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NOISE AND LIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

The Noise Element provides specific policies to guide compatible land uses and provides for the incorporation of possible attenuation measures for new uses in order to ensure the protection of people living and working in the community from excessive noise. These policies work in conjunction with the General Plan, which provides policy direction for noise-related issues, and City noise-related ordinances, which already limit noise levels and operational hours associated with both residential and commercial uses.

Community Noise Equivalent Level, or CNEL, is the noise rating scale used for land use compatibility. The CNEL rating represents the average of equivalent noise levels, measured in decibels (dB), at a location for a 24-hour period, with upward adjustments added to account for increased noise sensitivity in the evening and night periods. The General Plan specifies that noise levels at or below 70 dB are conditionally compatible for multi-family residential uses, and 65 dB for single family, children's schools, and other sensitive receptors uses, if sound attenuation measures are included to reduce the interior noise levels to 45 dB. Typical attenuation measures are addressed in the General Plan.

Roadway activity is the most widespread source of noise in the community. Traffic volumes on all existing freeways, prime arterials, major streets, and many of the community's collector streets typically generate on average noise levels of 65 dB and greater on adjacent properties. Figure 9-1 illustrates the future noise contours from freeways and major roads in the community. Another growing concern among residents is noise generated from dining and entertainment establishments and uses, noise emanating from construction activity in commercial, and mixed-use corridors as a result of growing development interest. With North Park's popular night scene and growing number of dining and entertainment establishments, both residents and business owners have been faced with the issue of dealing with noise issues resulting from the success of dining and entertainment establishments. The construction of new buildings, and the accompanying improvement to infrastructure, has the potential to result in short-term construction noise that can affect residents and businesses.

Noise and Light Element Goals:

1. A community that takes a multifaceted approach to minimize exposure of residential and other noise sensitive land uses to excessive vehicle noise, construction noise and nighttime commercial activities.
2. Public transit projects that minimize transit vehicle noise on residential land uses.
3. Dialogue between proprietors of existing and proposed eating/drinking/entertainment establishments and adjacent residents, particularly if the commercial establishment will operate early morning or nighttime hours, to develop feasible "good neighbor" practices.
4. A community that reduces light pollution by lowering elevated light levels while reducing waste of energy and improving the built environment.
5. Illuminated roadways, public, and private spaces while minimizing unnecessary light pollution.
6. Prevention of excessive glare, light at night, and light directed skyward to conserve energy and reduce obtrusive lighting.
7. Development projects that contribute to the reduction or elimination of light spillage into sensitive environments and preserve the night sky.
8. Creation of community lighting projects that improve North Park's quality of life.

As North Park's commercial areas continue to grow and expand, with new commercial establishments, and mixed, commercial-residential developments, more instances of exposure to the unwanted effects of light pollution could become more prevalent in the community, especially within the community's popular commercial areas and business districts. The Light Pollution component of this Element addresses night time safety, roadway and site design, as well as light trespass into natural areas and the night sky in order to reduce the unwanted spillover effects of lighting.

9.1 MOTOR VEHICLE NOISE

The General Plan identifies motor vehicle noise as a major contributor of noise within the City emanating from arterial roads, interstate freeways, and state highways. Higher levels of motor vehicle noise are generated primarily from the community's commercial corridors of University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard, as well as Interstate-805. The General Plan allows residential uses along mixed-use corridors up to the 75 dB noise level, if sound attenuation measures are included to reduce the interior noise levels to 45 dB. Collector streets, such as 30th Street, Adams Avenue, and Upas Street, which provide traffic connections between commercial areas and single family neighborhoods located at the northern and southern ends of the community, have also raised a growing concern and need for attenuating motor vehicle traffic noise. The use of traffic calming measures to slow down traffic, increase pedestrian safety, and livability has been widely accepted in the community's residential neighborhoods. Reducing vehicular speeds for safety reasons also has the added benefit of reducing roadway noise associated with motor vehicles.



With the many streets that cross the community, roadway noise generated by motor vehicles is the primary source of noise within the community.

POLICIES

- NE-1.1** Encourage the use of traffic calming measures as a means to enhance safety, reduce vehicle noise and speed reduction, at commercial locations such as 30th Street and Adams Avenue as well as neighborhood streets.
- NE-1.2** Establish wayfinding signs within the community to facilitate efficient and more immediate vehicle access to community destinations such as parks, schools, business areas, the theater, and the North Park parking structure for motorists.
- NE-1.3** Raise awareness to changes in vehicle speed on major thoroughfares in residential areas through the placement of neighborhood traffic calming measures such as landscaping, community identity signs, and installation of public art along streets such as 30th Street, Upas Street, Pershing Drive, Texas Street, Florida Drive, and Park Boulevard.
- NE-1.4** Work with Caltrans to establish and maintain landscape buffers along freeway right-of-way through the use of berms and planting of native and/or drought resistant trees and shrubs.

9.2 TRANSIT-RELATED NOISE

The implementation of the Mid-City Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service and the strong desire to reintroduce the streetcar on El Cajon Boulevard, could affect noise levels from operations along or within close proximity to residential streets.

