

Sustainability News

The Greening of Vancouver

Did you know that the city of Vancouver has a long history of climate action? Since the 1990s, Vancouver has been working with the community to address the environmental challenges facing our city. Vancouver is routinely recognized as one of the most liveable cities in the world, and is leading others by implementing changes to help us “become resilient in the face of the changing crisis.”

On January 26, 2022, Vancouver City Council voted unanimously to phase out gas-powered landscape maintenance equipment, which includes lawn mowers, chainsaws and hedge trimmers, for personal and commercial use by 2024. Councilor Sarah Kirby-Yung (who proposed the motion) said that “leaf blowers are the most egregious offenders in terms of environmental impact and degrading people’s quality of life.” Gas-powered leaf blowers carry a heavy environmental toll and have negative health impacts due to exposure to toxic fumes and unsafe noise levels at close range. According to the California Air Resources Board, “operating a commercial leaf blower for an hour emits as much pollution as driving a car for 1,700 kilometres!” Leaf blowers have actually been banned for 20 years in Vancouver’s West End so it’s wonderful to see the rest of the city following their example.



January 2022 also saw the city introduce a series of bylaws aimed at reducing single-use items as part of a plan to be a Zero Waste city by 2040. The items included are:

- Plastic shopping bags
- Single use cups
- Plastic drinking straws
- Foam cups and containers
- Utensils - This bylaw operates on the customer asking for the utensils. Meaning that for all dine-in, take-out, in-person, online, and telephone orders, vendors can only provide single-use utensils if a customer confirms they want them or takes it themselves at a self-serve station.

How the rules will be enforced:

If a business is found to be non-compliance with the bylaws the city will initially focus on education and support. Failing that, increasing levels of enforcement may be applied. Enforcement may include issuing tickets, which carry a minimum fine of \$500 but could reach as high as \$10,000 for each offense.

Ongoing non-compliance may also result in business license suspensions or recommendations for business license revocation.



Learn more about Vancouver's climate action: <https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver.aspx>