



To the Montgomery County Council

July 20, 2025

*Summary: The quantifiable (see below) and unquantifiable health and environmental costs imposed by gasoline-powered equipment justify the expense of new, battery-powered equipment. Gutting the ban flies in the face of decisions that other, nearby localities are making. The trade journal *Lawn and Landscape* praises investing in battery-powered lawn equipment as a smart financial decision for companies.*

Nearby local governments continue to adopt bans on gasoline powered leaf blowers, because of the risks to workers and to the public at large.

In Maryland, [Annapolis](#) and [Baltimore City](#) have adopted bans.

In May 2025, the City of Alexandria, VA, adopted a [use ban](#) on gasoline powered leaf blowers. Until recently, Virginia's status as a Dillon's Rule state meant that localities were stymied in adopting local bans. But in August 2024, the state's Attorney General [advised](#) the City of Alexandria that the City's noise ordinance allowed for a use ban. Given the nature of the opinion, other Virginia localities are likely to follow suit.

Battery powered leaf blowers create less noise than gasoline powered blowers.

In a 7 May 2025 [memorandum](#) to the Mayor and City Council of Alexandria, VA, City staff cited a study comparing noise levels of battery powered and gasoline powered leaf blowers:

"The study found that gas leaf blowers have significantly more noise impact, even when the decibel levels are the same as an electric leaf blower. This is due to characteristics of the deep rumbling noise emitted by gas engines. Such low frequency noise travels farther and can penetrate homes. This results in noise that cannot be easily mitigated. Given the availability of non-gas-powered leaf blowers, the noise from the gas-powered leaf blowers is unnecessary."

This month's edition of a major landscaping industry trade publication argues that using battery-powered equipment makes smart business sense.

The July 2025 edition of *Lawn and Landscape* praises battery-powered equipment, because it protects worker health and is quiet, clean, durable, low-maintenance, and easy to use. That article is attached to this email.

One contractor interviewed for the article says, "With using all electric, there's less chance of liability for us as a company in terms of hearing loss or health issues because of the fumes or various things that can occur because of gas equipment."

Damage to workers' hearing is associated with significantly lower worker income and lower economic productivity.

Up to [25 percent](#) of hearing loss could be noise-induced. Hearing loss is permanent and irreversible and is not only associated with a wide variety of [illnesses](#) but also with [lower income](#). Workers with hearing loss are more [likely](#) to be unemployed and they earn [25 percent](#) less than people with normal hearing.

The direction of causality is uncertain. If 20 percent of noise induced hearing loss could be prevented, this could result in a [\\$123 billion](#) gain (2013 dollars) in economic productivity in the US.

Tolerating workers' hearing damage, for the convenience of not switching to modern equipment, is a cruel and unfair bargain. Many workers may not know they are at risk for hearing loss, especially non-native English speakers. They might not have a choice in the leaf blowers or protective equipment their employers supply. These workers do not have the power to shield themselves from permanent harm, so the Council must do so.

The three-year seasonal exemption in the bill could impose social costs of \$5.4 million from carbon dioxide emissions.

The US EPA [estimates](#) that the social cost of carbon emissions is \$190/Mg, in 2020.

Maryland's greenhouse gas [inventory](#) shows that commercial leaf blowers and vacuums in Montgomery County emitted 11,878 Mg of greenhouse gases in 2020. Most leaf blower use occurs in the fall, the season exempted under Bill 19-25. So, we assume that 80 percent (9,502 Mg/year) of the commercial leaf blower pollution in Montgomery County would still happen if 19-25 passes.

Combining this last figure with the social cost of carbon of \$190/Mg, the social cost from the greenhouse gases emitted from commercial leaf blowers and vacuums in Montgomery County per year is \$1.8 million and over three years amounts to \$5.4 million. This figure does not consider damages from noise or air pollutants like benzene and fine particulate matter.