POLICIES

- NE-2.1** Work with SANDAG, MTS, and Caltrans to install and evaluate noise mitigation systems to minimize impacts to existing businesses and residences, and maintain compliance for visually impaired access adjacent to new rapid bus, future streetcar, and Trolley transit systems.
- NE-2.2** Incorporate the use of innovative technologies to reduce noise associated with transit vehicles, such as electric powered buses, tires with noise reducing tread designs, and open-graded/rubber asphalt concrete.



The increasing trend for eating and drinking establishments to incorporate “open air” concepts and outdoor patios has been a result of North Parks’ favorable climate and unique street activity.

9.3 COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE ACTIVITY

With the growing success of North Park’s hospitality industry, the community has been challenged with minimizing noise impacts to adjacent residences, while supporting the popularity of its local restaurants, clubs, and bars. The increasing trend for eating and drinking establishments to incorporate “open air” concepts and outdoor patios has been a result of North Parks’ favorable climate and unique street activity. An “open air” concept typically consists of outdoor space within the building’s envelope, in addition to open windows, doors and patios, which cannot be closed. While open air concepts activate the public realm, they can expose surrounding neighborhoods to increasing urban noise when establishments do not include attenuation measures and practices to reduce their noise exposure. Refer to the Land Use Element for policy guidance on the incorporation of “open air” concepts into drinking and eating establishments.

Construction activities associated with new commercial and mixed-use activity in the community would potentially generate short-term noise levels in excess of 75 dB at adjacent properties. The City regulates noise associated with construction activity through enforcement of noise ordinance standards (e.g. days of the week and hours of operation) and by imposing conditions of approval for building permits. Due to the developed nature of North Park, with sensitive receivers located in proximity to infill development sites, there is potential for the construction of future development projects to expose existing sensitive land uses to significant noise levels. At the project level, future development projects will be required to incorporate feasible mitigation measures. Typically, noise can be reduced to comply with City requirements through the provision of standard construction noise control measures that are enforced at construction sites, and by limiting the noise-generating construction period to one construction season (typically one year) or less.

POLICIES

- NE-3.1** Implement operational measures in areas where eating, drinking, entertainment, and assembly establishments are adjacent to residential:
- Institute appropriate open/close window hours for eating and drinking establishments.
 - Require that the volume of amplified music is lowered during the last hour of service.
 - Encourage the use of evening security staff to control crowds as well as loitering after hours.
 - Provide noise attenuation measures to reduce the noise levels generated from the establishment, to the degree possible, within their premises with special attention on "open air" concept establishments. (such as beer gardens or large outdoor eating and drinking venues).
 - Encourage bars that serve food to keep their kitchen open after alcohol has stopped being served to encourage a slower flow of people leaving the establishment.
- NE-3.2** Locate the commercial portion of new mixed-use developments away from existing single-family residences.
- NE-3.3** Promote "quiet-in-residential neighborhoods" signs to bring awareness to evening commercial patrons who walk through residential neighborhoods.
- NE-3.4** Encourage existing drive-thru restaurants to use visual-only confirmation order screens, especially at locations adjacent to residential buildings.
- NE-3.5** Encourage truck deliveries for businesses to occur on commercial streets with commercial zoning zones during day-time hours.
- NE-3.6** Incorporate sound attenuation measures such as sound absorbent wall/ceiling materials, sound walls, and dense, drought-tolerant landscaping where commercial uses such as restaurants and bars are permitted, especially adjacent to residential areas.
- NE-3.7** Encourage private waste pick-up, franchise hauler agreements with the City to be organized by geographic area to reduce unnecessary frequency and instances of multiple haulers servicing areas.
- NE-3.8** Implement the standard noise controls to reduce construction noise levels emanating from new construction to minimize disruption and annoyance:
- Limit construction activity hours.
 - Equip all internal combustion engine-driven equipment with intake and exhaust mufflers that are in good condition, and appropriate for the equipment.
 - Locate stationery noise-generating equipment (e.g. compressors) as far as possible from adjacent residential receivers.
 - Acoustically shield stationary equipment located near residential receivers with temporary noise barriers.
 - Utilize "quiet" air compressors, and other stationary noise sources where technology exists.
 - Encourage construction contractors to prepare a detailed construction plan identifying the schedule for major noise generating construction activities that includes coordination with adjacent residents so that construction activities can be scheduled to minimize noise disturbance.
 - Encourage construction contractors to designate a "disturbance coordinator" who would be responsible for responding to any complaints about construction noise.

