation, existing gas blowers will still be in use for years.) The bill came with an initial \$30 million to help small landscaping businesses make the transition, and lawmakers may allocate more such funding in the meantime.

Finally, grants that fund programs to improve local air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions are commonly offered through air pollution control districts, community choice aggregators, government agencies, and other institutions. These are becoming more common as electrification of the highest-polluting machines and technologies is increasingly recognized as a cheap and easy path to fighting climate change and achieving cleaner air.

**AMENDMENT
BY
COUNCILMEMBER ALBORNOZ**

Expedited Bill 19-25 - Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

Beginning on page 2, insert on line 35, as follows:

31B-10. Exemptions.

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(d) Seasonal exemption - use of combustion leaf removal equipment. A professional landscaping company is exempt from the prohibition under Section 31B-9(f) during the following days of each year: October 1 to December 31, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and [8 p.m.] 6 p.m.

June 18, 2025

Dear Council Members,

I write to urge that you vote against the proposed carveout to the law banning gas-powered leaf blowers. The carveout would effectively nullify the force of the law by creating an exception for gas-powered leaf blowers for weekdays from 8am to 8pm between October and December. This timeframe is precisely when gas-powered leaf blowers are most often in use and when a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers would be most impactful for residents. **It is disconcerting that, with little public notification, the Council would consider such a carveout at the behest of a small number of landscaping businesses and at the expense of hundreds of thousands of homeowners who have endured years of extremely loud, disruptive, and polluting gas-powered leaf blowers.**

As residents of Montgomery County, we entrust a meaningful part of our futures to your shared judgment as council members and public officials. We rely on you to discern the common good and see beyond narrow, short-term interests. **The proposed carveout for gas-powered leaf blowers is the height of short-termism:**

- It runs counter to the direction of Washington, D.C. and many other **municipalities across the nation that have banned gas-powered leaf blowers.**
- It would perpetuate the use of extremely noisy, hazardous, and fossil-fuel-powered leaf blowers that are **dangerous for the health and hearing of all of us, not least our landscapers and the workers who operate this machinery.**
- It would **undercut the efforts of landscapers and other smaller companies that have already done their part and made the transition to electric equipment.**
- It would set back the efforts of Montgomery County to be a leader in promoting **sustainable small businesses**, while safeguarding our environment and combating climate change.

The best way we can support our small businesses is not to prolong their use of hazardous, polluting equipment but instead to empower them to make the transition now to electric equipment and a clean energy future. That is why **the county has already disbursed more than \$300,000 to help landscapers switch to new equipment, with another \$300,000 in train.**

The carveout is also short-sighted from an economic perspective:

- Charging infrastructure and electrical system upgrades are *investments* that will result in cost savings and pay substantial dividends over the medium to long term.
- Electric battery technology is rapidly improving and recent testing data show that electrics provide comparable power and runtimes across most tasks; the best electric blowers are in a class of their own when you consider the higher and often volatile fuel and maintenance costs of gas models over their operational life.
- Interchangeable electric batteries will create savings across multiple outdoor tools, such as electric mowers and trimmers.

- Commercial landscapers argue that they may need to use gas- or diesel-powered generators to charge the batteries. Renewable sources are readily available and cost-effective for charging batteries and will only grow more efficient over time; by contrast, fossil fuels will only grow more expensive.
- Instead of generators, landscapers can explore a range of cleaner alternatives, such as solar charging, portable battery banks and battery swapping systems, client-site plug-ins, improved route planning and efficient deployments, and shared charging infrastructure.
- Small companies and landscapers that rely on outdated business models and polluting capital investments will feel the impact in the form of less healthy employees, lost productivity, and declining economic prospects as our county and country move away from fossil fuels.

Customer and consumer sentiment is on the side of the full gas-powered leaf blower ban.

Montgomery County residents are environmentally conscious and will be increasingly less likely to contract with landscapers and small businesses that are not committed to cleaner, quieter sources of energy. Irrespective of the political currents, it is also clear that local and global markets are moving toward clean power. **Clean energy is the future; gas-powered leaf blowers are the past.** By empowering our landscapers and small business owners to seize that future now, we are setting them up for greater health and prosperity for themselves, their workers, and their families. By delaying and denying that future, we are doing exactly the opposite.

As a resident and community member, I can also share that **gas-powered leaf blowers have exacted a toll on our lives and livelihoods.** The benefits of the ban are measured not simply in terms of costs and benefits from an economic perspective but also in the quality of life and the bonds of community that we aspire to nurture in Montgomery County. Since COVID-19, many of us work at least part time at home and rely on home offices for our jobs. Almost daily, there are gas-powered leaf blowers buzzing in our ears. The sound is intolerably loud. I can attest to the experience of many neighbors who will share with you that gas-powered leaf blowers cause home offices to vibrate, precipitate migraines, disrupt work calls, and render it almost impossible to enjoy the outdoors or spend time with family and friends outside when such devices are active. The smell of gas fills the air and the emissions pollute our lungs and our environment, which is particularly concerning given the many young kids in the area whose health and development should be among our highest concerns. **Commercial landscapers argue that the cost of the transition to electric blowers is high, but the cost of the status quo is what's becoming unaffordable.**

One of democracy's great burdens and blessings is to make pluralism work for the 21st century. Our communities have many, often divergent interests. The free and open democratic process is the most effective way to surface those differences and reconcile them in directions that benefit the public good. The gas-powered leaf blower law is the right step forward for our community. It is the product of a robust legislative process of consensus building and offers a sensible solution in the form of **rebates and phased timelines that have given landscapers and small businesses more than enough incentives to adapt to new realities and prepare their workforce.**

Now is the time to vote with the majority of residents in the county and empower our families and small businesses to lead a clean energy future. A vote for the carveout is a vote against that future. It is a vote for narrow interests over the common good; pollution over prosperity; and short-termism over the long-term prospects of our workers, businesses, and communities to thrive in the clean energy transition that is no longer optional but a moral and generational imperative for our kids and grandkids. Every step forward counts.

Thank you for your engagement to pass the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. I urge you to stand up for what's right and complete the work to see it across the finish line.

Sincerely,

William Andrew Imbrie

Andrew Imbrie
Montgomery County Resident

Dear County Council,

I am writing to oppose **Expedited Bill 19-25** on a seasonal exception for gas powered leaf blowers. The transition to battery powered blowers has been broadly advertised for well over a year, and the noise burden and detrimental environmental and respiratory health effects of gas powered blowers are significant and should not be dismissed.

While the economy is challenging right now, there will never be a “perfect” moment for most landscaping companies to make this switch. If they have to pass their additional costs onto their customers, that’s economics as well, and a reasonable consequence for those in our community who can regularly afford landscaping companies to blow their leaves. Rakes work.

Sincerely,

Andrew Schneider

To the County Council :

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use

gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a “common sense” way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

I will add a suggestion: as opponents of this bill are rightfully concerned about landscape worker health, respiratory and otherwise, perhaps a financial incentive for landscape companies to provide employees with appropriate respiratory masks and equipment(gloves) as recommended by Health Department to mitigate the health concerns cited. While that does not resolve fully all the health issues associated with gas use, it does provide a level of protection for employees most directly affected .

And, if any manufacturers or distributors of optimal PPE is within our County, utilizing that company as a source would be an additional benefit to MoCo.

Thank You for your consideration,

Ann Connor, R.N.

----- Soper St.

Poolesville, Md.20837

Council Members,

I am Barton Rubenstein, Chair of the Environment Committee of the Town of Somerset, and the second municipality in MOCO, behind Chevy Chase Village (see letter below), to ban Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers, GPLB.

This law in the Town of Somerset went into effect over two years ago, following the same timeline as Chevy Chase Village and Washington, DC. And it has made a huge difference for the residents. Having also spoken to the many dozens of landscapers that have contracts in our town, the transition has been smooth and successful.

In fact, I have spoken to many other landscapers in the county, typically while they are blowing properties, and virtually ALL OF THEM know that the ban is beginning on July 1 and they are ready to use electric blowers and retire their GPLBs. This is evidence that MOCO has already done a great job with outreach and education.

So based on these above conversations, there appears to be no reason to delay or water down the July 1 date for the ban of GPLBs to go into effect. Landscapers are ready and they have already bought their electric blowers.

So, it is time to put this ban in place and begin to encourage (by example) other counties around the US to do the same. Montgomery County is a leader of Green Initiatives, so to be a leader, we must continue to LEAD and not postpone common-sense laws, especially those that have been studied and already implemented by 100s of municipalities across the country.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and we hope that you, as our elected officials, will fulfill the promise of this important ban which will immediately raise the quality of life in our beloved Montgomery County.

Best,
Barton

Barton Rubenstein
Sculptor and Public Artist
Co-Founder of the Mother Earth Project

www.RubensteinStudios.com

c. [REDACTED]



Activating Sustainability Worldwide
www.MotherEarthProject.org

To the Montgomery County Council:

Respectfully, please do not extend the use of gas-powered leaf blowers as specified in the proposed exemption.

Landscapers are the biggest generators of the noise, with their leaf blowers.

A member of my family suffers from extreme tinnitus, and the noise from the gas blowers has been akin to torture, even inside our home. This is at its worst in the autumn, exactly when proponents of the exemption are proposing to extend their use.

We have been anxiously waiting for and anticipating an end to this awful noise. Please don't pass the exemption!!

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspectives on this hurtful proposed exemption. We are counting on the Council to turn down the proposal.

Benjamin Berman
----Pinecrest Crest Cir
Silver Spring, MD 20910

-

We strongly object to this bill. Its logic defies reason. An exemption for landscapers who do much/most of the work in our neighborhood/County clearing leaves and trimming lawns with noisy and polluting gas-powered equipment makes no sense to us. The ban on the use of this equipment was hard fought, long in coming, and the right decision for human health and the environment. Montgomery County was at the forefront of advancing the rights of workers and residents to work and live in an environment free of this unnecessary and toxic noise and pollution. Now some Council members have found a reason to exempt landscapers, apparently for economic reasons—when those same landscapers have already had 2 years' notice of the ban. Why give them even longer to pollute our environment and harm our health and that of their workers? Was their lobbying effort so successful that the Council would take this unprincipled step to meet their demands? Does money once again take precedence over health?

We are particularly concerned that our district member, Marilyn Balcombe, is a co-sponsor of the bill. We voted for her, and expected better.

We strongly encourage the Council to vote this bill down, hold to your word, and maintain your commitment to your constituents' health and a cleaner environment--which is what the original ban represents. Your constituents sought the ban, and the Council approved it by a vote of 10 to 1. The reasons for the ban have not changed, and if anything, our air and noise pollution has only gotten worse. So why have you suddenly reversed course? We profoundly disagree with this action.

CARY D. BROWN, M.D

[REDACTED] Selby Ave.
Poolesville, MD 20837



Council.PublicHearing@montgomerycountymd.gov

15 July, 2025

Sirs:

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition

process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative. The infrastructure required to transition to battery power is significant in its cost, and the stipend quoted above is barely enough to purchase the equipment, let alone the batteries, for one crew; the stipend would be enough, perhaps, if a homeowner wanted to purchase new equipment, but not for a landscaping company serving multiple homes a day, with no way to recharge batteries.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use

gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a "common sense" way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

We have utilized the same landscaping company for over 10 years. Their customer service is excellent, and their employees are courteous and sensitive to our needs. They provide outstanding service. The original legislation, while addressing noise levels and climate change, did not take the enormous financial impact to all of the landscapers working in the county. They need not only more time, but more financial assistance commensurate with the very significant expenses involved in making this transition.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.D. Brown", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Cary D. Brown, M.D., Col USAF(Ret)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

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The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a “common sense” way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Sincerely,

Charles E Harris

Beallsville Road

Beallsville, MD 20839

July 11, 2025

RE: Please oppose bill 19-25 watering down wonderful phase out of gas leafblowers

Dear County Council:

In thinking about what to write about this dismaying attempt to partially rollback the long overdue phase out of gas powered leafblowers, I was tempted to note all the obvious arguments -- the more than 7,000 residents who for years asked for this change, unbearable endless neighborhood-rattling noise, embarrassingly outdated technology with more than adequate cleaner/quieter/affordable alternatives, the impact on some of the most voiceless often minority workers being asked to lug these ear splitting/pollution-belching machines on their backs every day (at whose benefit exactly?), the two year transition period that included hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer-funded assistance, and other near and far areas that long ago made this switch with lawns still being tended, landscapers still working, and quality of life for residents and workers improved....but last week as the new law took effect, something marvelous changed my mind on what to emphasize.

Our family was up early. I was having breakfast before work with our kids and my wife took an early work call outside on our small patio. A sizeable landscaping company pulled up to tend to a neighbor's yard and we all braced (based on more than a decade of experience) for the disruptive, ear (and wall) piercing noise, and the ensuing stress of waiting for it to end. But after mowing, the worker grabbed a new portable electric blower and finished so quietly we didn't even notice. My wife continued her call outside instead of scrambling inside. And the worker wasn't exposed to noise and two stroke engine fumes. A bit later walking to the subway, I passed a much smaller landscaping operation with the same wonderful experience. We could stay on the sidewalk and not be overpowered by noise more than a block away and the workers had cleaner quieter equipment. What a change in just the first week...one I have heard happily repeated now from others in the county. What a gift you gave residents and workers with this phased in law....and that the county helped these companies with the shift is a win win for all.

