



Policy Efforts to Phase Out Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers in Portland, 2019-2023

Prepared by [Quiet Clean PDX](#), October 2023

2019-2020

On December 4, 2019, Portland City Council unanimously (4-0) adopted [Resolution No. 37463](#) concerning phasing out gas-powered leaf blowers. Introduced by the late Commissioner Nick Fish, working closely with County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, the Resolution committed the city to taking eight actions, including:

- “Direct City bureaus to transition from gas-powered to electric and/or battery-operated leaf blowers.”
- “Convene a working group to consider an equitable city-wide transition to electric and battery-operated leaf blowers.”

The Resolution held great promise (see [announcement](#)). Sadly, Commissioner Fish died soon afterward and no city working group was convened. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and lack of capacity put a pause on city staff efforts to advance this work. Also, a letter from industry lobbyists calling an emissions-based ban on gas leaf blowers a violation of the federal Clean Air Act convinced city and county staff and officials that the county would be better positioned to enact legislation since it could use its public health authority. (Note: While other municipalities across the country had successfully overcome this legal challenge and banned gas leaf blowers, they were not researched as possible models.)

2021

On December 16, 2021, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted [Resolution 2021-094](#) which substantially mirrored the city of Portland’s 2019 resolution (above). Sponsored by Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson and reflecting her work with Commissioner Fish and later with Commissioner Carmen Rubio, the county’s Resolution expressed support for:

[A]ccelerating the county’s transition from the use of gas-powered leaf blowers at county facilities, and for convening a work group with the city of Portland to consider an equitable community-wide phase-out strategy for gas-powered leaf blowers.

It called for:

- Action by the Multnomah County Chair to transition away from the use of handheld, backpack, push, and other gas powered leaf blowers at county facilities to electric models no later than December 31, 2024.
- Action by County Departments and the Multnomah County Chair to ensure that County facilities are adequately equipped with charging stations and other necessary infrastructure to support the electrification of county-operated or contracted leaf blowers.
- Education and communication that informs the public of the health and environmental impacts of gas powered leaf blowers and to encourage County residents to consider electric alternatives.
- Efforts by Multnomah County and the City of Portland to convene a working group to examine an equitable pathway to a county-wide transition to electric and battery powered leaf blowers.

2022

In March 2022, County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson and City Commissioner Carmen Rubio convened a joint county-city Leaf Blowers Policy Work Group comprised of stakeholders and county and city staff. Led by Hayden Miller, policy advisor to Commissioner Vega Pederson, the work group held three meetings in 2022 (March, April, October) and produced a detailed, 32-page [memo](#) with ten recommendations (pp. 9-12), [excerpted here](#). The memo was submitted to Vega Pederson and Rubio on December 9, 2022.

2023

In early 2023, Commissioner Vega Pederson, by then Chair of the County Board of Commissioners, designated John Wasiutynski, director of Multnomah County’s Office of Sustainability, to replace Hayden Miller as point person on county leaf blower policy. Since then, Mr. Wasiutynski and Quiet Clean PDX members have been meeting with City Commissioners, staff, and administrators to discuss city-county collaboration on an ordinance banning gas leaf blowers city-wide and related Work Group recommendations.