

THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC  
COMMENTS WERE SUBMITTED  
FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION  
OF THE AGENDA PACKET

**Martin McTaggart**

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**From:** Peter Breining [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 18, 2023 3:09 PM  
**To:** Clerk  
**Subject:** Leaf blower support comment

Please do not change the current leaf blower regulations. The regulations are a good compromise as they currently exist.

Leaf blowers are a valuable tool. I use my gas-powered leaf blower to blow off dust and debris from public tennis courts before I play tennis, making them much less slippery and safer.

It would not be possible for me to sweep the tennis courts off each time.

Also, I recently noticed a park employee using a battery powered blower and it was much louder and much more shrill than my gas powered one. So there is no noise benefit of electric vs. gasoline, as far as I can see.

Thank you for your consideration of this safety-related use of leaf blowers and please do not change the current regulations.

Peter Breining

[REDACTED]

San Mateo

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Kristie Eglsaer [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 19, 2023 4:18 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo); Clerk  
**Cc:** Stephanie Gindlesperger; Sang Hee Cho; Bethany Lopez; Sue-Ellen Atkinson; Azalea Mitch; Amourence Lee; Lisa Diaz Nash; Rob Newsom; Adam Loraine; Richard Hedges; Andrea Chow  
**Subject:** Comments for Mon 3/20 CC meetings

Dear City Council,

Here are my public comments for the meetings on Monday, March 20.

### **Slow Speed School Zone (Item #16)**

Thank you so much for starting the slow streets around schools project!

### **Ped/Bike Priority List Action (Item #19)**

I look forward to the City making changes to our streets this year, and I am wondering if that is what is meant by "Create a pedestrian master plan implementation plan" because a [2012 Ped Plan Implementation Plan already exists](#)  - Ch 7 titled Implementation, with things like pedestrian scale lighting, curb extensions, and signal timing with specific locations and cost estimates. Many near term actions, like those also mentioned in the [2022 TOD Ped Access Plan](#), can't happen soon enough, like minimizing vehicle conflicts with pedestrians at signalized intersections via turn restrictions at El Camino Downtown (p.63). My neighbor was just telling me yesterday about a really scary near miss there due to the ped-vehicle signal conflict.

### **Add Pilot Installations as part of Complete Streets Community Engagement Plan (Item #22)**

Pilot Installations are designed to be temporary, allowing for modifications based on real-world and real-time feedback from users, allowing the community and City to engage in a cycle of action and feedback. The city has had some real success with pilot installations and community engagement recently. Now it's about folding that practice into the Complete Streets Community Engagement Process.

### **Leaf Blowers and #LeaveTheLeaves (Special Session)**

Does the City of San Mateo Parks Dept have a policy similar to what is laid out by the NYC Parks Dept to [leave fallen leaves on the ground](#), like keeping leaves around tree bases or mulch mowing lawns? Thank you for [the City listing alternatives to leaf blowing](#) on the leaf blower webpage, like letting the leaves lie, and thank you for the electric leaf blower rebate program (and [great flyer with QR code!](#)).

Thanks very much!

Best, Kristie

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/4566/TOD-Pedestrian-Access-Plan>

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/2218/Pedestrian-Master-Plan>

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/10061/10---Implementation?bidId=>

<https://www.nycgovparks.org/learn/trees-and-plants/leave-the-leaves-why-our-parks-gardeners-may-leave-fallen-autumn-leaves-on-the-ground>

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/4544/Electric-Leaf-Blower-Rebate>

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/85710/Electric-Leaf-Blower-Rebate-Flyer?bidId=>

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Patrice Olds  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 1:56 PM  
**To:** Martin McTaggart; Andrea Chow; Sue-Ellen Atkinson  
**Subject:** Fwd: Comments for 3/20 meeting

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**From:** Lisa Rayle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 1:22:16 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>  
**Subject:** Comments for 3/20 meeting

Dear Councilmembers,

As a resident of San Mateo, I am writing to comment on three items on tonight's agenda:

### 1. City Council Priority List - Draft Review, item #32

On item #32, I urge council to be more specific.