Why in the world would we go backwards on this great quality of life and worker health move? What is it about hundred year old two stroke gas leafblower technology that some on this council seem to think needs such special protection (should we also get rid of mufflers too??). Let's be honest, this change has been coming and demanded for some time. DC and several incorporated MoCo jurisdictions already had them in place for years (with some using the new technology in those areas then absurdly using the old equipment next door in MoCo). And as ironically noted in the County Council write up for the proposed watering down of the new law, the *"exemption does not extend to weekends to ensure County residents are not disturbed while at home"* therefore acknowledging that for the other times we all would in fact all be disturbed. No doubt this is of little comfort to county residents who are retired, home with young kids, or working irregular shifts (or trying to eat dinner or walk in one's neighborhood given the exemption until 8pm on weekdays).

This was a great win very popular with voters. There was compromise time for change, substantial taxpayer help (and county outreach) for the transition, and a win for quality of life, worker health, and the environment. Let it continue. With every passing day it will be even more popular and common sense.

Thank you,

Chris Homan
Bethesda, MD

Montgomery County Council

Legislation: Bill 19-25 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

Organization: Climate Coalition Montgomery County

Position: Oppose

Council Hearing: July 15, 2025

Dear Council President Stewart and Council Members,

As a representative of the Climate Coalition Montgomery County, my testimony is in opposition to Bill 19-25, which delays the complete ban of gas-powered leaf blowers, approved by this council in September, 2023 by an overwhelming vote of 10-1.

When this council was deliberating Bill 18-22, the gas-powered leaf blower ban, a primary concern was the development of an effective rebate program by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The program that was subsequently approved by this council helps residential users and commercial landscape companies. It was specifically designed to support the start of the ban on July 1, 2025.

As you know, residential users can get a single \$100 rebate over the 2.5 years of the program. Revenue qualified companies, which are the small landscapers, can get a \$1500 rebate every year, meaning they can get it up to 3 times. Larger companies can get a \$1000 rebate also up to 3 times.

The rebate program extends through December, 2026, a year and half after the ban goes into effect. This supports DEP's goal to not punitively cite users, but provide time to allow companies to take advantage of the rebate and get into compliance.

Councilmembers emphasized that the county's information efforts must reach the smaller companies. Based on this criterion, the program's success is clear. There were about 500 rebates given out, including 205 for commercial users. Of those 205, 187, that is, 91%, were to revenue qualifying businesses.

Thus, my first point is that small businesses in Montgomery County have been well informed and do not need the seasonal exemption.

Related to this point, Ruppert Landscape was mentioned in the bill's background as one company that could take advantage of the delay. They are "one of the largest landscaping companies in the region...which employs nearly 2,000 employees." Well, of course they are large. They are a national company serving the east coast from Pennsylvania to Florida and Texas. This includes Washington, DC, which has had a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers since 2022. If they can comply with the law in DC, then they should comply in Montgomery County.

A second issue also compels rejection of this bill. When discussing the original Bill 18-22, Councilmember Fani-Gonzalez said, quote, "This is not just about noise, this is about health". She was referring to the fact that gas leaf blowers expose workers to substantial exhaust emissions. This includes hydrocarbons from both burned and unburned fuel to generate ozone, carbon monoxide, benzene, acetaldehyde, and formaldehyde (1). These all have harmful health effects, with the latter three considered probable human carcinogens.

Third, there is the issue of fairness. Many landscaping companies made a business decision to plan ahead and take advantage of the county's efforts to help them in the transition and comply with the law. With the ban now in effect, after DEP has spent over \$600,000 to inform users and provide rebates, and after more than 200 rebates have been given to mostly smaller landscaping companies, this exemption shows little respect to those forward-thinking businesses who seek to be good citizens and engaged members of the Montgomery County community.

I urge you to vote against Bill 19-25 and its delay of the complete ban of gas-powered leaf blowers which went into effect two weeks ago.

Thank you for your time.

Kevin Walton
For the Climate Coalition Montgomery County
kmwalton@gmail.com

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1. A report to the California legislature on the potential health and environmental impacts of leaf blowers. (2000) California Air Resources Board.
<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/Health%20and%20Environmental%20Impacts%20of%20Leaf%20Blowers.pdf>

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

July 15, 2025

Hello Councilmembers,

My name is David Mosher and I’m a homeowner here in Montgomery County. I’m writing you today because I’m very concerned about the problem of gas leaf blowers and I’m **against adoption of Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption**. I’ve talked with some landscapers in this area who have already made the switch to electric equipment. They are very successfully running their businesses on all electric equipment.

The lawn maintenance industry in Montgomery County should move to electric blower equipment now to reap the benefits of cost savings and protecting their worker’s health.

1. ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT IS AS POWERFUL AS GAS AND MORE COST EFFICIENT

Independent researchers now rate electric equipment as highly as gas, and the landscapers who use them say they won't go back to gas. Electric equipment actually saves businesses money over time, even with pricey batteries. The reason is that gas leaf blowers use and waste a lot of gas and oil and require frequent maintenance. In my conversations with electric-equipped landscapers, they all said electric equipment lasts longer. Even if batteries hold slightly less energy density after a few years, they still function perhaps at 80% capacity, whereas a gas leaf blower rarely lasts more than 3 years in professional usage and is in the landfill by that time.

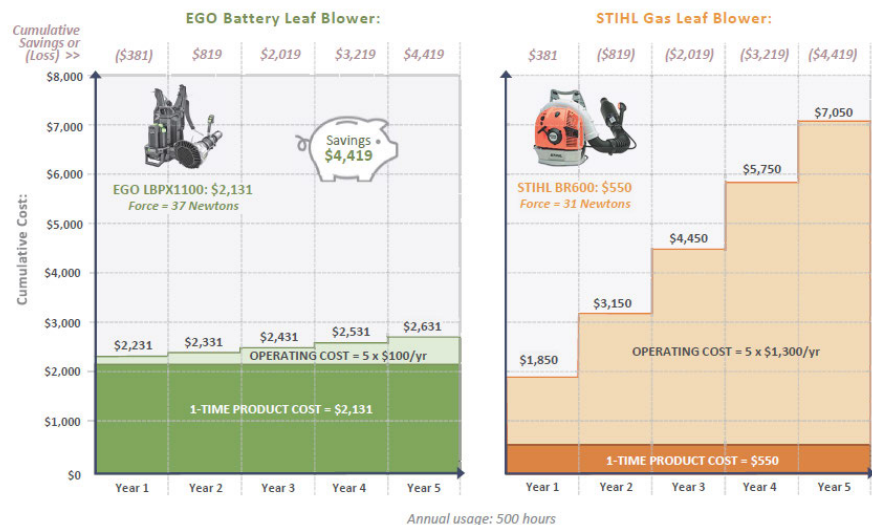
The slide below, which was created by a researcher, shows a sample scenario where even spending over \$2K on an electric blower with powerful batteries quickly shows savings versus using gas. Landscapers routinely use over \$1K in gas/oil each year per blower according to major manufacturers and landscaper testimony. Moving to electric now seems like an obvious business decision. **Delay will only add to the cost over time.**

SECTION 3: Battery vs. Gas Cost Comparisons Over 5 Years

- Page 6 -

Battery Leaf Blowers Save \$4,400 vs. Gas Over 5 Years (Commercial Use)

Cumulative Cost Comparison



P. Kampas 4/2025

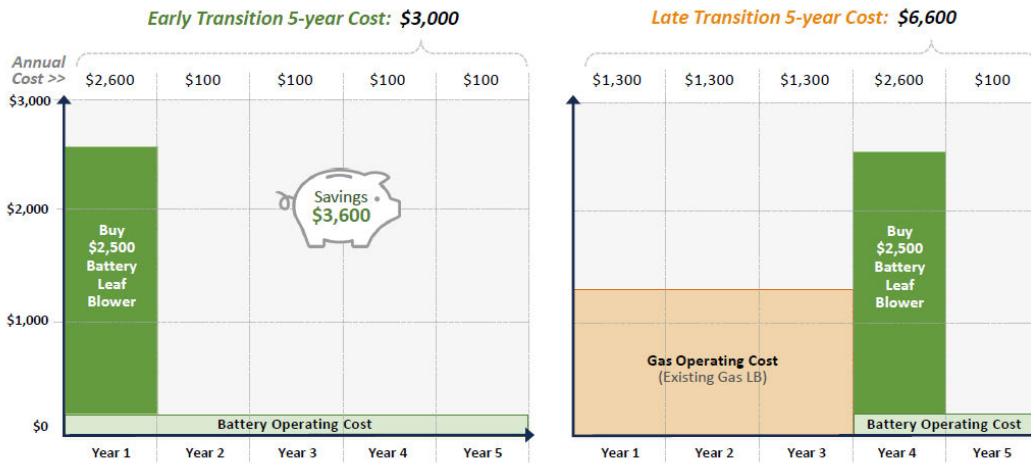
Also, landscapers will need to buy electric blowers to service their customers during the rest of the year outside the fall exemption season, so this will not avoid the expense of purchasing some electric blowers. If you look at the chart below, the sooner landscapers purchase electric blowers, the sooner they can start

reaping the savings and we've not found evidence of a single landscaper being forced out of business by moving to electric leaf blowers because they actually save money.

Q: Does delaying the transition from gas to battery leaf blowers save money?

A: No. The sooner you switch, the more you save.

Annual Cost Comparison



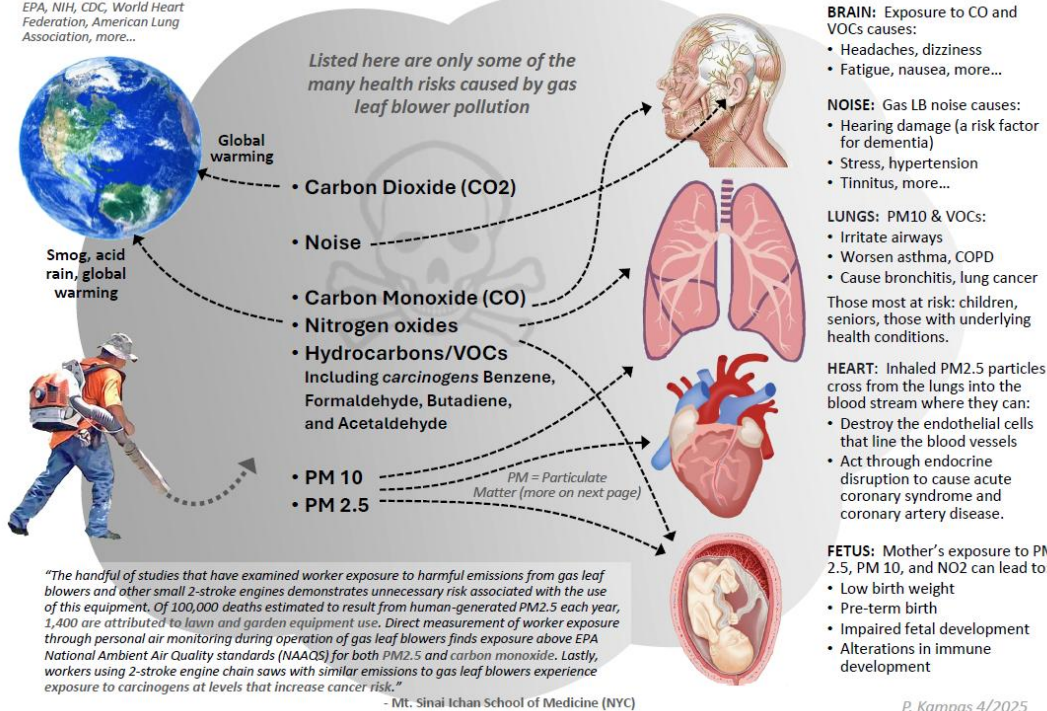
Annual usage: 500 hours

2.GAS EQUIPMENT HARMS WORKER HEALTH.

Electric equipment is far better for workers and everyone in the community. The air pollutants emitted from a gas leaf blower include 23X the carbon monoxide emitted by a Ford F-150 pick-up truck and an absurd amount of PM2.5, which the World Health Organization says is the deadliest of air pollutants. Workers routinely complain of eye and throat irritation, coughing and far more serious health complaints including permanent hearing damage. Ground-level ozone and PM2.5, even at low levels, cause or contribute to many different health impacts: including cardiovascular events, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma and COPD, and they compromise the ability of the body to fight respiratory infections, and result in higher morbidity and mortality. Long-term (months to years) exposure to PM2.5 has been linked to reduced lung functional growth in children, and premature death particularly in people who have chronic heart or lung diseases.

Gas Leaf Blowers Cause Health Risk to Workers, Residents, and the Planet

Sources:
EPA, NIH, CDC, World Heart
Federation, American Lung
Association, more...



2. GAS LEAF BLOWERS HARM COMMUNITY HEALTH

Further, this equipment causes harm to everyone in the community, because the air and noise pollution travels far and wide from the work site. Roughly four million Marylanders live in communities with suboptimal/failing air quality, including those in "D" rated Montgomery County, according to the American Lung Association. Don't we all have a right to breathe cleaner air? Shouldn't we be able to enjoy our homes without the extreme air and noise pollution of gas leaf blowers throughout the day? Gas leaf blowers prevent me from enjoying that right. Three quarters of Marylanders complain about gas leaf blower noise, saying it impacts their ability to concentrate, work, learn, and sleep, and even affects physical and mental health for some, according to a Maryland Sierra Club survey. Gas leaf blowers have the same effect on birds and other wildlife.

I urge the lawncare industry to make the switch now to electric and reap the cost savings and protection of the health of their workforce and the community.

