

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 1, 2024

Question:

The City presently uses gas-powered leaf blowers at various times during the year as part of the work to maintain our landscapes. If the City owns and directly operates these devices, do effective electric alternatives exist, and if so, what would it cost to replace the gas-powered devices? If the City contracts out for services that use gas-powered leaf blowers, what would it cost to change our contract to require the use of electric leave blowers? Is it possible to determine equity impacts or impacts on our ability to hire locally-owned businesses from such a contract change?

Response:

The City both owns and contracts with companies that use gas leaf blowers for maintenance of lawn and landscaping at City properties. The City has begun to use electric leaf blowers on a small scale, but has not adopted them on a large scale. The Departments of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, General Services, Transportation & Environmental Services, and the Office of Climate Action are working together to identify the best strategy for transition. A key factor in electrifying our lawn care options is interoperability of equipment – purchasing the same brand of equipment for as many tools as possible to ensure batteries can be shared. We will also need to better understand the battery life, in-the-field charging options, and performance.

Together, we are exploring opportunities for demonstrations from vendors for leaf blowers, lawnmowers, chainsaws, and other equipment. Working with these vendors, we could also make information available to the public about the benefits of electric equipment for their personal use – electric lawn equipment is ideal for personal use as individual residents don't have the need for full-day run times, and the need for durability and power are typically lower.

For contract landscapers, we can ensure that all future RFP for landscaping includes requests for separate bids for all-electric equipment. The Office of Climate Action has explored this option with various Condo Associations that are interested, and there are few, if any, landscaping companies that currently provide this service. Including language in our RFP would allow us to share that language with interested Condo Associations and other businesses to help demonstrate a market demand, potentially spurring opportunities for an all-electric lawn care business in Alexandria.