- "Refine programmatic timeline for future bike improvements" --> we should create a timeline to build all priority projects in the Bike Master Plan
- "Create a pedestrian master plan implementation plan" --> Does it really take all year to make a plan to implement a plan? Can we also identify quick-build projects that can be implemented this year?

### 2. Complete Streets Plan - Introduction & Community Engagement

I strongly support the design of streets that are truly complete, which means making streets safe and welcoming for people on foot and on bike. San Mateo roads are too often designed for cars with pedestrians and bicycles as an afterthought. It's past time to correct that imbalance by prioritizing design for people over design for cars.

### 3. Leaf blowers

Gas leaf blowers create air pollution hazardous to health, with few benefits. When I lived in Palo Alto, where gas leaf blowers are banned, the landscapers were fine using an electric blower and the cost was basically the same. Why continue to subject residents and workers to hazardous fumes when there are perfectly good alternatives available?

Thank you,  
Lisa Rayle

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Patrice Olds  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 2:15 PM  
**To:** Andrea Chow; Martin McTaggart  
**Subject:** Fwd: Leaf blower ordinance.

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**From:** Rick [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 2:12:13 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>  
**Subject:** Leaf blower ordinance.

Good afternoon,

I never seen anyone using a leaf blower (gas or electric) collect the debris and take it away. Have you? The debris gets blown onto the street or the neighbors property. This ends up in the storm drain system and clogs it up and eventually the pollutants flow into the SF Bay which is a violation of the Clean Water Act. A broom and a rake are the Green zero emissions alternative. If we are banning everything that is gas or gasoline powered allowing gasoline leaf blowers, that sends the wrong message to everyone.

sincerely

Rick Sakuda

San Mateo, CA

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Elaine Salinger [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 19, 2023 8:03 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo)  
**Subject:** Citizens Climate Lobby members' comments about Leaf Blowers

Dear Mayor Lee, Deputy Mayor Dias Nash, Councilmembers Loraine, Newsom and Hedges,

**The San Mateo County chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby has the following comments on Item 2 of the March 20 Special Meeting of the City Council related to Leaf Blower Regulations.** We have 1000 members in SMC and 200 members living in the City of San Mateo.

### Recommendations for Regulations of Leaf Blowers

1. Effective January 1, 2026 or sooner, ban use of all gasoline powered landscaping equipment in San Mateo (an expansion of **policy option two** in the staff report).
2. Immediately enforce the widely ignored operating hours for leaf blowers; and enforce the limits on noise levels.
3. Expand the electric leaf blower rebate program to include batteries.
4. Use alternative landscaping methods that include leaving the leaves on the ground, letting the grass grow longer, and/or trimming shrubbery less often and educate the public. (Please see this [link](#). for a good explanation of why this is beneficial.)
5. Have the Parks Dept trial mulch mowing and other ways to leave fallen leaves, like placing leaf piles around tree bases to protect tree roots.

### Discussion of Recommendations

After January 1, 2024, new gasoline powered leaf blowers and other new gasoline powered equipment such as hedge trimmers can no longer be sold in California. The staff report for the March 20 City Council meeting very correctly outlines the reasoning: the environmental damage done by one hour of gasoline powered leaf blowers is equivalent to the emissions from driving a Toyota Camry for 1,100 miles.

Besides creating annoying noise pollution and carbon pollution, gas leaf blowers blow away topsoil, blow away pollinator larvae that live in the leaf litter, and blow away annual flower seeds. Over time, the ground that has been blown is visibly eroded and barren. While electric blowers have the same problems, because they are not as powerful, the environmental damage is less severe.