Hundreds of communities across the nation have made this transition, and those communities are doing just fine. I respectfully request you to **oppose the adoption of Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption.**

Thank you very much,

David Mosher

██████ Rushing Water Way

Germantown, MD 20874

Dear Council Members of Montgomery Co., Maryland:

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide

a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas

powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force

landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a “common sense” way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this important request

Sincerely,

Sandra and David Stump

David Stump Insurance Agency Inc

Office: 19910 Fisher Ave.

Mailing: PO Box 19

Poolesville MD 20837-0019

I am writing **in opposition** to the proposed seasonal exemption for gas-powered leaf blowers.

I work from home, and I run virtual programs for a nationwide audience. Some of our programs have as many as a thousand participants. When I am not leading programs, I am often in meetings. It is not an exaggeration to say that doing my job often becomes nearly impossible during the months of October, November, and December. I live in a large complex, and the landscapers are on site for the better part of those three months. During that time, I constantly have to apologize to event participants for the loud and disruptive noise that comes through my microphone, not to mention the fact that it's very difficult for me to hear others, concentrate, and effectively facilitate these sessions. Noise-cancelling headphones do not block the low-frequency noise of gas-powered blowers. In addition to the significant disruption to my work, I often end up with headaches and increased stress levels.

You talk about supporting small businesses, but what about the thousands of us who work from home (providing the county with income tax revenue) and find our ability to make a living impaired for three months of the year by the highly disruptive noise of leaf blowers? As you decide who and what to prioritize, the health and wellbeing of the landscaping workers should be of primary importance, but please consider the needs and wellbeing of the thousands of people who work from home in the county (and county residents in general) ahead of the complaints of a handful of landscaping company owners who did not adequately prepare for this transition, despite being given two years and plenty of financial incentives to do so.

I'd also like to point out that the county did a very robust public outreach campaign for the original bill. After it became law, there were ads on buses, mailings to our homes, and many people consider it a done deal. The amount of public outreach that has happened for this last-minute exemption is grossly insufficient. I've told dozens of people about this bill, and not a single person had heard about it through any other means. You should understand that if this exemption goes through, you will likely have thousands of very upset county residents on your hands come October 1st. I know that I would feel that the council has betrayed our trust and not followed through on enforcing a law that has been on the books for nearly two years now.

Lastly, I hope we can start thinking differently as a community about how to manage our landscapes. Leaves have high ecological value – butterflies overwinter in them, and we are seeing alarming declines of butterflies in large part because of the practice of stripping the land of all leaves. An ecological practice like transferring some leaves into garden beds minimizes the need for mulch in the spring, is better for the environment, and saves money, time, and effort. I hope it's something that those who manage both private and public landscapes will consider.

All of us have been subjected to the damaging effects of gas-powered leaf blowers for long enough. Other municipalities have already made the transition, proving that it is achievable. The time to follow through on your policies and promises and make a full transition to electric blowers is now, not in three years.

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Albornoz and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers.

The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Albornoz would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

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--

Donna Sirk

Dear County Council,

I urge you to maintain the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers for Montgomery County, which went into effect on July 1. This legislation was approved in a 10 to 1 vote by the council in 2023. At the time, the council heralded this decision as “one example of the many steps we are taking to help combat climate change, while also working with our small businesses to offset the initial fiscal impacts of going green”.

Those offsets are important to note - landscapers have had ample time to work costs of battery-operated leaf blowers into their budgets, and the county's rebate program has generously aided landscapers who need to purchase new equipment with three \$1000-\$1500 rebates available over the 22 month period.

The county itself urges homeowners to mulch their leaves. As recently as this past fall, the county's “[green Montgomery](#)” website listed five ways to use leaves on properties, encouraging the use of nutrient-rich clippings. Individuals that do not wish to follow current environmental practices should be prepared to pay higher prices for their decisions and landscapers can charge accordingly, explaining that leaf blowing and removal of lawn clippings is an additional fee. The county is working against itself if it retracts laws meant to encourage greener practices.

Professional landscapers are the primary users of leaf blowers, so exempting them is tantamount to throwing out legislation that has been approved by the majority of residents. Ironically, those workers are the most harmed by the pollutants of the gas-powered blowers, so a county that cares about its workers should be pushing for safer conditions for some of the lowest paid employees.

In fact, when the council approved this legislation in 2023, council member Fani-Gonzalez said “As the only immigrant on the Montgomery County Council, I am particularly proud to represent the many immigrants who do these incredibly tough and dangerous jobs. Today's vote shows that we are taking action to improve the health of landscape workers, as electric leaf blowers eliminate emissions that heighten respiratory conditions like asthma. These battery-powered blowers are effective and contribute to a healthier environment and improved air quality for all.”

The healthcare costs of NOT enacting this legislation will outweigh the costs of new leaf blowers. In fact, the [World Economic Forum](#) estimates the cost of air pollution averages \$2500 per American in annual healthcare costs. Those costs are not evenly borne though, and landscapers exposed to fumes are at greater risk.

When this legislation was approved, one council member said “I'm glad that we took the time to discuss it thoroughly, so that we passed the best bill possible.” That sentiment is still true. Banning gas-powered leaf blowers improves air quality, reduces noise-pollution, and improves soil health. The decision was made in 2023 to put human and environmental health first. There is no reason to question that now.

I urge you to keep the ban.

Sincerely,
Elaine Akst

Protect Workers, Uphold the Ban: Opposing Bill 19-25

To the Members of the Montgomery County Council,

As a Montgomery County resident who works from home, homeschools, and advocates for sustainable landscaping, I'm writing to express strong opposition to Bill 19-25. This exemption undermines worker protections, public health, and the environmental goals our county has worked hard to promote. Residents were told the ban would take effect July 1st. Companies had years to prepare, with county support and rebates. We cannot go backward now.

Today, gas-powered blowers expose workers to dangerous levels of noise and air pollution. They cause hearing loss, respiratory illness, and increase cardiovascular risk. Many of these workers can't advocate for themselves due to language barriers or fear of job loss. It is our duty to protect them—not to exempt the companies profiting from their harm.

We've seen this pattern before: unsafe factories, toxic materials, child labor—once accepted as “just business.” This ban is part of the same moral arc that removed lead from gasoline, banned cigarettes in offices, and required safety rails on scaffolding. We owe it to our workers—and our neighborhoods—to keep moving forward.

Gas blowers aren't just loud—they're physiologically damaging. Stress disorders, cognitive decline, heart strain, and delayed learning in children are all well-documented (*see Addendum*). In our neighborhood, the noise can continue for hours each day during the fall.

As someone who homeschools and works from home, I've experienced constant disruption, headaches, and the inability to concentrate, even with noise-canceling headphones. This is a public health issue.

The ban passed with public support and a clear implementation date. Council members told residents and businesses what to expect. Now, without meaningful public engagement, those rules are being changed at the last minute. The proposed exemption would gut the ban during its most critical months and invalidate the years of planning that led to it. This isn't just a policy reversal—it's a breach of public trust.

Montgomery County has a responsibility to protect its residents—workers, children, and communities—not just the convenience of a few companies. I urge the Council to reject this exemption and fully enforce the ban we've waited for.

Sincerely,

Emelin Ringuette
Gaithersburg, MD

Addendum: Documented Effects of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers to Landscape Workers and Residents

Noise Levels & Hearing Damage

- CDC/NIOSH measurements place commercial backpack blowers at 95–106 dB(A) at the operator’s ear; even 50 ft away levels stay near 70 dB(A), above WHO’s 55 dB community limit. [1]
- A 2019 field study of two-stroke blowers found sound >100 dB at the machine and WHO-exceeding levels up to 800 ft away; low-frequency components dominated, making the sound harder to block indoors. [2][3]
- Prolonged exposure above 85 dB causes irreversible cochlear damage; landscapers therefore exhaust their safe daily noise dose in minutes without protection. [1]

Cardiovascular & Physiological Stress

- Environmental-noise reviews in Nature (2024) and WHO guidelines show chronic exposure above ~55 dB raises risks of hypertension, myocardial infarction and stroke via stress-hormone–driven vascular damage. [9][11]
- The CDC blog notes elevated cardiovascular morbidity among noise-exposed workers, citing NIOSH epidemiology. [1]
- Low-frequency blower noise raises cortisol and adrenaline in bystanders, increasing blood pressure and immune suppression. [7]

Cognitive, Developmental & Mental-Health Effects

- AAP policy (2023) stresses that children’s smaller ear canals amplify high-frequency sound and that infants cannot escape hazardous noise, making them uniquely vulnerable. [5]
- MRI study of 5- to 9-year-olds linked higher day-to-day environmental noise to thinner language cortex and poorer language scores. [6]
- Classroom experiments show 70 dB background noise (similar to a blower half a block away) reduces reading-comprehension accuracy and the amount of work adolescents attempt. [6a]
- Community surveys document annoyance, sleep loss and anxiety spikes from GLB noise; Santa Cruz CHASE reports measurable cortisol increases. [7]

Landscape Workers: Highest Risk Group

- Nearly 1 million U.S. workers in landscaping face routine noise over 85 dB; leaf blowers are the loudest tool measured. [1]
- Longitudinal studies of groundskeepers show elevated prevalence of permanent hearing loss and tinnitus, plus higher rates of hypertension compared with non-exposed workers. [1][4]

Why Children Need Extra Protection

- Pediatric guidance warns that if sound is “too loud” for an adult it is definitely too loud for a child; hearing loss risk is cumulative across the lifespan. [5]
- Chronic daytime noise above 55 dB is linked to slower reading acquisition, impaired attention, and long-term academic deficits. [6][6a]

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- [6a] Connolly D et al. “The Effects of Classroom Noise on the Reading Comprehension of Adolescents.” *J Acoust Soc Am* 145:372, 2019.
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Testimony by Friends of Sligo Creek

On: Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

Montgomery County Maryland

My name is Kit Gage, I've lived in Montgomery County for over 40 years, and am Advocacy Director of Friends of Sligo Creek, and a Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional.

Starting with a joke that's not a joke: My husband suggested I just play the sound of a gas blower at normal volume, then give my testimony and see if you could hear it. ..Perhaps not.

- In my more than 40 years working on legislative matters, national and local, I've never seen a more universally popular bill than the gas blower ban. Everyone I've talked with before and after passage, including landscape workers using gas blowers, has been in favor of switching to electric.
- From a Noise perspective: Montgomery County prides itself on nurturing its workers – particularly those new to the country, people with English as a second language, folks relatively disempowered – these are the people affected most by this amendment - at serious risk of hearing loss. They benefit not one whit if during the highest blower use time period, they end up having to use gas blowers. Is there money in this amendment to pay for hearing aids?
- People actually using the blowers are least empowered and not familiar with its systems or aware they are allowed to affect them. They are unlikely to risk their jobs to ask even for hearing protection. Why would Montgomery County not focus on helping them rather than continuing their bad work environment? We must speak up for them.

- From an Environmental and Climate perspective, we should be seeking to limit the use of blowers in general, but particularly dirty, noisy gas blowers. We should be consistent – the Leave the Leaves movement endorsed by MoCo government means don't blow them and all the accompanying byproducts of inefficient internal combustion engines and particulates around, to be inhaled and ingested by workers, children, and everyone else. There can be reasons to move leaves around, but minimize that activity and do it safely.
- Friends of Sligo Creek helped initiate and promote the original bill. We have received accolades from around the county and country for our work.
- This amendment would gut the original bill, allowing gas blowers during the main time of year of their use.
- Don't pretend to support the law when by supporting this amendment; you would gut it.

Thank you.

To: Members of the Montgomery County Council

Date: June 22, 2025

Re: Expedited Bill 19-25-Noise Control-Leaf Removal Equipment-Seasonal Exemption

In the spirit of transparency, I was and still am opposed to the original bill banning gas powered leaf blowers. With that said I don't see the current County Council repealing it. However, the seasonal exemption clearly makes sense. I have spoken to several landscape companies, and each one has said that during the fall, when leaf removal is being done, the use of battery powered leaf blowers is both impractical and time consuming. The battery powered ones are not strong enough and the battery life if is not long enough to take care of leaves (ie. Many batteries are needed and quite often a source to charge them is needed.)

I sincerely hope the members of the County Council will vote in favor of Expedited Bill 19-25.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I will be following the actions of the County Council in reference to this.

Sincerely,
Gary L. Frace
Olney, MD 20832

Council members,

Companies have had 5 YEARS to prepare for this, and this is being thrown at us 2 weeks before the prohibition goes into effect? This is an incredibly transparent attempt to tank this bill at the last minute. I'm a Montgomery County resident and won't be voting for any of my council members that support this bill if you succeed in pushing this offensive and damaging Hail Mary exemption through. All of my neighbors, family, and friends in the county feel the same way. Enough is enough.

I'd like to remind you of the reasons this bill went into effect in the first place:

Gas-powered blowers **damage the hearing of landscape workers.**

The decibels from gas-powered blowers [have been shown in study after study](#) to be damaging to physical and mental health, **including childhood learning delays and low birth weight.**

Gas-powered blowers are **exceedingly polluting.** We're in the middle of a climate crisis in case you're not aware. Now is not the time to kick the can down the road three years.

This exemption would penalize companies that have already invested in the proper electric equipment to handle the busiest season. Plus, there are provisions in the law to provide rebates to landscapers (especially small ones) to help pay for electric blowers that are considerably cheaper.

Since October to January is by far the time when we are assaulted with the worst levels and frequency of noise and pollution, **this exemption completely undermines the bill.**

Please do not cater to whiny businesses and instead **prioritize the citizens and workers of the county.** Companies are not required to give citizens any notice whatsoever when they jack

prices by 30-50% several times a year, but we give companies years to plan for impacts, and continue babying them when they complain. Do right by your constituents and enact this law with no exemptions!!!

