The Evanston Environment Board recommends the following plan for phasing out handheld lawn equipment powered by fossil fuel.

A. Purpose: To end use of fossil-fuel-powered equipment in Evanston through
   - an ordinance that establishes a transparent and orderly process for ending use of handheld and backpack lawn equipment powered by gasoline and propane
   - support for residents and commercial operators in complying with the ban.

B. Background

B.1 The Climate Action & Resilience Plan adopted by City Council in December 2018 pledges to
   - Achieve 100% renewable electricity supply for all Evanston accounts by 2030 (CARP, p.14)
   - Phase out gasoline- and propane-powered leaf blowers, lawnmowers, and construction equipment; provide timeline for replacing with electric, battery (CARP, p.19)
   - Reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers community wide (CARP, p.20) to support both climate mitigation and adaptation.

B.2 Small off-road engines* are a significant source of emissions, including greenhouse gases. According to the California Air Resources Board, “For the best-selling commercial leaf blower, one hour of operation emits smog-forming pollution comparable to driving a 2017 Toyota Camry about 1,100 miles.” In enacting a 2019 ban on such engines, the City of Encinitas, California, explained: “The benefits of prohibiting gas-powered leaf blowers include avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions; decreased noise levels; and reduction in suspended dust, allergens, and other harmful particulates.”

B.3 Evanston’s current ordinances are limited in reach, addressing only dates and times when gasoline-powered leaf blowers may be used.

B.4 A more comprehensive ban is needed to phase out use of these engines.

* “Small off-road engines (SORE) are spark-ignition engines rated at or below 19 kilowatts.” — California Air Resources Board

C. Recommendations for changes to Evanston’s municipal code

C.1 Further limit use of gasoline- and propane-powered blowers, effective September 30, 2020
   a. Allow blower use for no more than 30 minutes in any three-hour period on lots of one-half acre or less.
   b. Consider immediate ban on use of all blowers for spraying pesticides.

C.2 Phase in ban on use of gasoline- and propane-powered blowers over a five-year period
   a. Sample language: It shall be unlawful for any person, including any City employee, to operate any portable machine powered with a gasoline- or propane- powered engine to blow leaves, dirt, or other debris off sidewalks, driveways, lawns, or other surfaces within the City limits.
b. Make effective April 2024 for all municipal operations and commercial operators, and April 2025 for all other persons (including residents, organizations, associations, groups).
c. Establish escalating fines, beginning with a warning.
d. Retain current provision that makes both operators and property owners responsible and subject to fine.

C.3 After ban has gone into effect
a. Allow electric and battery-powered blowers, but with limitations
   1. Require that blowers be recharged by electrical outlets via the grid (or potentially by solar panels mounted on vehicles), not by portable generators or power inverter outlets on gasoline-powered vehicle.
   2. Limit dates and times as in current ordinance 5.9.5.20.4, modified to specify electric and battery only.
   3. Prohibit blowing debris beyond property line.
b. Require that notice of this prohibition shall be posted in all stores selling leaf blowers within the City limits.

C.4 Establish a timeline for phasing out gasoline- and propane-powered leaf blowers, lawnmowers, and construction equipment and replacing with electric, battery equipment by 2030.

D. Recommendations for outreach, education, and assistance with a just transition

D.1 Align City of Evanston practice—Transition landscape maintenance equipment used by City employees and contractors to all-electric. Budget additional funds to allow more rapid replacement of current inventory. Reduce mowing frequency. Create “green zones” and natural areas in city parks to demonstrate alternatives such as low-mow grasses and no-mow areas.

D.2 Educate the public—Notify residents of their responsibilities through City communication channels. Post signs in stores where blowers are sold. Place signs in “green zones” and natural areas and partner with community groups to increase awareness and understanding of alternatives to intensively managed lawns.

D.3 Educate commercial operators—Notify companies of relevant laws and regulations as they register/renew business licenses. Provide FAQs, fliers, and other material through multiple channels. Offer workshops about transitioning to electric landscape maintenance equipment. Issue warning for first violation. Provide training in proper use of blowers.

D.4 Support companies in complying—Consider supporting group purchase agreements. Provide information about proper disposal of blowers that can no longer be used.

D.5 Make all materials and programming bilingual (English and Spanish).