

Article found on the Internet in June, 2021

Novato has advanced new restrictions that would limit when residents and landscapers can use gas-powered leaf blowers.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to approve the first reading of the ordinance that allows the use of gas-powered leaf blowers between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday and federal holidays.

The rules would take effect on July 22 if the council gives final approval at its next meeting. The rules would also prohibit people from blowing leaves, dirt and other debris on to other properties. Violators would face fines ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 and the potential to be charged with a misdemeanor or infraction in court, according to the city's [municipal code](#).

The rules are meant to address noise complaints by residents. Currently, the city allows leaf blowers, lawnmowers and other loud landscaping equipment to be used as early as 6 a.m. under its noise restrictions. If the ordinance is approved, Novato would join other North Bay communities such as San Rafael, Tiburon and Petaluma, which have enacted similar rules.

The ordinance is a first step as the council considers eventually banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and other small landscaping equipment entirely. The city has mulled such a ban since 2019, but decided to [delay](#) earlier this year in response to the economic impacts of the coronavirus on businesses.

Mayor Pat Eklund, who originally brought the idea of a ban to the council, urged the council to reconsider the ban in 2022.

"Gas-powered blowers are not friendly to the environment at all, nor to people's ears," Eklund said.

Vicki Parker, the city's community development director, said the hours in the noise ordinance are similar to the hours the city allows for construction, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Electric blowers are exempt from the rules as they are generally quieter than their gas-powered counterparts, Parker said.

Novato resident Jean Schurtz urged the council to impose the same time restrictions on electric blowers and other types of landscaping equipment.

“We currently battle with noise from loud landscaping equipment starting up shortly after 6 a.m. weekday mornings,” Schurtz wrote to the council.

Lauren Elkin, chief executive officer of the Valley Memorial Park cemetery and funeral home, successfully convinced the council to change the rules to allow gas-powered leaf blowers beginning at 8 a.m. on Saturdays. The city originally proposed allowing leaf blowers after 10 a.m. on Saturdays. Elkin said the cemetery has to prepare its 40-acre property for funeral services that begin as early as 9 a.m.

“I know several people have talked about if we could use electric leaf blowers,” Elkin said. “The problem we have is a commercial leaf blower is \$1,500, it runs for approximately one hour if we’re lucky and then we would have to have a second battery as well.”