However, we do recognize that as long as landscapers are expected to remove every leaf, it will be economically challenging for them to cease operations of all leaf blowers. Although leaves, grass clippings and

other material can be hand raked and swept, very few, if any, homeowners or businesses would be willing to pay the higher labor cost such hand work would require. Actually, leaf litter is nature's best mulch. And about 3" of mulch is recommended to reduce water needs and keep plant roots cool. What is really needed is education of the public to accept landscaping that is more natural.

We thank the City for their electric leaf blower rebate program, and the California Air Resources Board for their recent launch of a voucher incentive program for zero emission landscape equipment, referred to as the CORE program, available to landscape professionals. We understand that the leaf blower battery may not last the entire day and landscapers will need to carry extra batteries. One solution is to expand the landscape professionals' rebate for electric leaf blowers to include additional batteries.

In addition to air pollution, gasoline powered leaf blowers create significant noise pollution and thus, by San Mateo Municipal Code, may legally be operated only between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM in residential and adjacent areas. Please note that during hours of legal operation, the Municipal Code also sets some very clear noise level standards. Unfortunately, in San Mateo, the hours of operation and sound level limitations are widely ignored, especially in commercial and office areas adjacent to residential properties.

An outright ban on gasoline powered landscaping equipment, effective January 1, 2026, gives landscape professionals almost three years to find electric battery powered alternatives. With financial assistance from the CORE program and the City's rebates, this is an equitable and fair approach.

Finally, the problem of leaf blowers potentially could be addressed through alternative landscaping methods that involve less frequent use of leaf blowers, which would also yield other environmental benefits. The Parks and Recreation Department could try leaving the leaves on the ground to create natural mulch and provide habitat for the creatures. However, this was not on the objectives list from the City Council, and therefore, further awareness and public education of this option is needed.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elaine Salinger, Group Co-Leader  
San Mateo County Chapter



## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Nancy Schneider [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 19, 2023 8:34 PM  
**To:** Clerk  
**Subject:** Revised letter on Leaf Blower regulations

Hello Patrice --

Would you please replace the letter I sent a few minutes ago with the one below. I made a change on the signature.

Thank you,  
Nancy

Dear Mayor Lee, Deputy Mayor Diaz Nash, Councilmembers Loraine, Newsom and Hedges,

**The San Mateo Climate Action Team has the following comments on Item 2 of the March 20 Special Meeting of the City Council related to Leaf Blower Regulations.**

### **Recommendations for Regulations of Leaf Blowers**

1. Effective January 1, 2026 or sooner, ban use of all gasoline powered landscaping equipment in San Mateo (an expansion of **policy option two** in the staff report).
2. Immediately enforce the widely ignored operating hours for leaf blowers; and enforce the limits on noise levels.
3. Expand the electric leaf blower rebate program to include batteries.
4. Use alternative landscaping methods that include leaving the leaves on the ground, letting the grass grow longer, and/or trimming shrubbery less often and educate the public. (Please see this [link](#) for a good explanation of why this is beneficial.)
5. Have the Parks Dept trial mulch mowing and other ways to leave fallen leaves, like placing leaf piles around tree bases to protect tree roots.

### **Discussion of Recommendations**

After January 1, 2024, new gasoline powered leaf blowers and other new gasoline powered equipment such as hedge trimmers can no longer be sold in California. The staff report for the March 20 City Council meeting very correctly outlines the reasoning: the environmental damage done by one hour of gasoline powered leaf blowers is equivalent to the emissions from driving a Toyota Camry for 1,100 miles.

Besides creating annoying noise pollution and carbon pollution, gas leaf blowers blow away topsoil, blow away pollinator larvae that live in the leaf litter, and blow away annual flower seeds. Over time, the ground that has been blown is visibly eroded and barren. While electric blowers have the same problems, because they are not as powerful, the environmental damage is less severe.