Gaurav (District 6)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Albornoz and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Albornoz would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary

objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a “common sense” way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Your Sincerely,

Graham Irvine

Cobb Ave, Poolesville, MD

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Albornoz and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide

a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas

powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Albornoz would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

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Personal Note

Living in District Two and caring about the environment, I am concerned that the leaf blower ban is yet another example of a poorly thought-out regulation that burdens small businesses, driving them from Montco and MD, and creates further harms either not considered or understood by the advocates of this ban. I am very pleased that Gabe Albornoz, Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke are supporting this exemption.

v/r

Hugh Fisher

Berryville Road, Darnestown, MD 20874

Written testimony against Expedited Bill 19-25
Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption
Submitted to Montgomery County Council, June 19, 2025

Dear Councilmembers,

As a concerned resident, I urge you to vote against Expedited Bill 19-25, and instead support the original full version of Montgomery County's important legislation banning gas leaf blowers.

Alternate legislation 19-25, introduced by Councilmember Albornoz and cosponsored by Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz, would severely weaken the conversion to electric leaf blowers, by creating a carve-out for landscapers to continuing using loud, polluting gas leaf blowers during October, November, and December, the high autumn season when the majority of leaves fall.

Allowing gasoline leaf blowers in autumn would defeat the purpose of the current law. Pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, worker health issues, and loud noise would continue.

As you know, Montgomery County already disbursed over \$300,000 to subsidize landscaping companies and gardeners as they convert to new electric equipment. Another \$300,000 remains available. DC, and other areas in Vermont, Illinois, Oregon, and California, have successfully made the switch to electric leaf blowers. With your support, we will too.

Please ensure full implementation of all original provisions in the final version which goes into effect on July 1st. Relevant issues have already been fully debated. We count on you to prevent any weakening of this essential legislation to abolish gas leaf blowers in our county.

With gratitude,

Jacqueline Crawley
Homeowner, 20815

Dear Montgomery County Council,

As a resident of Montgomery County and the City of Rockville, I strongly encourage the Montgomery County Council to reject the recently proposed bill that would exempt professional lawn service companies from the 2023 Montgomery County law banning the use and sale of gas-powered leaf blowers.

The exemption would defeat the purpose of the law by allowing the most prolific users an additional three years to comply. Professional lawn companies have had almost two years (Sep 2023 to Jun 2025) to comply with the original ban. They also have had access to taxpayer-funded rebates of up to \$1,500 per year for smaller companies (under \$250k annual revenue and with five or fewer employees) and up to \$1,000 per year for higher-income landscapers with over \$250k annual revenue and six or more employees. Noting that lower-cost leaf-blowers can cost from \$80-\$300 per unit, small companies could have purchased up to 18 lower-cost leaf blowers per year (for a total of 36 non-gas leaf blowers) solely with the rebate, and higher income landscapers up to 12 lower-cost leaf blowers per year (for a total of 24) solely with the rebate.

This exemption would negatively impact the county and city's Climate Action Plans by delaying its goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, Maryland's Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 requires Maryland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent below 2006 levels by 2031. This exemption would be a setback to achieving this goal by allowing some of the worst pollution-generating equipment to be used past the deadline.

Local air quality would suffer because most leaf blowers have a two-stroke engine, which emits high levels of cancer-causing chemicals, ozone, and fine particulate matter. Professional lawn care services often employ multiple leaf blowers at once, elevating pollutants to hazardous levels. The non-profit Environment New Jersey states that using gas-fired leaf blowers for an hour creates as much pollution as driving a car for 1,100 miles.

Emissions aren't the only hazard. Allowing the continued operation of this equipment will further damage hearing of the operators since leaf blowers generate noise over 100 decibels (anything above 85 db can cause permanent hearing loss). Anyone in the neighborhood forced to listen to this noise for extended periods will be negatively impacted.

I ask you to not support this bill and continue to encourage landscaping companies to take advantage of the generous rebate program and comply with the law.

Sincerely,
Jen

--

Jen Hawse

[REDACTED]

Regarding Bill 19-25:

Please do NOT provide seasonal or any exemptions to the bill banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

The gas-powered leaf blowers are harmful to the health of the employees who use them, both because of toxic fumes and hearing damage from noise.

It is especially important to keep the ban in place during the fall when the most leaves are around, and the most harm is being done by them.

The ban was thoroughly debated and passed by the Council 10-1. The issues have not changed. The leaf-blowers have not changed.

People should be ashamed to use gas-powered leaf blowers. But when they are not, we need government to ban them completely, not with silly exceptions for day time in the autumn.

The noise from gas-powered leaf blowers goes a greater distance, and penetrates walls more than other forms of yard machinery, having to do with the pitch of their noise, more than their decibel level.

The current ban does not prevent property owners from removing leaves. Rakes and battery-powered equipment can do the work adequately. Anyone who can afford a lawn service can afford to pay landscapers to take the little more time for raking. Landscapers should charge more, rather than hurt their own employees and the communities where they work.

We have an ethical responsibility to each other to try to protect workers and residents from bodily harm.

Don't weaken the ban against gas-powered leaf blowers.

Jessica Krash, Chevy Chase

To: Montgomery County County Council

From: John Francis

Date: 17 June 2025

Re: [Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption](#)

Dear Council members and affiliates,

Expedited Bill 19-25 providing a limited exemption for landscapers using gas powered leaf blowers is a slap in the face of representative governance. I along with countless homeowners are tired of the noise pollution generated by gas powered blowers and have been looking forward to the day of impending relief, so much so that it is marked on my calendar. The existing legislation was crafted owing to this outcry.

I cannot believe this backpedaling Bill 19-25 has been drafted, especially as the previous action was constructed to allow landscapers to accommodate the change. Perhaps there is a lobbyist representing the landscaping community that has your ear, but this is not, I am certain, what the residents of Montgomery County want. The professional landscapers represent nearly the entirety of the noise pollution (and CO2 emissions) that is being opposed and this problem needs to be rectified immediately.

Even if the cost of new equipment is being passed along to consumers, as perhaps it should, the force of the pending prohibition should stand. People who don't want to pay higher prices for services can pick up a rake and/or buy their own electric gear as I do to speed the process of cleaning their property.

I would further argue that the use of generators as mentioned in your report is entirely counterproductive. While this is not proposed, landscape professionals should have a bank of batteries charged at their businesses using renewable electric suppliers. These costs can and should be passed on to customers as necessary.

Please send me any material that supports your position. Even if government support to landscapers for transition is not forthcoming (as I have heard) consumers need to oppose Bill 19-25, pay the price, and allow an end to this public nuisance.

With sincere concern for democratic Council representation.

John Francis

[REDACTED]

Silver Spring, MD 20910

July 15, 2025

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing on Expedited Bill 19-25 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

From John Parrish, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Councilmember,

I am greatly disappointed that Bill 19-25 seeks to substantially undermine the original Bill 18-22 that banned the sale and use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

On September 20, 2022 I submitted testimony to the council in support of Bill 18-22. In 2023 the Council finally passed Bill 18-22 with very strong support of the community and councilmembers. It has taken a few years to fully implement this ban. In fact it will be July 1, 2025 until the ban goes into full effect. I have looked forward to this day for many years.

The delayed implementation was sensitively designed to allow landscape businesses and the general public time to adjust to the ban. Incentives such as rebates were offered to help transition away from gas-powered equipment to less noisy and less polluting equipment. The landscape industry has had ample time to make this transition.

Bill 19-25 would restrict the use of gas blowers to weekdays. How does this help people that stay at home during weekdays? I am semi-retired and spend most of my weekdays at home. **The noise and air pollution from leaf blowers is a constant nuisance that detracts from my quality of life and health.** It is especially intolerable during the fall when each crew may use multiple blowers at the same time to remove leaves.

Think about the health of the landscape crews that would continue to be harmed by breathing exhaust emissions and suffering from excessive noise if this bill passes.

I urge you to reject Bill 19-25 to safeguard our health, quality of life and well being.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Parrish

Dear Montgomery County Council Members,

I urge you to support the proposed legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Albornoz and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to grant a limited exemption for professional landscapers to use gas-powered leaf blowers between October 1 and December 31, through 2028. Usage would be restricted to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

This exemption is critical for small, often family-run landscaping businesses—many employing immigrants working long hours—to survive during their busiest season. The current rebate program offers minimal financial support for transitioning to costly battery-powered equipment, which remains inefficient and difficult to manage. In fact, the original law may unintentionally increase noise and emissions by requiring gas-powered generators to recharge batteries on-site.

This common-sense measure gives hard-working local businesses more time to comply without jeopardizing jobs or livelihoods. Please support this important adjustment.

Respectfully,

Joy Zucker-Tiemann

----- Spates Hill Rd.

Poolesville, MD 20837

July 14, 2025

RE: Bill 19-25

To the Montgomery County Council

Melissa and I have lived in the Sligo Park Hills neighborhood of Montgomery County for 21 years. We very strongly support the July 11, 2025 letter from our Community Association president, David Heller, protesting the attempt to disable a portion of the now in force ban on the use of gasoline powered leaf blowers.

The landscaping companies have had plenty of time to adjust to the regulation, and there has been support in place to assist them as needed.

The gasoline powered blowers are very noisy and put out a large amount of visible exhaust. We have very rarely (if ever) seen any of the workers using any kind of ear or respiratory protection such as earphones or face mask/filters. We, who are some away, find the noise and stink obnoxious – and the poor workers who carry them on their backs are directly and more profoundly affected.

While the landscaping companies may not be evil, they have certainly been consistently remiss in protecting their own employees.

Regulations are put in place by responsible governments to ensure – and enforce - the protections required. Regulations are usually enacted by governments in precisely these situations where protections have been consistently lacking.

Please do not gut the law that had been wisely enacted.

Julius and Melissa Kassovic

----- Hilltop Rd.

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Kenneth Bawer
8 Cleveland Ct
Rockville, MD 20850

July 15, 2025

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

Position: Against

References:

[Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption](#)

Introduction: Lead sponsor Councilmember Gabe Alborno will introduce Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption, which would provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year and set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption. The proposed three-month exemption would run from Oct. 1 until Dec. 31 on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The exemption would sunset three years after the bill is enacted. The purpose of Expedited Bill 19-25 is to provide a seasonal exemption to the ban on gas-powered leaf blower equipment for landscape professionals that begins on July 1, 2025.

Councilmembers Dawn Luedtke, Marilyn Balcombe and Sidney Katz are cosponsors of Bill 19-25. A public hearing is scheduled for July 15

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Councilmembers:

I urge you to vote against this bill as written because it simply does not go far enough to damage our lungs and ears, raise our blood pressure, and lower our quality of life. We really need more reasons to visit our health-care providers.

Hats off to the lawn care industrial complex that did a great job lobbying the Council to turn against the will of the people and introduce this Trumpian bill that shows no respect for peoples' health, no respect for the environment, and no respect for the will of residents as reflected in the County's current ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. The Department of Environmental Protection's [web site](#) says, "The County's ban on gas-powered leaf blowers reduces harmful air emissions and continued reliance on fossil fuels. It also lessens health

impacts that contribute to hearing loss, cardiovascular and respiratory disease and other health issues.” But, what do they know, right?

I, along with hundreds of thousands of other residents, really want more noise and more air pollution because we just do not get enough air pollution from cars these days, what with so many annoying electric vehicles.

In that spirit, I would like to suggest several friendly amendments, because, while this bill makes a good start, it missed some obvious ways to harm us that make as much sense as this bill.

And these amendments are just as important, reasonable, and desired by the residents of this County as our desire to bring back gas powered leaf blowers.

Here are some examples of other sensible seasonal exemptions:

- a seasonal exemption from the use of lawn pesticides.
- a seasonal exemption from speed limits in school zones during school hours.
- a seasonal exemption from passing schools busses while flashing red.
- a seasonal exemption from the proposed ban on bamboo.
- a seasonal exemption for stopping at stop signs and red lights.
- a seasonal exemption from burning leaves and trash.
- a seasonal exemption from selling alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana to minors.
- a seasonal exemption for fireworks, maybe around the 4th of July.

These are just some of the common-sense exemptions that could be added in the spirit of this bill which would also harm our health and well-being.

In summary, thanks to this bill’s sponsors for saving us from the horrors of quieter neighborhoods, cleaner air, and the evil specter of less polluting electric leaf blowers.

Thanks for saving us from having to go down to Fairfax to breath in the sweet aroma of gas leaf blower exhaust before we visit our pulmonologist and get fitted for hearing aids.

So many great bills to pass, so little time.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kenneth Bawer

.

I am opposed to extending the time for Landscapers to use battery powered leaf blowers and allowing them to continue using noisy polluting gas powered equipment for the following reasons:

- Some landscapers I know have already invested in new equipment to comply with the ordinance. Instead the county would be rewarding non-compliance.
- I don't see how the county will enforce the seasonal limits and there would no longer be a reason for landscapers to comply or invest in compliant equipment. It would also be confusing to homeowners.
- Landscapers will adapt their methods to keep their services attractive and affordable. Moving smaller piles of leaves so that the batteries will last longer or using rakes and tarps, for example.
- I would like Montgomery County to use the same excuse of uncertain economic times to delay any tax and fee increases for three years.

I cannot tell you how dismayed I was to learn, today, of the bill to reintroduce gas leaf blowers for the fall season. I was shocked and enraged.

These tools are a nuisance. They are sources of extreme noise pollution and they ruin my right to quiet enjoyment of my home. They also are air pollutants..

