

RESOLUTION NO. 20240307-020

WHEREAS, the City declared a climate emergency in 2019; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Equity Plan set a goal for Austin of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040; and

WHEREAS, Strategy FPC.GS3-S4 of the Climate Equity Plan calls for incentives for products with lower negative environmental and social impact; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 National Emissions Inventory from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that lawn care equipment emitted large quantities of smog-producing nitrogen oxides, greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, and toxins such as benzene; and

WHEREAS, the EPA report found that lawn care equipment produced a disproportionate amount of fine particulate matter, known as PM2.5, that is particularly harmful to human health; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, gas-powered lawn equipment in the United States produced 21,800 tons of PM2.5, which is an amount equivalent to the pollution from 234 million typical cars over the course of a year; and

WHEREAS, in February 2024, the EPA finalized rules regarding the level of air pollution, seeking to limit PM2.5 at less than 9.0 ug/m3, and published guidance that the air quality data for Travis County recorded between 2020 and 2022 would be considered non-attainment by this standard; and

WHEREAS, a 2015 study from the Capital Area Council of Governments estimated the cost for ozone non-attainment in Central Texas as \$1 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, Travis County ranks 27th in the nation for the amount of carbon dioxide produced by lawn and garden equipment; and

WHEREAS, gas lawnmowers and leaf blowers are significant greenhouse gas emitters, releasing over 20 million tons of CO₂ in 2020; and

WHEREAS, gas-powered products contribute to noise pollution by producing sound at a level deemed unsafe by the World Health Organization; and

WHEREAS, Environment America's recent report shows refueling lawnmowers results in 17 million gallons of spilled gasoline per year, producing groundwater pollution and harm toward wildlife; and

WHEREAS, electric-powered products have less maintenance and fuel costs over time; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Equity Plan has adopted goals around electrification and decreasing carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS, City Council recently passed Resolution No. 20240215-25, calling for an investment in the City's environmental goals; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy already provides a rebate to residents purchasing new electric equipment; and

WHEREAS, the current cost difference between electric and gas-powered lawn care equipment after the Austin Energy rebate varies from \$165-\$370; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to not only incentivize the purchase of new electric lawn care equipment, but to dispose of existing gas machinery safely; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act, a federal bill creating federal funding opportunities for environmental programs,

including electric lawn care; and

WHEREAS, cities including Toledo, Louisville, and Salt Lake City have implemented programs that allow residents to dispose of their gas lawn mower in exchange for a rebate for an electric lawn mower; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to explore a program, including utilizing pop-up events and in-store programs, that allows Austin area residents or small businesses operating in Austin to turn in and properly dispose of gas-powered landscape maintenance equipment in exchange for a rebate for an electric or manual alternative, in an amount that at least covers the price difference between a typical gas versus electric option.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to explore expanding and promoting the current electric lawn care rebate, to better incentivize consumers and professional landscape maintenance businesses to transition away from gas-powered products.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to make recommendations for action and implement strategies for community outreach in promotion of the pilot program, in partnership with relevant community stakeholders and groups.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to report back to the City Council with recommendations for a lead department, funding options, and implementation plan to be adopted in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council amends its state and federal legislative agendas to include supporting legislation related to maximizing local availability of federal resources for the transition away from gas-powered equipment.

ADOPTED: March 7, 2024 **ATTEST:** Stephanie Hall for
Myrna Rios
City Clerk