However, we do recognize that as long as landscapers are expected to remove every leaf, it will be economically challenging for them to cease operations of all leaf blowers. Although leaves, grass clippings and

other material can be hand raked and swept, very few, if any, homeowners or businesses would be willing to pay the higher labor cost such hand work would require. Actually, leaf litter is nature's best mulch. And about 3" of mulch is recommended to reduce water needs and keep plant roots cool. What is needed is education of the public to accept landscaping that is more natural.

We thank the City for their electric leaf blower rebate program, and the California Air Resources Board for their recent launch of a voucher incentive program for zero emission landscape equipment, referred to as the CORE program, available to landscape professionals. We also note that the experience of some of our members with electric leaf blowers has been like that of the San Mateo Parks Department: battery life makes switching from gasoline to electric a challenge. One solution is to expand the landscape professionals' rebate for electric leaf blowers to include additional batteries.

In addition to air pollution, gasoline powered leaf blowers create significant noise pollution and thus, by San Mateo Municipal Code, may legally be operated only between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM in residential and adjacent areas. Please note that during hours of legal operation, the Municipal Code also sets some very clear noise level standards. Unfortunately, in San Mateo, the hours of operation and sound level limitations are widely ignored, especially in commercial and office areas adjacent to residential properties.

An outright ban on gasoline powered landscaping equipment, effective January 1, 2026, gives landscape professionals almost three years to find electric battery powered alternatives. With financial assistance from the CORE program and the City's rebates, this is an equitable and fair approach.

Finally, the problem of leaf blowers potentially could be addressed through alternative landscaping methods that involve less frequent use of leaf blowers, which would also yield other environmental benefits. The Parks and Recreation Department could try leaving the leaves on the ground to create natural mulch and provide habitat for useful creatures. However, this was not on the objectives list from the City Council, and therefore, further awareness of this option is needed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Schneider and Elaine Salinger on behalf of the  
180 Members of the San Mateo Climate Action Team

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Patrice Olds  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 1:20 PM  
**To:** Andrea Chow; Martin McTaggart  
**Subject:** Fwd: Ban gas-powered leafblower use

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**From:** Carol Steinfeld [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 1:01:03 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>  
**Subject:** Ban gas-powered leafblower use

Councillors:

Please ban use of gas-powered leafblowers—for at least residential use as an interim measure until a complete ban is enacted.

A study shows that gas leafblowers do not increase cost to the yard workers. But if it did, this cost must be charged to the customers.

After all, yard maintenance is a discretionary cost, and I feel my neighbors should pay more for polluting the air, creating noise, and harming insects/plants/wildlife, as well as damaging everyone's health, including the yard workers'.

You might look at the Palo Alto regulations as a model.

Yard workers know the days of gas powered leafblowers are coming to an end.

Thank you.  
Carol Steinfeld  
[REDACTED]

## Martin McTaggart

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**From:** Maggie Trinh [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2023 9:22 AM  
**To:** Clerk  
**Subject:** Agenda Item #2 - Gas Leaf Blowers

To the City Council:

I am writing in my personal capacity to strongly urge a ban on gas leafblowers. We have in the past used landscaping services that used gas leafblowers and they created lots of noxious fumes that are unpleasant and dangerous to breathe in, similar to standing next to an idling pickup truck (but much worse). We purchased an electric leafblower for the landscaping service to use, which was better from an environmental standpoint. The landscaper simply plugged it into an outlet on the side of our house using a long extension cord, which will be sufficient for the vast majority of residential jobs and will not require carrying a battery at all. I believe the fears of costs being passed onto the consumer are much exaggerated; electricity is much cheaper than gas, which customers are already paying for. And it will be much healthier for the people actually operating the leafblowers who have to breathe in these fumes day after day. Banning gas leafblowers will be a step in the right direction -- we need to do everything we can to address the climate change crisis.

On a side note: I recognize that everyone will have different needs and preferences for how they clean up their yards, particularly commercial applications, but I have actually stopped using these services altogether and my soil is much healthier and more productive and absorbs more rainwater, avoiding runoff/flooding.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Maggie Trinh