I have joyfully been anticipating the ban on these horrible tools for two years and now you want to change it at the eleventh hour?!

Landscapers have already prepared for this -- the ban is to go into effect in two weeks.

I am completely opposed to reintroducing these horrible tools back into our environment. If Takoma Park can survive without them, so can Montgomery County.

Enough already. We all were promised this --- keep your promise.

Moreover, 8:00 p.m. is way too late on weeknights. Those of us who work deserve to have a quiet evening once we arrive home and not be subjected to the RARRR RARRR RARRR constant drone of these leafblowers, which the landscapers run three at a time in a single yard.

You are proposing to continue to ruin my right to quiet enjoyment of my home and snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. NO.

Sincerely,

Lauren Ruby

Silver Spring, MD 20910

I cannot describe how disappointed I am at this 11th hour, hail Mary pass by certain council members attempting to slide through a bill undermining the ban on gas powered leaf blowers. For two years we have been waiting for this ban to take effect. And it's been promoted and promised on the news, in publications and blared from speakers at gas stations.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that gas powered leaf blowers should be banned for environmental reasons as well as for the physical and mental health of residents and, most importantly, the workers - all which are clearly laid out in the discussion of the original bill banning these blowers, a few members of this council are attempting to backslide on a promise to its Montgomery County constituents. On the Discussion page of Agenda 4G (March 21, 2023) it states "It reduces the significant health impacts of two-stroke engine exhaust and noise on the company's workers, who operate the machines for hours each day. This in turn means happier, more productive, and more reliable workers. It also increases the workers' comfort, since they don't have to suffer the noise and high vibration of gas blowers or return home each day smelling like gasoline."

I live in a neighborhood that backs up to Watts Branch Creek Park. The gas leaf blowers are so loud and noxious, that even down in the woods - hundreds of yards away from the neighborhood - the smell and noise is often overwhelming. It is distressing and depressing that we cannot even walk in a county park that is meant for getting away and finding peace because of these awful machines.

The notion that this bill is being introduced in part because the cost may be prohibitive for some small businesses is ludicrous. Again, on the Discussion page of Agenda 4G dated March 21, 2023 it states "In either scenario, landscapers recover the initial cost of purchasing a battery-powered leaf blower in less than a year, and achieve significant savings (higher profits) every year after. The primary reason for this is the large difference between the cost of gasoline and battery power for the same resulting power output. The differential across time is large enough to dwarf the purchase cost of the battery equipment." In addition, under Financing the Transition to Battery Power (Agenda 4G, March 21, 2023) it states, "The economics of switching to battery equipment are in fact even easier than this analysis shows, for reasons beyond the conservative assumptions mentioned. This study assumes the cost of new equipment will be fully paid, out of pocket and up front, but there are many ways businesses of all sizes commonly finance new purchases and investments, enabling even the smallest of companies to acquire new equipment immediately."

And to the point of electric leaf blowers being less capable of handling large amounts of leaves, there is overwhelming evidence that electric leaf blowers are more than capable of handling leaves. I have been using an electric leaf blower for personal use that is far less powerful than commercial electric leafblowers, and I have no issues with blowing leaves from my lawn. Environmentally, companies should be leaving most of the leaves in their customers' plant beds because leaves provide vital nutrients for the soil and provide important habitat and cover for many insects including butterflies and other pollinating insects.

This is a slap in the face. I'd like to personally thank the council member who represents my area, Mr. Andrew Friedson, for not attaching his name to this disgraceful bill.

Thank you,

Linda Hope

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO EB-19-25
Submitted in connection with
A Public Hearing of the Montgomery County Council
July 15, 2025

Chair Stewart and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in connection with this public hearing.

As a longtime resident and homeowner in Montgomery County, I am submitting this statement to register my strong opposition to EB-19-25 and to urge the Council to reject this misguided last-minute legislation.

Montgomery County did the right thing in October 2023 when it banned the sale and use of gas-powered leaf blowers. The ban helps protect lawn service workers from harmful noise and toxic substance exposures caused by the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. The ban helps protect our environment from excessive noise and gas pollution and improves the quality of life for residents of Montgomery County who will no longer be subjected to annoying and harmful gas fumes and excessive noise.

In passing the ban, Montgomery County joined other leading jurisdictions across the country, including our neighboring District of Columbia, which have successfully implemented bans.

The Council provided a generous phase-in period for the ban - almost two years – meaning that residents and contractors have had plenty of time to prepare for this change. It is my understanding that financial subsidies have been offered to assist businesses with the conversion to electric-powered leaf blowers.

There is no excuse or justification for giving lawn service contractors an out at this late date, after the ban has finally taken effect. To do so rewards bad behavior by contractors that dragged their feet and is unfair to the contractors that have taken steps to comply with the new law.

The purported "limitations" on the exemption for lawn service companies are the proverbial loophole that you can drive a truck through. The exemption covers the fall - the period of heaviest use of leaf blowers, meaning that workers will be exposed to noise and fumes during the busiest season, as will Montgomery County residents. Limiting the "exemption" to weekdays is meaningless – workers will continue to be exposed, and many residents work from home or are retired and will be subjected to the pollution and noise that the Council voted to ban back in 2023.

As someone who is regularly subjected to noise and fumes that prevent me from working in my home office or using my outdoor patio when my neighbors' lawn service fires up their gas-powered leaf blowers, I am vehemently opposed to this misguided proposal. Please protect the workers and residents of Montgomery County, reject this last-minute exemption, and preserve the action you took in October 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rhinehart

[Silver Spring, MD 20910](#)

June 17, 2025

Dear Montgomery County Council Members,

I am a resident of Chevy Chase Village, the first municipality in Montgomery County to permanently ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers year-round. The decision by our 7 Member Board of Managers was unanimous and followed a long period of public outreach, demonstrations of equipment by landscape professionals and comments from residents. The ordinance, passed on December 9, 2019 with a two-year grace period for landscape companies and residents to transition from gas-powered blowers to battery and electric powered equipment. The ban went into effect on January 1, 2022, coincident with a similar ban in Washington, DC. Since that time the Village has experienced a fundamental improvement in the quality of life of its residents. This is due to the significant reduction in noise and pollution from CO2 and particulate carbon, and relief from the year-round assault of high intensity/low-frequency sound waves emitted by gas-powered leaf blowers which have been linked to cardiovascular distress.

In the three years since the Village has adopted the ban, we have had **no** requests from residents to bring back gas-powered blowers. Landscape companies operating in the Village have successfully transitioned to battery-powered equipment, which is competitively priced and more than adequate to do the job. Batteries are now powerful enough to hold a charge for several hours and can be plugged in to recharging units powered by clean energy. The investment by landscape companies in battery powered leaf blowers, including multiple batteries, has more than paid off in savings in fuel and maintenance costs, rebates for trade-ins of old equipment, and the health and well-being of workers. This, along with growing demand for similar legislation throughout the County, led to the Council's passage of Bill 18-22. This provided for a generous, three-year phase-in prior to a total ban to take effect on July 1, 2025. Landscape operators in the County have known since 2019 that a transition away from gas powered blowers was imminent. Any suggestion that more time is needed to phase out this noxious equipment, particularly given the incentives and lead-time the County has already provided to landscape operators is, at best misinformed; at worst it is nothing more than a pretense and an attempt to curry favor with commercial interests that do not have the well-being of the public, and especially their workers, in mind.

I urge you to hold firm to the original bill passed by the Council, with a total, year-round ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers to go into effect on July 1 of this year. As a proud Montgomery County resident and taxpayer, I am counting on you to honor your commitment to the public good and to the health and well-being of all its residents.

Sincerely,

Marea Hatzios Grant, PhD
Chair, Environment and Energy Committee
Chevy Chase Village,
MD 20815

Good morning,

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a "common sense" way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Thank you!

Best,

Marie & Bobby Gignilliat

----- Bodmer Ave, Poolesville, MD 20837

Regarding Expedited Bill 19-25 - Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

We strongly object to Councilmember Alborno's proposed legislation regarding leaf blowers. We have been putting up with this horrible noise for years. Nothing ruins a nice day on the deck faster than the on-and-off jet engine noise from gas-powered leaf blowers. No sooner do they finish at one neighbor's house than the landscaper at another neighbor's starts up.

His arguments do not hold up. This law has been coming for years. The battery-powered blowers are fully up to the job. Landscapers have had plenty of time to amortize their equipment and invest in battery-powered equivalents. Tariffs and supply chain constraints have a minimal impact on this. Surely there are better ways to support small businesses than encouraging this noise pollution.

Mark & Pat Glander
Everest Street
Silver Spring

Good afternoon, members of the HHS and Education & Culture Committees,

My name is Marla Schulman, and I am a member of B'nai Israel Congregation, as well as a proud member and board member of Action in Montgomery (AIM). I'm here today to speak as an individual in strong support of the Children's Opportunity Alliance (COA), sharing a perspective shaped by years of community involvement and a deep commitment to ensuring all children in our county have access to high-quality early childhood education.

COA has played a vital and unique role in Montgomery County. They have not only supported early childhood providers, especially those historically overlooked, but also offered critical technical assistance, training, and resources that many providers would otherwise not receive. In doing so, they have built trust, fostered collaboration, and created innovative, community-informed pathways for expanding early care and education across the county.

In addition to this on-the-ground support, COA has engaged in meaningful advocacy at both the local and state levels. Their work is grounded in listening to families, providers, and community voices, ensuring those most impacted by decisions are not only heard but lead the way forward.

Now is not the time to pull back. I urge the Council to continue investing in the systems and partnerships that are working to create more preK seats for our children. COA's vision, dedication, and solution-oriented approach are exactly what our county needs to build an inclusive and effective early education system.

Thank you.

I support Expedited Bill 19-25 to allow gas-powered leaf blowers only for professional landscapers and only during leaf season (October 1 – December 31). I believe it is also essential to include the sunset provision to force a review of this matter in three years when more electric options may be available.

I am concerned with both the environmental impact and the noise of gas-powered leaf blowers. I have observed my neighbors using them more frequently for all kinds of tasks at all hours of the day. In the warm months my family takes all our meals on our screened porch. I hope the moratorium on personal use of gas-powered leaf blowers and professional use for purposes other than fall leaf removal will allow us to converse over lunch or dinner.

Dear Montgomery County Council.

I have been eagerly awaiting the ban on gas leafblowers, which is so crucial for improving the health of our county in a variety of ways. As you know, gas-powered leafblowers are harder on local pollinators, contribute to air pollution, and also disturb the peace of our neighborhoods through excessive noise pollution.

So you can imagine my dismay upon hearing that Councilmember Gabe Albornoz has introduced Expedited Bill 19-25, co-sponsored by Councilmembers Dawn Luedtke, Marilyn Balcombe, and Sidney Katz! **I am writing to express my very strong opposition to this bill.**

Even if the exemptions proposed are phrased as "limited," they would still allow a great deal of harm -- harm that we had already agreed is worth finally putting a stop to.

And even if it has a "sunset," 3 years is a very long time -- and who's to say it won't be extended again?

The rebates already planned for electric leafblowers are a good measure to help people transition. I don't see a compelling enough reason to add these exemptions.

We all know that finally banning gas-powered leafblowers is the right thing to do: for our environment, our pollinators, and our community. Please let's have the integrity to stick to the plan, and please don't add to the rollback of progress that we're seeing all around us right now.

sincerely,

Meg Ahern
Silver Spring, 20910

June 18, 2025

Re: Expedited Bill 19-25 Gas Powered Leaf Blowers

From: Meg Spearman, resident of Silver Spring, MD

I am a resident of Wheaton Hills (Silver Spring) and I fail to see the rationale or benefit in delaying the ban on gas powered leaf blowers. The idea that continuing to pollute the air, kick up feces and pollen and dust, and cause nuisance-level noise on a regular basis is somehow a good idea despite passing legislation to the contrary makes absolutely no sense. Businesses have had (over) a full year to make the switch, or use a rake, a broom, or hey – the wind. Studies have shown our yards *need* this organic matter to keep healthy soil, and to support the pollinators that lay eggs in those leaves. Making a pile in the corner of your yard has exceedingly more benefits than all the time and energy (fossil fuels) it takes to gather and move those leaves offsite.

Many of us have kids with asthma and/or allergies; we spend time outside gardening and enjoying what little peace and quiet we get between loudspeakers, car exhausts, construction, and year-round landscaping crews; and/or we work from home, and exercise and walk dogs outside on a regular basis. The gas leaf blowers are a persistent, costly, dangerous nuisance and – most importantly - absurdly unnecessary. Delaying their ban doesn't change that. No one needs a gas leaf blower. Literally no one. No one ever did or ever will. What we do need, however, is more quiet, more clean air, and more pollinators. Ordinances banning blowers all across the country are making this point loud and clear.

Legislation is sometimes passed to spurn innovation or change or affect cultural shifts. The leaf blower is a vestige from the post-colonial status symbol of a highly manicured lawn, and an expensive waste of resources (namely fossil fuels, water) and time, taxing wildlife and neighbors' nerves in the process. The county needs to do a better job communicating the rationale for the legislation already passed, and supporting the transition to alternatives; not by delaying when the ban becomes effective.

Opposition to proposed Seasonal Exemption to Bill 19-25

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, Councilmembers Albornoz, Balcombe, Fani-Gonzalez, Friedson, Glass, Katz, Luedtke, Mink, and Sayles:

We oppose any seasonal exemption from the Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ban.

