

Background:

A ½ day Green Landscaping Training session was held on March 29th in the Council Chambers and the outside area. The goal was to provide unbiased data and information on what Green Landscaping equipment is currently available, the pluses & minuses of each, upcoming regulations, current incentives, etc. Although residents were invited, the focus was on, and the time frame/schedule was chosen for the convenience of the local gardeners. Over fifty individuals and companies were pre-registered. Attendance was in person & via ZOOM. The training was conducted by an outside expert in Green Landscaping methods & technology (AGZA) and was supported by at least four equipment manufacturers/vendors who detailed their specific approaches.

Specific Issues and “Lessons Learned”:

- A) The Gardening/Landscaping Companies:
 - They were the targeted audience & a weekday afternoon was chosen based on informal surveys of a variety of local gardeners
 - 1) It turns out that there are many more independent gardeners than anticipated & the average number of employees per company is small
 - Small teams cannot afford to miss any time at work & ½ day absence is very difficult
 - 2) Larger teams were able to send one or two representatives
- B) Private Companies with large landscaping areas
 - The most obvious was the Circus Club & they had the Director of Landscaping attend
- C) Atherton residents:
 - Those that attended learned quite a lot and gained new insights as to the scope of the issue
 - However, if we want greater attendance from residents, we should schedule such sessions either after work (6:00pm?) or on a Saturday
- D) Highlights:
 - 1) Attendees learned & actively asked questions concerning:
 - The latest advances in handheld equipment (trimmers, edger's, blowers, saws, etc.)
 - The “logistics” and management of the battery charging/swapping systems
 - The total economics of transitioning to 100% battery operated systems
 - The application of robotic lawnmowers to residential landscaping
 - The current & potential subsidies/rebates were discussed in detail
 - 2) The Town initiated engagement with the Corporations in the jurisdiction
 - The Circus Club was a very active participant and is pursuing a variety of applications based on the session
 - 3) The Concept of the Town providing a training/information opportunity to residents that could save them significant personal time & money and lead to a better decision was well received

- The use of an “Outside Expert” in the topic is very useful & adds credibility as a subject expert
- Although the concept is popular, the execution details require “fine tuning”

E) Limitations:

- 1) For a town with ~ 2,500 homes, we should be able to attract more attendees
 - As always, obtaining resident involvement is the challenge
 - Most of the residents do not yet understand the impending changes on gasoline powered equipment, or realized the economic benefit of some new technologies
 - However, we must continue to engage residents at every opportunity
- 2) The best timeframes for gardeners & for residents do not appear to match & we will have to better target the time to the audience
 - In either case, a ½ day session is probably too long & we should plan a limit of ~ 2 hours in the future

Outcome & Next Steps:

A) In follow-up cocreations with the Vendors:

- They all believed that it was well attended & with good enthusiasm & questions
- Their experience in other locations (primarily Southern CA) has been that they have more inquiries after such sessions, but they do not expect immediate increased sales of “green products”
- There is a “gestation period” of even mote “research” before consumers/gardeners buy the equipment (There comment was “It goes slowly until it goes quickly!”)
- I suggest that we check back with them in the late summer to see if they have sold more Green Equipment

B) EPC Follow-up:

- 1) Robotic lawnmowers
 - A public demonstration of a robotic lawnmower would add a real-world example & exposure Green Landscaping to more residents
- 2) The EPC should consider:
 - If a follow-up event on this, or another topic, would be of real value
 - Are there other projects that could build on what we have learned about working with residents & their vendors?