

RESOLUTION R-5585

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO IMPLEMENT AN ELECTRIC LEAF BLOWER INITIATIVE TO TRANSITION THE CITY'S GAS-POWERED HAND-HELD AND BACKPACK LEAF BLOWERS TO ELECTRIC, ADMINISTER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO SUPPORT PRIVATE SECTOR AND RESIDENT EQUIPMENT CONVERSION, AND EXPLORE LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT USE OF GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS IN THE CITY OF KIRKLAND BY DECEMBER 31, 2025.

1 WHEREAS, the Kirkland City Council has prioritized preserving
2 the environment by adopting the 2023-2024 Council Sustainable
3 Environment goal to "Protect our natural environment through
4 sustainable goals and practices to meet the needs of community
5 members for a healthy environment and clean energy without
6 compromising the needs of future generations"; and
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8 WHEREAS, on December 8, 2020 the Council adopted Resolution
9 R-5457 approving Kirkland's Sustainability Master Plan which establishes
10 environmental goals for the City and 200 actions including SG-1.10, "the
11 City will explore [the] reduction of or elimination of gas-powered
12 landscaping equipment in City operations"; and
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14 WHEREAS, on February 21, 2023 the Council adopted Resolution
15 R-5578, adopting the 2023-2024 City Work Program, including a work
16 plan item to "prioritize and continue to fund Sustainability Master Plan
17 actions to further equity, energy efficiency, public health, and a clean
18 energy economy that promotes a sustainable and resilient environment
19 to further the Sustainable Environment goal"; and
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21 WHEREAS, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in
22 2020, the City has received a high volume of noise complaints about
23 leaf blowers, and responding to these complaints was a key factor
24 prompting exploration of this initiative; and
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26 WHEREAS, the Council included \$500,000 in American Rescue
27 Plan Act Funds in the adopted 2023-2024 budget to support
28 transitioning the City's equipment to all electric leaf blowers and
29 incentives for private sector and resident conversion; and
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31 WHEREAS, initial research shows that current electric leaf blower
32 models produce similar noise levels to gas powered leaf blowers, but
33 that electric motors have more potential to reduce noise pollution and
34 electric leaf blower technology is anticipated to improve in the coming
35 years; and
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37 WHEREAS, research also shows gas-powered equipment has
38 negative health impacts on operators and negative environmental
39 impacts from extracting natural resources and burning fossil fuels that
40 contribute to climate change; and

41 WHEREAS, this initiative would impact landscaping businesses
42 who are often small operations owned by culturally diverse members of
43 the community and who are also disproportionately exposed to
44 emissions at a higher rate than other community members; and
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46 WHEREAS, providing financial incentives to support Kirkland
47 businesses through the transition will be important to maximizing the
48 benefit of offering an electric landscaping service to Kirkland clients and
49 reduce any associated burdens, especially on small businesses; and
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51 WHEREAS, similar financial incentives may be strategic to
52 encourage adoption of electric equipment among Kirkland residents and
53 support community members that may be experiencing economic
54 constraints in making the transition; and
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56 WHEREAS, research also shows an environmental trade-off by
57 converting to electric equipment, where the mining, extraction,
58 production, and recycling processes for batteries also causes significant
59 environmental harm; and
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61 WHEREAS, acknowledging this complexity, policymakers around
62 the country are still choosing to act to reduce emissions, and potentially
63 noise pollution, in their communities and protect health and safety of
64 users by sunseting gas-powered equipment including in Washington
65 D.C., California, Multnomah County, Seattle, and other cities in the
66 Puget Sound region; and
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68 WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature has considered
69 legislation in the past to incentivize purchase of electric equipment
70 through financial incentives and although the bills presented did not
71 pass out of the legislature, Kirkland's legislative delegation has
72 expressed that future action is likely; and
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74 WHEREAS, the Electric Leaf Blower Initiative positions Kirkland
75 to be proactive and effective in anticipation of potential future State
76 decisions to sunset gas-powered equipment, in addition to reducing
77 emissions in Kirkland and protecting health of users; and
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79 WHEREAS, the City's Parks and Community Services and Public
80 Works Departments have already purchased and use a combined total
81 of 18 electric leaf blowers and actively consider electric options when
82 the nearly 70 gas-powered leaf blowers in the fleet reach the end of
83 their useful life; and
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85 WHEREAS, in early 2023 the City Manager met with staff from
86 the City's Parks and Community Services and Public Works Departments
87 and hosted a focus group with Kirkland landscaping businesses to learn
88 what impacts a transition to all electric equipment would have and how
89 to work together to make this initiative a success; and
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91 WHEREAS, City staff met with staff from the Kirkland
92 Congressional delegation to discuss opportunities for funding and
93 partnerships and there was expressed support for the initiative and
94 interest in identifying collaboration opportunities in the future; and