In addition to public and worker health, environmental protection and climate impacts, and quiet enjoyment of our homes and neighborhoods, continuing to allow gas-powered blowers defers the need to address current landscaping practices. These practices are not sustainable in the long term.

Maintaining the ban is the first step toward transitioning to environmentally beneficial practices such as replacing turf with native plants, retaining existing trees when a new or replacement home is built, minimizing large new turf installations, and allowing leaves to remain on the ground over the winter to boost native pollinators. The County government can play an important role in guiding this transition and should consider offering incentives for homeowners to move toward more sustainable landscaping.

Finally, Staff's comment that "limiting use to weekdays (Mondays – Fridays) between the hours of 8 am – 8 pm . . . ensure[s] that County residents are not disturbed while at home." is simply incorrect and assumes pre-Covid work settings. Like many County citizens these days, we work from home and will be disturbed during these hours. Also, even traditional workers are home well before 8 pm.

Please reject any exemption from the leaf blower ban.

Carol and Michael Deck
Potomac

July 1, 2025

To the members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing to you about a proposed exemption for lawncare companies who seek permission to continue using gas-powered blowers. The lawncare companies are seeking an exemption from the ban on gas-powered blowers, which went into effect today, July 1.

I urge you NOT to vote to allow the lawncare companies to obtain an exemption from the ban. Gas-powered blowers are a nuisance, generating high noise volumes that are an irritant to me, my family and my pets. Unfortunately, my next door neighbor hires a lawncare company that employs two workers who simultaneously use gas-powered blowers for up to an hour while working on their property. The noise is deafening! I often leave home when they arrive. When I return, I encounter the stench and fumes from the blowers.

Gas-powered blowers are known to harm human health. They generate fumes that contribute to pollution and greenhouse gases. Many municipalities have banned them. Let's join the growing numbers of citizens who have wisely voted to ban the blowers.

Furthermore, allowing lawncare businesses an exemption will simply allow them to continue polluting, harming human health and causing irritating noise. Voting for an exemption now would be unfair to the many lawncare companies that have already invested in electric blowers.

Please, I respectfully urge you NOT to approve an exemption to the ban for lawncare companies. My family and many of my neighbors join me in opposing the exemption.

Thank you,
Nancy Traver



July 9, 2025

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, Councilmembers Alborno, Balcombe, Fani-Gonzalez, Friedson, Glass, Katz, Luedtke, Mink, and Sayles:

The Olney Chamber of Commerce writes to express our support for the proposed Seasonal Exemption to **Bill 19-25**, proposed by Councilmembers Alborno, Luedtke, Balcombe, & Katz.

We commend the County Council for taking steps to reduce pollution and transition to cleaner equipment. The original legislation is well-intentioned and, in the long term, will benefit the environment and public health in Montgomery County. However, the pace of the transition presents serious challenges for local landscaping businesses—many of which are small, family-run operations with limited financial flexibility.

Our members who operate landscaping companies have shared the following concerns:

1. While battery-powered equipment has improved, it is not yet advanced enough to compete with gas-powered blowers in terms of efficiency and durability. Without the Seasonal Exemption, routine fall clean-ups will take significantly longer and ultimately increase prices for county residents.
2. The cost of rapidly replacing entire fleets of gas-powered equipment is a significant financial burden, especially for smaller businesses. The Seasonal Exemption allows operators time to spread out these costs and invest more gradually in electric alternatives.
3. Battery technology continues to evolve rapidly. Allowing for a brief delay in full implementation is likely to result in more affordable, higher-performance options for landscapers in the near future.

In short, we support the broader goals of the gas-powered leaf blower ban, but believe the Seasonal Exemption is a reasonable and necessary step to preserve the competitiveness of local businesses and protect consumers from sharp cost increases during the transition.

Sincerely,

The Olney Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Council Members Albornoz, Katz, Balcombe, and Luedtke should be ashamed of themselves for advancing Bill 19-25. They know full well that this measure effectively overturns the County's ban on gasoline powered leaf blowers. The notion that this bill just provides a "seasonal exemption" is absurd. The leaf blowing season is in the fall. Everyone knows that.

Leaf blowers are devastating for landscape workers' health, causing hearing damage and forcing them to breathe in noxious air pollutants and whatever happens to fly up from the ground. I wonder, would you four Councilors want to be told by your employer to use these machines? Do you really enjoy the disruption they cause to people who are trying to work from their homes or to people trying to just enjoy sitting outside?

Council Member Albornoz is supposed to be representing everyone in the County. But it seems he's mostly focused on catering to a small group of landscape companies that have decided they don't like the ban. Such companies are already outdated. The best companies use electric equipment. They must, because of the District's ban on leaf blowers. But the technology has advanced well, in part because localities like Montgomery County have forced those improvements.

You can bet that my friends, family, and I will remember what the Council does when the next election rolls around.



July 14, 2025

Re: Testimony in opposition of Expedited Bill 19-25 relating to the seasonal exemption to use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Montgomery County.

Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing on behalf of the [Quiet Clean Alliance](#), a coalition of efforts across the country to eliminate gas leaf blowers from our communities. The considerable harms of these tools to public health, workers, and the environment have been well documented. Health and environmental organizations across the country support our goal, as do many equipment manufacturers and landscape contractors who are already using electric blowers.

Most policymakers understand that gas-powered leaf blowers are highly polluting, unhealthy, and disruptive, but may hesitate to act because they've heard outdated rhetoric about high costs, expensive batteries, and underpowered battery technology. Myths like these have been repeated so often they've become conventional wisdom. But they no longer hold true.

The landscaping industry has been resistant to regulation even as it openly supports a transition to battery-powered equipment, and they continue to lobby against common-sense legislation like the 2023 Bill 18-22. Without regulation to protect public health we would still have DDT, three-wheeled ATVs, leaded gas and paint, asbestos, and smoking on airplanes.

Ordinances, like those passed in Washington DC and Baltimore, MD, establish a level playing field, allowing competition to work as it should in setting fair prices for services such as landscaping. This has been shown in the more than 160 municipalities that prohibit gas leaf blowers all or most of the year. We have no evidence of service fees increasing as a result, or landscapers going out of business. Contractors we've spoken with who have made the shift are largely "middle of the pack" with respect to fees. This seems to be true regardless of company size.

We've heard dozens of public hearings on this issue. Debates can easily go down rabbit holes on the hazards of lithium mining, the dangers of batteries, particulars of enforcement, or technical data (e.g., run-times, return on investment, and charging strategies). Mired in these details, the main point often gets lost: Gas leaf blowers are a public health problem with a solution at hand. Viable, cost-effective alternatives are readily available that won't break the bank and won't disrupt local businesses. Phasing out gas-powered blowers is exactly the low-hanging fruit it sounds like. Waiting any longer to address every minor detail would be letting the perfect be the enemy of the good.

We urge you to protect the public health of millions of constituents in Montgomery County by **staying the course with Bill 18-22, passed in 2023**, which approved a ban on the sale and use of gas-powered leaf blowers. Landscapers have known that the implementation date has been set for quite some time and during that time they should have made accommodations to prepare to transition to zero-emission equipment. Introducing a last-minute exemption that would allow gas-powered equipment to continue

being in use goes against all the reasons the original bill was created and is not in the interest of Montgomery County residents and operators of this equipment. And as a former Maryland landscape designer and Certified Professional Horticulturist who worked on residential and commercial projects in Montgomery County, I look forward to seeing more sustainable landscape maintenance practices become the norm.

Thank you on behalf of the Quiet Clean Alliance.

Sincerely,

Jill Bellenger

Steering Committee

Bonnie Sager, Huntington C.A.L.M. (Huntington, NY)

Michael Hall, Quiet Clean PDX (Portland, OR)

Vicki Mann, Quiet Georgia (Atlanta, GA)

Judy Walton, Quiet Clean PDX (Portland, OR)

Jill Bellenger, State Coordinator, Quiet Clean Alliance (Rochester, NY)

Members

California

Ban Gas Leaf Blowers in

Menlo Park

C.H.A.S.E. Santa Cruz

Mow Better

Quiet Clean San Mateo

SD-SEQUEL

Sonoma CALM

Walnut Creek CAN

Connecticut

Quiet New Haven

Quiet Yards Greenwich

Ridgefield C.A.L.M.

Sustainable Essex – Quiet

Lawns Campaign

Sustainable Fairfield – Gas-
powered Leaf Blowers

District of Columbia

Quiet Clean D.C.

Florida

Quiet Pensacola

Georgia

Quiet Georgia

Illinois

Chicago CALM

Massachusetts

Andover WECAN

Don't Blow It Melrose

Quiet Healthy Arlington

Quiet Clean Winchester

Vineyard Conservation

Society – Leaf Blowers

Maryland

Quiet Clean Montgomery

County

New Jersey

Advocates for Transforming

Landscaping in New Jersey

Go Glen Ridge Green

My Green Cranford

Our Green West Orange

Quiet Glen Ridge

Quiet Maplewood

Quiet Montclair

Quiet Princeton

Sustainable Montclair

New York

Garden City Sustainability –

Leaf Blower Campaign

Healthy Yards

Huntington C.A.L.M.

Leave Leaves Alone

New Castle Healthy Yards

Pound Ridge CALM

Ohio

Quiet Clean Heights

Oregon

Quiet Clean Eugene

Lake Oswego Sustainability

Network – Electric

Landscaping Project

Protect Durham Oregon

Quiet Clean PDX

Quiet Clean Salem

Pennsylvania

Climate Action Lower Merion

Quiet Clean Cheltenham

Quiet Clean Philly

Rhode Island

Providence Noise Project –

Leaf Blowers

Quiet Clean Rhode Island

Virginia

Quiet Clean NOVA

Quiet Clean Virginia

Foundation

Washington

Quiet Clean Kirkland

Quiet Clean Seattle

Keep Gas Powered Leaf Blowers Out of Montgomery County-Period

I write on behalf of maintaining the integrity of this ban on gas leaf blowers and NOT allowing an exception.

I frequently post and comment on a neighborhood forum called Next Door. The consensus is clear. Citizens of Montgomery County do not want to be plagued by incredibly noisy and polluting gas-powered leaf blowers, whether in May or November.

The reason the law was passed in the first place was the recognition that the largely trivial benefit was not worth the noise and pollution which degrades our quality of life.

And now an exemption is letting the camel's nose in the tent, with repeal probably not far behind. That would be a major failure of leadership.

This is a moment, an opportunity to look differently at our yards as sustainable mini-ecosystems, not just sprawling green/brown monocultures.

It is critical that we enforce it to the fullest. I recommend a hotline to or email to report violators so they can be fined.

On the politics of this, I'll just say that I don't know if there's a better alternative than the supporters of this ill-advised exemption, but I'll be looking for them.

Richard C.

Dear Councilmembers,

Since the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers went into effect on July 1, my neighborhood, Chevy Chase West, has been blissfully quiet. Lawns have still gotten mowed. Grass clippings have been blown (with electric blowers). But with only a couple of exceptions, none of the mostly Latino lawn workers were forced to breathe cancer-causing pollutants or suffer hearing-damaging decibel levels for hours at a time.. (I have tried to make sure that the two offenders of the ban that I've heard, then seen, are aware of the new law.)

The much-needed common sense law you so wisely adopted by a vote of 10-1 in March 2023 is working smoothly and creating no hardships for landscape companies. Many small landscapers have taken advantage of the rebate program to acquire electric blowers, and more will do so as they learn they can.

I urge those of you who soundly voted for this law to resist any urge to make fools and tools of yourselves by now gutting it on behalf of the monied interests behind big landscaping companies who value the bottom line more than the health of their employees and our communities.

Reject Bill 19-25 and any other attempts to weaken the long-overdue ban on gas-powered leaf blowers. The vast majority of your constituents will reward you. And you will be able to look in the mirror without the person who looks back at you being a hypocrit.

Richard Whittle

Hunt Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD

My name is Rich Biedrzycki. While I am a member of Strong Towns DC, this comment is made as a resident of downtown Bethesda and does not represent the opinion of Strong Towns DC.

I oppose Expedited Bill 19-25. Gas-powered leaf blowers should remain banned. They produce significant amounts of air pollution due to the nature of their motors, and they produce significant amounts of noise, resulting in large negative impacts on residents. Switching to electric-powered leaf blowers addresses both of these issues.

The ban was passed in October 2023, and sales of gas-powered leaf blowers were banned in July 2024. There has been plenty of time for landscapers to purchase and pay for new electric leaf blowers to replace their gas leaf blowers. This bill would be unfair to landscapers who have made the financial investment to comply with the current law while benefiting those who selfishly delayed compliance. It is only fair for our small business owners who chose to do the right thing for the environment and their communities that the ban remain in place as is.

I hope that the council will side with the environment, residents, and forward-thinking business owners by voting against this legislation.

To: Montgomery County Councilmembers
Re: Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption
Subject: Testimony submitted by Ms. Roberta G Steinman
Date: July 1, 2025

I urge you to NOT support the Seasonal Exemption for gas-powered leaf blowers. I support the ban on the use of combustion engine-powered leaf blowers and leaf vacuums that began on July 1st, 2025 in Montgomery County.

Banning the use of Gas-powered leaf blowers is critical for better **AIR QUALITY**, reducing **NOISE POLLUTION**, and bringing some **PEACE** back into our neighborhoods. **The adverse consequences of gas-powered leaf blowers affect EVERYONE in our community** – the residents, the workers, and the critters that inhabit our communities.

Gas leaf blowers are a persistent source of air and noise pollution. We hear their loud, high-pitched noise almost the entire year. Additionally, these inefficient gas-engines fill the air with toxic pollutants – not just carbon dioxide, benzene, methane, and other volatile compounds – they also blow all the stuff that's on the ground up into the air: herbicides, fungicides, pesticides and metals, including lead.