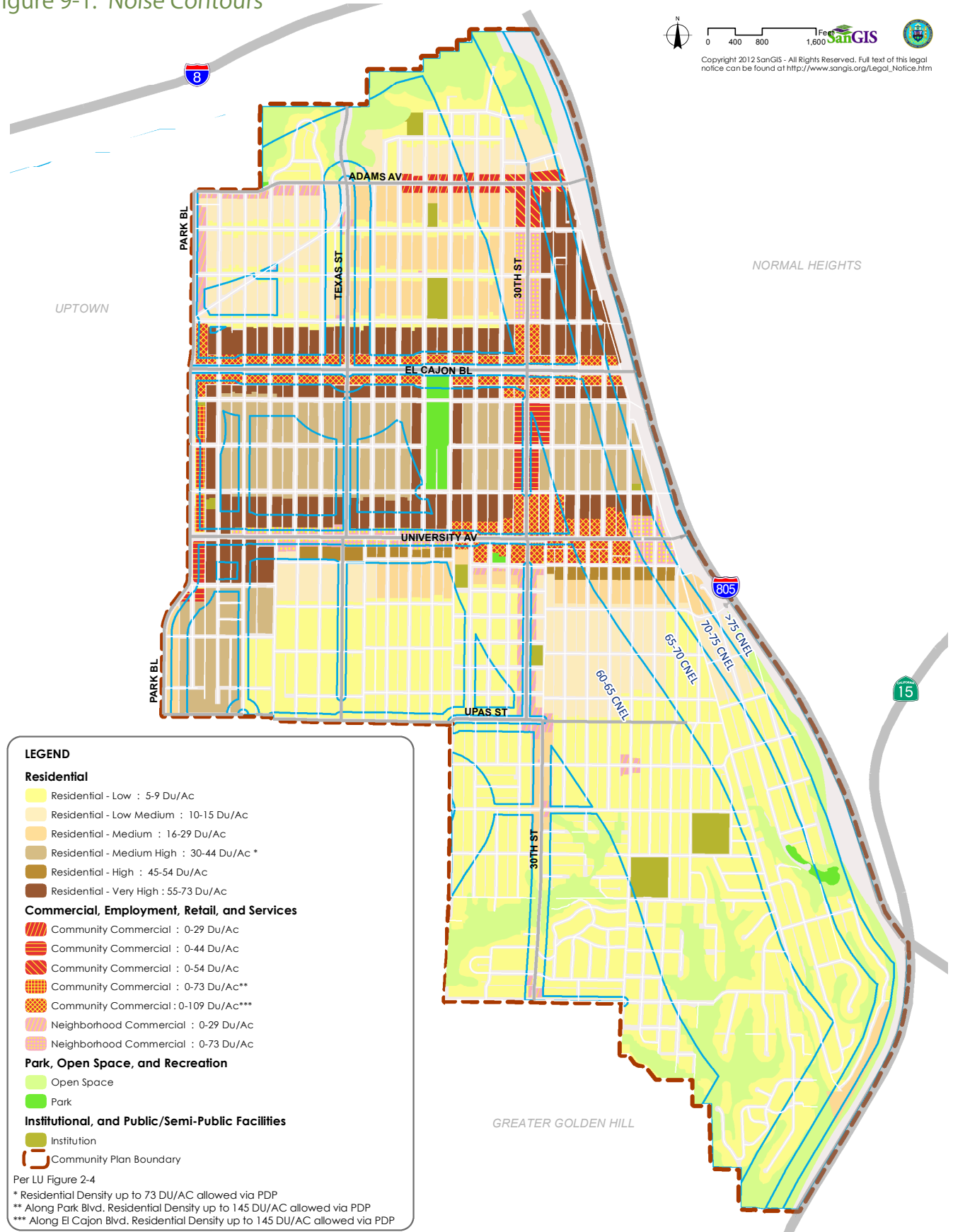
9.4 LIGHT

With the continuing urbanization of San Diego's communities, unwanted intrusion of artificial light into the environment not only has the effect of being a nuisance, but can also be disruptive to human health and the ecosystem. The City of San Diego has Green Building regulations to reduce light pollution. The regulations require outdoor lighting systems to comply with the California Energy Code; minimize light trespass, glare, and urban sky glow in order to preserve the enjoyment of the night sky; and minimize the amount of light entering identified, sensitive biological resource areas.

POLICIES

- NE-4.1 Utilize adjustable lighting fixtures to redirect lighting to where it is needed in varying conditions or landscaping such as trees and shrubs to block light spillage or adjustable lighting fixtures to redirect lighting to where it is needed in varying conditions.
- NE-4.2 Avoid use of signs that include blinking video clips or other forms of digital animation, electronic message boards or displays, marquee signs, and electronic display systems.
- NE-4.3 Ensure that the benefits of lighting projects and improvements are shared equally in the community.
- NE-4.4 Ensure that lighting projects respect and maintain or improve their surroundings through context-sensitive design, such as preserving views and view corridors, natural features around canyons, and open space.
- NE-4.5 Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting, such as dark-sky compliant fixtures, to avoid uneven light distribution, harsh shadows, and light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- NE-4.6 Utilize materials in new development that will reduce light reflection and glare.
- NE-4.7 Minimize shadows cast by new development on neighboring properties.
- NE-4.8 Encourage lighting plans and specifications on projects to show the use of energy including efficient lighting, solar power to fuel street lights, the removal of existing but unneeded lighting, use of automatic turnoff systems, and application of non-lighting alternatives such as clear signage and clearly painted roadway lines.
- NE-4.9 Consider the use of artists for projects that involve lighting as a decorative element on a building or the inclusion of lighting elements such as public art.

Figure 9-1: Noise Contours



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