

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