Gas-powered blowers produce double the number of decibels and have a lower sound frequency than electric leaf blowers. Because they cause high levels of sound at low frequencies, the roar of gas blowers can be heard 23 houses away from a lawn that's being blown, whereas the sound of electric blowers only will travel six houses away. There are so many eco-friendly alternatives, including electric blowers, rakes, and leaving the leaves on the ground.

When gas leaf blowers are operating in our neighborhood, we have to close our doors and windows instead of simply allowing the fresh air and breeze to cool our homes. My husband and I spend a lot of time outdoors because we are native plant and vegetable gardeners, and there is always outdoor work to do. The gas-powered leaf blowers make working outdoors unpleasant, nerve wracking, and dangerous. The fumes and dust are toxic and the noise is deafening – both for us and for all the pollinators, birds, and insects – and the toxic dust and pollution settles on the plants. As a result, we race back inside every time the blowers show up in our vicinity.

The health consequences of breathing polluted air affects all of us – regardless of age, race, socioeconomic demographic, or species. Everyone in our neighborhood – human or non-human –is harmed by both the noise and the breathing of the exhaust of unnecessary leaf blowers. I live in a walkable neighborhood where many people enjoy being outdoors - walking, running, pushing babies in stroller, walking the dog, and taking their daily exercise regimen. But that pleasurable and healthy activity has become so unpleasant due to the pollution and noise from the ubiquitous gas-powered leaf blowers that we are forced to severely alter or curtail some outdoor activities altogether.

Do not overlook the fact that the noise and toxic fumes generated by gas-powered blowers also impact the health and safety of workers who use them on the job. Landscape workers and others may experience hearing loss and respiratory problems due to extensive exposure to noise and toxic emissions from these gas-powered leaf blowers.

These adverse impacts also impact non-humans. The blower noise, dust, and particulate matter affects the lives of birds, smaller mammals, pollinating insects and other creatures, some of which cannot escape the dust, noise, and fumes.

Some landscaping companies argue that going green and using electric power tools will slightly reduce their efficiency and make them less competitive. This is precisely why a ban will be so beneficial, as it will level the playing field across all companies and not allow a small number of free-riders to profit from the good will of ecofriendly companies.

No more delays! Companies have had 2 years to prepare for this. The sale of gas-powered leaf blowers has been banned since July 1, 2024. A rebate program is in place, and it does not require trading in a banned piece of equipment.

Our health, the air we breathe, our well-being is simply more important than the 'illusory' efficiency of gas-powered blowers – 'illusory' because the use of these devices does not factor in their substantial external negative impacts.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted
Ms. Roberta G Steinman
Silver Spring, MD 20910



What the County Executive says:

Gas-powered leaf blowers are noisy and create pollutants that contribute to the carbon emissions that heat our atmosphere and make it more difficult to breathe. By adopting electric leaf blowers, we are all playing an active role in reducing harmful air emissions, lessening our dependence on fossil fuels and getting away from a device that contributes to hearing loss, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Testimony by Russell Sturm (home owner) regarding the proposed legislation

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

1. I appreciate the good work of this Council in crafting a realistic, practical response in 2023 to the invasion of dangerously loud and highly polluting gas fired leaf blowers in our community.
2. I am alarmed by the Council's consideration of the Bill 19-25 to delay implementation of this well considered law with its reasonable implementation period and financial assistance to commercial lawn services to comply, and I thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal that is presently before the Council.
3. Referencing the Council staff's summary of the legislation, I note the following:
 - a. The proposed exemption for weekday use only of the monsters does NOT, in fact, protect homeowners from invasive noise and pollution. In addition to retirees, I – and many of my neighbors – work from home. I cannot schedule work calls or Zoom meetings from my home office. I measure 90 decibels in my living room and my home office when the army of monsters starts to roar. This not only causes me economic harm, but I have documented hearing loss and have experienced debilitating levels of anxiety as noted by my work colleagues and family as a result.
 - b. The proposed legislation is intended to limit the “economic harm” of the law upon professional landscape companies. In fact, I am directly paying the economic cost (the economic externalities in lost work time, lost access to a peaceful home, and harm to my health) that these companies seek to avoid. Their decision NOT to follow the law by delaying the transition to modern technology, and my neighbors' decision to not pay whatever cost is required to support that technology transition is a gross economic injustice. I use a rake. Yet I have been driven indoors by toxic fumes and painful levels of noise while trying to work on my own yard when the monsters are fired up in my neighborhood. That ain't right.
 - c. Advocates of the seasonal exemption claim that there are not appropriate technological solutions available to enable an affordable transition to

modern battery electric leafblowers. **THIS is simply not true as of 2025.** I submit for the Council's consideration this summary of the product offerings available today. It includes packaged multi-battery + high performance electric blowers available from virtually all major manufacturers of commercial grade, high powered lawn equipment designed specifically for use as a fleet for commercial lawn services. I also provide an economic analysis of the initial and maintenance cost of transitioning away from antiquated gas technology. This includes capital and operational costs.

My conclusion of this analysis is that only poorly managed companies would not have taken advantage of the County's generous financial subsidies in order to transition their fleet in order to be in compliance with the current law and in order to be able to compete in a fast shifting market.

It is not the County's job to bail them out of their self-imposed managerial failure.

Further, it would be a gross injustice to the well-managed companies who have made the effort to move forward and operate in compliance with the law.

My questions to the Council:

- What has changed since passage of the law to justify this delay?
- How will the Council address the harm done to companies already in compliance and the neighbors who pay the price every time these monsters are used?

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

Thanks again for your registration. The Council would like to confirm that you have been placed on the speakers list for the event listed below. All speakers must adhere to the Council's policies for public hearing speakers, <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/about/procedures.html>. Be sure to read them before providing your testimony.

- 1. Each speaker will have three (3) minutes. If you are confirmed to speak on multiple agenda items, you will have no more than five (5) minutes. Your testimony on multiple agenda items should be provided when you are called upon for the first agenda item. You should clearly identify the multiple topics that you will be covering, when you begin your testimony.**
- 2. Your comments must be limited to issues relevant to the public hearing topic for which you are testifying. If your comments are off-topic, you will be asked to make them on-topic. If you decline to do so, the host may end your testimony.**

If you are providing in-person testimony at the Council Office Building in Rockville, your name is now on the Council's speakers list, and you will be called on by the Council President to present your testimony at the speakers' table. The speaker's list is posted as you enter the Council's Hearing Room. It can also be found online, three hours prior to the hearing at this link: [PHSpeakerList.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

If you choose to testify virtually, you will receive a separate email providing the Zoom conference information on the afternoon prior to the public hearing. The information will include the phone number and/or link to present audio OR video testimony based on your selected preference. If joining by video,

you may turn on your video once the moderator has called your name. Please mute your mic and turn off your video before the moderator announces the next speaker.

Audio or video testimony provided during the Council's live public hearing is captured in the Council's video archive; however, if you want your testimony included as part of the written record you must submit it in writing prior to the start of the public hearing. Testimony may be sent in one of the following three modes:

1. Upload written, audio or video testimony online
here: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/PHSignUp.html>
2. Mailing address: Council President, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850

For language translation services and reasonable accommodation requests contact Lucia Jimenez at 240-777-7832 at least 72 hours prior to this meeting.

Additional information about the Council's public hearing procedures is available on the Council's website at: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/about/pub.html>.

We thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Montgomery County Council

Public Hearing Office

Telephone: 240-777-7803

Email: Council.PublicHearing@montgomerycountymd.gov

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL. Questions about signing up to speak? Request for accommodations? Anything else? EMAIL Council.PublicHearing@montgomerycountymd.gov OR CALL THE PUBLIC HEARING LINE AT 240-777-7803.

[Change Registration](#)

[Cancel Registration](#)

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment - Seasonal Exemption

DATE Tuesday, July 15, 2025
TIME 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm EDT
WHERE Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD - Third Floor Hearing Room.
The meeting will also be available via Zoom to enable remote participation.
DESCRIPTION Council Agenda for this public hearing is available [here](#).
Deadline to sign up to speak is July 14, at 2:00pm.
For additional information please see: [Staff Report - Introduction](#)

Testimony

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control—Leaf Removal Equipment—Seasonal Exemption (PDF) for landscape professionals.

Please vote AGAINST this bill -- to reduce noise and pollution, to protect and enhance our environment, and protect the health of Montgomery County workers and County residents.

We live at Friends House Retirement Community, a CCRC in mid-county that was recently designated as a Homegrown National Park. <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/map/> We are endeavoring to reduce the amount of lawn surrounding us and increase plantings of native plants to support and encourage the biodiversity on our 62-acre campus. FHRC has also been designated as a National Wildlife Federation habitat. <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify>. Over 190 different species of birds have been observed on or over our campus.

We were looking forward to the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers -- to reduce noise and pollution, to protect and enhance our environment, and protect the health of Montgomery County landscape workers and residents.

The original law – passed unanimously by the Montgomery County Council in 2024 -- provided ample time and rebate funding to help with the transition to electric leaf blowers. More educational efforts may be needed to further support this transition. However, Bill 19-25E would undermine years of progress to protect Montgomery County landscapers and residents from excessive noise and harmful air pollutants.

PLEASE enforce the ban you enacted unanimously and VOTE NO on Expedited Bill 19-25.

Sharon Stout

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Friends House Rd., Sandy Spring, MD 20860

Susan Thomas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Friends House Rd., Sandy Spring, MD 20860

Sligo Park Hills Community Association

July 11, 2025

To the Montgomery County Council,



The Sligo Park Hills Community Association represents 300 households in a leafy neighborhood of East Silver Spring. The SPHCA strongly opposes Bill 19-25, the proposed delay to full implementation of Montgomery County’s ban on the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers. The ban went into effect on July 1.

It has been two full years since the Council voted for this ban. Since then, the County’s rebate program has helped many companies transition to electric-powered leaf blowers. We see no reason to delay full implementation any longer.

The ban has many clear benefits: preventing hearing loss, reducing exhaust emissions, harmonizing with other municipalities with bans already in place, and minimizing nuisance noise for County residents. There are also environmental benefits to “leaving the leaves” under trees and bushes, such as free mulch, supporting wildlife, and reducing stormwater erosion. Furthermore, homeowners can reduce their landscape maintenance costs by reducing leaf blower usage, in favor of leaving the leaves.

Opposition to the ban will only postpone the inevitable. Surely some opposition is coming from employers uninterested in protecting their employees’ health or respecting the health of their customer base. The proposal would gut a program with broad support, and which needs the continued full support from the County Council. We strongly encourage every Councilmember to vote against the proposal.

Sincerely,

David Heller, President

Sligo Park Hills Community Association

My name is Stephen Walter, [REDACTED] Chestnut Ridge Court, N. Potomac, MD and I also work at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD. Brookside Gardens is a 50-acre public display garden. We as everyone else knew of this legislation coming well in advance and began purchasing battery powered leaf blowers last year. The electric blowers have limits, but so do the gas powered blowers. We get approximately two hours of blowing per set of batteries. We solve this problem by buying extra batteries for each blower and having multiple blowers. With gas we had similar issues, having to deal with carrying extra fuel cans and dealing with two-cycle oil for the small engines. I have had many visitors thanking me for now having quieter electric leaf blowers. I even had one visitor that was an audiologist who had an app on her phone that measured sound level. My electric leaf blower was putting out around 70 db, where the gas leaf blowers put out 95 -100 db. Also keep in mind that db is calculated on a logarithmic scale not a linear scale, so a 20+ db difference is worse than it seems. She actually thanked me for the public service I was providing protecting visitors hearing. I feel this 3-year extension is unwarranted and maybe, if you really want to be kind, a one year extension is certainly doable. Also at Brookside Gardens, we have all the gardens put to bed for the winter by the end of November, I don't see why landscapers can not be done by then also. We do not have a large staff, so that can not be the reason why we are done by the end of November. I do admit this transition does require some guidance and that should be provided by the county. That guidance would include what commercial battery powered leaf blowers are the best. The hardest part is establishing a recharging station at the home base. I saw an excellent example of a recharging station at Home Depot Aspen Hill tool rental department. As we now know, many tools are battery-powered and they have done an excellent job of setting up a recharging station.

In addition to the noise of the 2-cycle engines, they are very polluting. These engines have no pollution control on the exhaust. The builders of these engines justify this by the loss of power and the additional cost of such equipment. I also feel this is a poor excuse for polluting the environment. We made the decision to protect the environment and people's hearing; please don't give in to this last-minute plea of hardship. I am sorry I cannot be there in person, but I need to be in the garden taking care of the plants.

Regarding the Native Plant Protection Act

I can see the county seeking to restrict invasives such as bamboo, but I think it is gross overreach to specify how much can or cannot be planted to certain types of plants. Do all you can to promote the benefits of natives, but don't tell us what we can do. BTW: we extensively use natives in our landscaping. Not completely. And I haven't tried to calculate how much of each type.

I am writing in support of the legislation sponsored by Council Member Gabe Alborno and co-sponsored by Council Members Marilyn Balcombe and Dawn Luedtke to provide a short-term exemption for professional landscaping companies to continue to use gas powered leaf blowers. The use ban exemption proposed by Council Member Alborno would exclusively apply to qualifying professional landscaping companies for use of gas-powered leaf blowers between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, limiting use to weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The legislation would have a sunset date in 2028.