95 WHEREAS, staff gathered key insights from the stakeholder
 96 engagement and incorporated the opportunities and key challenges into
 97 the proposed Electric Leaf Blower Initiative three-phased approach,
 98 including key milestones set forth in this Resolution.
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100 NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City
 101 of Kirkland as follows:
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103 Section 1. The City Manager is hereby authorized and directed
 104 to implement an electric leaf blower initiative that would achieve the
 105 following goals:

- 106 a. Sunset the use of gas-powered hand-held and backpack leaf
 107 blowers in Kirkland by a target date of December 31, 2025
- 108 b. Reduce negative health impacts caused by emissions from gas-
 109 powered leaf blowers
- 110 c. Ensure a responsive transition to electric leaf blowers that
 111 reduces the burden and maximizes the potential benefit to
 112 Kirkland landscaping businesses and residents
- 113 d. Be proactive in anticipation of potential State decisions to sunset
 114 gas-powered equipment
- 115 e. Develop mechanisms to effectively improve enforcement of
 116 existing city noise regulations (KMC 11.84A.070 and KZC 115.95)
 117 on all uses of gas- and electric-powered landscaping equipment
 118 to provide relief to residents prior to conversion or technological
 119 improvements
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121 Section 2. The initiative shall develop strategies to address
 122 challenges identified throughout initial stakeholder engagement,
 123 including, but not limited to, the following:

- 124 a. Electric equipment is heavier than gas-powered equipment and
 125 with extended use, may create an ergonomics concern for users
- 126 b. Limited availability of powerful, commercial-grade electric
 127 equipment currently available on the market.
- 128 c. The potential impact of less powerful equipment on length of
 129 operations and service levels and the potential increase in costs
 130 to businesses and customers.
- 131 d. Ethical disposal process for functioning gas-powered equipment.
- 132 e. Ensuring sufficient charging infrastructure and exploration of
 133 alternative energy sources to charge equipment.
- 134 f. Noise pollution produced by electric leaf blowers.
- 135 g. Batter related challenges such as high acquisition cost for the
 136 quantity needed per day, concerns around the disposal/recycling
 137 process, less reliability in cold temperatures, and need for mobile
 138 recharging options that do not rely on gas-powered generators.
- 139 h. Consideration of expanding the scope of the initiative or identify
 140 opportunities for future initiatives to address other gas-powered
 141 landscaping equipment or gas-powered equipment more
 142 broadly, should stakeholder and regional engagement and other
 143 learnings suggest opportunity for pragmatic scope expansion.
- 144 i. Effectiveness and equity concerns with enforcement of a
 145 potential ordinance sunsetting gas-powered equipment,
 146 including enforcement plan options for future Council
 147 consideration.
- 148 j. Minimize potential disruption to equipment replacement cycles
 149 for businesses and the City.

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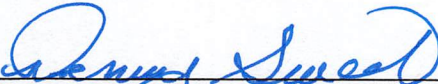
- k. Providing financial incentives to support of the transition of landscaping operations.
- l. Providing financial incentives, especially for low- and moderate-income residents, to support the transition of household equipment.
- m. Explore potential regional collaboration for the transition.
- n. Consider supporting County or State-wide action to transition to electric leaf blowers as part of the City of Kirkland legislative agenda.
- o. Evaluate any potential City budget implications that may result from changing service levels by using electric equipment.

Section 3. The City Manager is further authorized and directed to deploy a three-phased approach with key target milestones to accomplish the Initiative’s goals. The City Manager may propose changes to these milestones based on new information, learnings, and opportunities:


- a. 2023: City pilots, evaluates, develops, and begins implementing a transition plan for the City’s equipment; engages federal and state officials in support of the initiative; and initiates outreach to regional partners and key stakeholders in the community including, but not limited to, the Lake Washington Institute for Technology Horticulture Program, Quiet Clean Kirkland, the Washington State Nursery and Landscaping Association, and the Lake Washington School District; and deploys any Council approved improved enforcement of noise regulations to provide immediate relief to residents.
- b. 2024: City implements financial incentive programs to support private sector and resident transition to electric equipment; continues City transition and stakeholder engagement; and deploys an educational and information campaign for Kirkland residential households and businesses.
- c. 2025: Propose an ordinance for Council consideration sunsetting hand-held and backpack gas-powered equipment city-wide while continuing City, business, and resident transitions.

Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting this 18th day of April, 2023.

Signed in authentication thereof this 18th day of April, 2023.


 Penny Sweet, Mayor

Attest:


 Kathi Anderson, City Clerk