The landscaping industry is mostly composed of small, often family-owned businesses, employing a large number of workers, many of whom are immigrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. The industry already faces a number of challenges because people's disposable incomes have gone down, contract renewals are harder and harder to secure, and the fall season is the busiest for these landscaping companies.

The county did adopt a rebate program when it approved the legislation to ban gas powered blowers, but it provided very limited support for an expensive transition

process. Landscapers with revenue less than \$250,000 annually or five or fewer employees could receive up to \$1,500 in a year. Landscapers with revenue of more than \$250,000 or six or more employees can receive up to \$1,000 in a year. Tariffs are making an already expensive technology even costlier, however, and a large number of batteries must be charged and ready because they only power devices for short periods of time. The original 2023 legislation was considered a noise ordinance and an environmental protection measure but the practical effect is likely to be to force landscapers to carry generators into the field to power blowers, undermining the primary objectives of the legislative.

The bill only provides an exemption to the ban to allow landscape professionals to use gas-powered leaf blower equipment during certain months of the year. The goal of the exemption is to allow qualifying professional landscapers more time to use gas-powered leaf blowers due to the limitations and expense of battery-powered blowers. It recognizes the original legislation was unrealistic and could harm important small businesses who already face many struggles to keep afloat. The legislation is a "common sense" way to give landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Making a living is hard enough for the struggling families in Montgomery County. Please do not enforce the leaf-blower ban. It will be econically devastating for so many businesses and their employees. I do not think it was well thought out

Sincerely,

Susan Petro

Dowden Circle

Poolesville, MD 20837

Re: Let's Talk Leafblowers

To: councilmember.albornoz@public.govdelivery.com

Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2025 at 02:52 PM EDT

Thanks. Makes eminent sense. BUT, extend this to homeowners too...the same caveats of cost and efficiency apply to us as well...and our use is not nearly as noisy/polluting as pros'.

On Wednesday, June 18, 2025 at 12:01:56 PM EDT, Councilmember Albornoz
<councilmember.albornoz@public.govdelivery.com> wrote:

Dear Hearing Members,

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landscaping companies more time to transition their equipment and comply with the law without hurting their businesses and many employees.

Sincerely,

Thomas Shipe

----- Selby Avenue

Poolesville, MD 20837

**Testimony on Expedited Bill 19-25 - Noise Control - Leaf Removal Equipment -
Seasonal Exemption from Tiffin Shewmake, Rockville**

Dear County Council:

There is no need to relitigate the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers, they were banned for good reasons. Companies were given time to adjust and provided with subsidies to help them transition to the electric leaf blowers. Weakening a bill before it is even implemented reduces the incentive for companies to comply with new regulations and creates the expectation that regulations can be reversed with a bit of lobbying. It also penalizes companies that have purchased new equipment to comply with the bill while rewarding companies that either didn't plan or don't intend to. In addition, it erodes the public's trust in the regulatory process and in elected officials.

I strongly urge the County Council to reject this effort and continue working on creating a better community in Montgomery County.

As a reminder, there is no good reason to continue allowing such damaging machines that harm human health and the environment. Gas-powered leaf blowers spew significant amounts of cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene and unburned fuel; pollutants that contribute to smog and ozone such as volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides and; and hazardous pollutants such as particulates and carbon monoxide. As if that is not bad enough, they also generate CO2 emissions that contribute to climate change. The health effects of air pollution are well documented and include asthma, stroke, heart disease, dementia, low birth-weight babies, and more.

In addition, the extreme noise from gas-powered leaf blowers is damaging. Leaf blowers can be up to 112 decibels, louder than the sound of a plane taking off. The noisiest leaf blowers can damage hearing in as little as 2 hours. Studies have found that every 5-decibel increase in the average daily noise level around people's homes leads to a 34% increase in heart attacks and strokes. To make it worse, the low-frequency noise from leaf blowers carries over long distances and penetrates walls, meaning that residents can't escape the noise. In addition, there is no quiet time, as many lawn companies operate in the evenings and on weekends. This noise can also hurt workers. Exposure to excessive noise for many hours can result in permanent hearing loss. It should be noted, that the use of personal protective equipment to protect hearing is far from universal with landscaping companies and their employees.

While the current Administration has injected uncertainty into the economy, at the moment, inflation and gas prices are relatively low. This bill seems to be anticipating economic issues in the fall, but the reality is that no one knows what the economy will be

like in the future. What we do know is that companies have a long history of exaggerating the cost and impact of legislation designed to protect human health and the environment. For example, industry estimates of the cost of reducing CFCs in car air conditioners was up to \$1,200 per car – the actual cost topped out at \$400 per car. Auto manufacturers also fought requirements for seat belts, air bags, and catalytic converters, saying that they were too expensive. In addition, without regulations, companies that want to do the right thing must compete with companies that don't care about health or the environment. Health and safety regulations help companies that want to do better for their employees, the community, and the environment.

Excessive leaf blowing is more than just annoying; it is destructive to the environment and damages biodiversity. Do you like fireflies? They need fallen leaves to live. This is true for other insects such as luna moths and the American Bumblebee. Many of the insects that songbirds eat need fallen leaves, which also provide habitat for toads and frogs. The noise from leaf blowers also affects animals such as birds, squirrels, rabbits, and frogs. Perhaps it is time to change attitudes about leaves and take a proactive approach to protecting the environment.

This bill makes the finding that “battery-powered alternatives are not yet fully viable for the volume and intensity of fall operations.” This may have been true at one point but is no longer accurate. According to a 2023 [Consumer Reports](#) analysis of leaf blowers, “the best electric models earn a sweeping score of 5.2, identical to what we’ve found from the best gas models.” There is no need for “new technology” to catch up. What is needed is for companies to use new technology and retire harmful technology. This is how we move forward.

The reality is that leaf blowers are unhealthy for workers, the community, and the environment. Perhaps instead of looking backwards and keeping the status quo, we should be finding solutions. Perhaps instead of accepting the inevitability of harmful noise and pollution, we should be building a better place to live. I hope that the County Council rejects this misguided attempt to circumvent an intelligent and needed approach and will continue working to make Montgomery County the best place to live in the US.

Re Expedited Bill 19-25:

I absolutely, unequivocally, and angrily oppose this bill! I've waited years for the opportunity to open my windows during blower season, which generally runs from April through November, without hearing the incessant racket that these gas-powered blowers make. Now, just two weeks after the ban has taken effect, the Council wants to rescind it for the worst part of the blower season? No freaking way!

Landscaping companies have had years to prepare for the ban on gasoline-powered blowers. Indeed, this bill would leave the requirement of using battery-powered blowers in place during the summer. So if this bill passes, the landscapers would maintain two sets of blowers, one for summer and one for fall. That is nonsensical. The claim that these blowers aren't up to the task is specious. They have been used in the District for the past three years. There's no reason why they can't do the job here.

The cost argument is also specious. Passage of the ban on gas-powered blowers clearly shows that County residents are willing to put up with increased costs in order to avoid the air pollution and noise pollution of these stinking (literally!) machines. Besides, the County has offered subsidies to ease the transition to battery-powered blowers, an indirect additional cost of the changeover that we County residents, through the Council, also agreed to.

Kill this bill!

Tom Armstrong
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Montgomery County Council Must Vote Down the Latest Attempt to Undermine the Leaf Blower Ban, Expedited Bill 19-25

Dr. Vivian E. Thomson, Silver Spring, MD

A modified version of this testimony appears as a [commentary](#) in Maryland Matters.

Four members of the Montgomery County Council, led by Council Member Gabe Alborno, want to gut the [ban](#) on the use of gasoline powered leaf blowers that took effect on 1 July. The councilors' eleventh-hour [proposal](#), Expedited Bill 19-25, would let landscaping companies use gasoline powered leaf blowers between 1 October and 31 December, for three years. Under County [code](#), expedited legislation is supposed to be "emergency" legislation that is "necessary for the immediate protection of the public health, safety, or interest."

To the contrary, this bill betrays the public interest. Councilors supporting this proposed exemption are consigning the health and welfare of landscape workers and County residents to the back seat while favoring firms that have failed to prepare for the ban. As writer James Fallows [put](#) it, this amounts to a cruel bargain for workers: People without power jeopardizing their health because those with power aren't willing to shield them from avoidable risks.

The push to undermine the leaf blower ban comes almost two years after the Council [voted](#) for it almost unanimously in September 2023, with an exemption for agricultural producers. Council Member Alborno's latest proposal recalls his failed [attempt](#) in 2023 to exempt for five years large properties, like golf courses. In voting against the exemption, Council member Natali Fani-González, an immigrant, asserted, "This is about the health of low-income workers that we're trying to protect."

The Council has eased the transition to electric powered equipment via a [rebate](#) program. According to the Department of Environmental Protection, about 250 companies--most of them small businesses--have already received those subsidies and more have applied.

Clearly, many companies are preparing conscientiously for the ban. Further, any company managing leaves in the District of Columbia has had to use electric equipment since [2022](#).

Nonetheless, four locally elected officials want to cave to industry laggards, [saying](#) that "Commercial landscapers argue that the ban will significantly harm the industry." No documentation has been offered to support this claim, and the bill mentions no public emergency that would justify its expedited status.

But the hazards of gasoline powered leaf blowers are clear. They are a health menace, especially for vulnerable landscape workers, who are often Spanish speakers and may not know about leaf blower risks. They might not have a choice in the equipment their employers provide. Landscape workers undertake hard labor--often for the very affluent--while earning an average hourly wage in

Maryland of [\\$19.76](#). In 2024, [48 percent](#) of landscaping workers nationally identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Gasoline-powered leaf blowers expose landscape workers to harmful noise levels, which can reach [95 to 106](#) decibels at the user's ears. According to the Centers for Disease Control, a two-hour exposure to a leaf blower blasting at 90 decibels is enough to cause [hearing damage](#).

Hearing loss is associated with a host of problems, including communication difficulties and [dementia](#). Chronic exposure to noise pollution can [cause](#) high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, and [cognitive impairment](#) in children.

Routine use of gasoline powered leaf blowers exposes community members to disruptive noise. The low-frequency component of the noise produced by gasoline-powered leaf blowers [carries much farther](#) and is perceived as much louder than the noise generated by battery-powered blowers.

A substantial [body of evidence](#) indicates that anthropogenic noise is detrimental to wildlife.

Gasoline powered leaf blowers also expose workers to a toxic air pollution [brew](#) of fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide, carcinogens, oxides of nitrogen, and unburned fuel. They send dirt, excrement, mold, chemicals, and particles flying into the air.

Those same air pollutants threaten public health and the environment. Operating a professional backpack leaf blower for one hour [produces](#) as much ozone-forming air pollution as driving a light duty passenger car 1100 miles. The Baltimore area—which includes Montgomery County's neighbor, Howard County--still [fails](#) to meet EPA's ozone air quality limit. Leaf blowers emit carbon dioxide, and Montgomery County has an aggressive greenhouse gas reduction [goal](#). Reducing nitrogen oxides air pollution is important to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. An estimated [one-third](#) of the Bay's nitrogen load comes from the air.

Montgomery County's ban followed those of a long [list](#) of cities that have paved the way. [Annapolis](#) and [Baltimore City](#) have also adopted bans. Further, in California, new leaf blowers are subject to a zero-emissions [standard](#). Such policies are undoubtedly pushing manufacturers to improve battery powered equipment.

Safer leaf handling methods include rakes and brooms, [leaving the leaves](#), or mulching them with electric equipment.

We will need to keep educating businesses--especially small ones--and County residents about the need to protect workers from gasoline powered leaf blowers. But the Council must not capitulate to companies that are dragging their feet. The Council must vote down the latest Albornoz proposal to weaken the leaf blower ban.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 19-25, WHICH WOULD GREATLY WEAKEN THE NEW BAN ON USE OF GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS

This testimony is being submitted in opposition to Bill 19-25, which would allow professional landscaping companies to use gas-powered leaf blowers in Montgomery County on weekdays during October, November, and December.

After extensive debate and deliberation, the Council overwhelmingly voted almost two years ago to ban the sale of gas powered leaf blowers, effective July 1, 2025. The Council acted to protect county residents from the terrible noise and other pollution caused by these types of leaf blowers. See [Leaf blowers continue to be banned across the DMV](#): “[Gas-powered] leaf blowers pump out up to 100 decibels of ear splitting sound and noxious air emissions”.¹

At the 11th hour, an attempt is being made to amend the law and allow for the extensive ² use of gas-powered leaf blowers during the height of leaf blowing season – October, November, and December -- for the next three years. This is terribly misguided.

¹ In [written testimony](#) that I submitted to the Council in 2022, I described in more detail the serious harm that these blowers were causing to the residents of Montgomery County, including major health risks.

² The bill would allow their use every weekday for 12 hours a day – up to **60 hours a week** of horrendous noise and other pollution.

It is precisely during those months of heavy use that these machines cause the most harm to the health and well-being of county residents. Their nonstop, intense noise makes it impossible to enjoy our neighborhoods or even the quiet of our homes, and the other pollution they emit is also at its heaviest.

Washington, D.C., and many other jurisdictions have successfully banned gas-powered leaf blowers year-round. The Council deliberated the issue extensively before voting to join them. Furthermore, the Council also went out of its way to help the landscaping industry transition to the new ban: the Council considerably delayed the effective date of the ban, and also provided grants to assist with the purchase of quieter, less polluting equipment. Years of additional delay and injury to public health and well-being are not the way to address any remaining concerns about the transition.

In short, it would be a huge mistake to eviscerate the new law during the months that we need it the most.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Yoel Tobin

Montgomery County, MD

Submitted June 2025