

NOISE

9.1 NOISE COMPATIBILITY

Introduction

The Noise Element provides goals and policies to guide compatible land uses and incorporates noise attenuation measures to protect people living and working in Golden Hill from excessive noise. Because the application of policies related to noise is similar across communities, the General Plan provides the main policy guidance addressing this issue.

Noise-sensitive land uses are uses where unwanted sound could adversely affect occupants within that site. These include residences, schools, lodging, libraries, religious facilities, nursing homes, playgrounds and parks. Golden Hill has many noise-sensitive land uses as well as proximity to major transportation facilities. The main sources of unwanted sound in the community are related to airports and freeways. Heavily travelled streets as well as certain activities associated with commercial and industrial land uses also generate noise. Figure 9-1 illustrates the future noise contours expected to be generated from freeways and major roads in the community. The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for San Diego International Airport also provides maps of the noise contours related to aircraft overflight.

Community Noise Equivalent Level, or CNEL, is the noise rating scale used to evaluate land use compatibility. The CNEL rating represents the average of equivalent noise levels, measured in A-weighted decibels (dBA), at a location for a 24-hour period, with upward adjustments to account for increased noise sensitivity in the evening and at night. The A-weighted filter places a greater emphasis on frequencies within the range of the human ear. The General Plan provides compatibility guidelines for evaluating land uses based on noise levels. Golden Hill is largely residential, so noise effects on residential land uses are a broad concern. However, noise effects on other sensitive receptors are also important. Per the General Plan, single-family residential uses are compatible at locations with an exterior noise exposure at or below 65 dBA CNEL, with new single-family residences in the 60-65 dBA noise contour required to incorporate standard construction methods that attenuate interior noise to below 45 dbA. Multi-family residential may be allowed at locations with an exterior noise exposure at or below 70 dBA CNEL, with new developments in the 60-70 dBA CNEL noise contour required to incorporate sound attenuation measures to reduce interior noise levels to 45 dBA CNEL. Commercial uses also require noise attenuation in certain noise contours. Typical noise attenuation measures are described in the General Plan.

NOISE ELEMENT GOALS

- Excessive noise exposure minimized from vehicles, construction, and nighttime commercial activities for residential and other noise-sensitive land uses
- Noise levels adequately attenuated within new or retrofitted buildings, and also within associated useable outdoor space (when feasible).

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Commercial Activity

As commercial activity continues to expand within the community, more instances of exposure to the unwanted effects of noise pollution could become more prevalent in the community. The popularity of nighttime eating and drinking establishments and “open air” seating can contribute to unwanted noise for adjacent residents. Where commercial and residential or other sensitive receptor uses are present or proposed, the potential for noise impacts from commercial activities are important to evaluate, such as delivery noise during late night and early morning hours that can affect nearby residential uses.

Motor Vehicle Traffic Noise

The General Plan identifies motor vehicle noise emanating from major roads, interstate freeways, and state highways as a major contributor of noise within the City. Vehicle traffic noise is directly related to the traffic volume, speed, and mix of vehicles. The three freeways that surround Golden Hill (State Route 94, Interstates 5 and 15) are the primary sources of motor vehicle noise. The collector streets in the community such as C Street and 30th Street also have the potential to generate unwanted noise. Because commercial trucks generate more noise than cars and light trucks, they can have a greater impact. Commercial and industrial areas in the community generate truck traffic and are often located adjacent to, or near, residential areas. The use of traffic calming measures that slow traffic speeds without increasing starts and stops can reduce motor vehicle noise.

Aircraft Noise

Part of Golden Hill is within the area affected by overflights from San Diego International Airport (SDIA) and associated noise. Aircraft noise can affect people living and working in Golden Hill to varying degrees, depending on their noise sensitivity. Golden Hill is within the Airport Influence Area, which is the boundary for the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for SDIA. The ALUCP is prepared by the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for San Diego County, as required by state law. Aircraft noise is one factor that the ALUCP addresses by establishing policies for land use compatibility, as discussed in the Land Use Element. The General Plan conditionally allows future single-family and multiple unit residential uses in the areas above the 65 dBA airport noise contour within the SDIA Airport Influence Area with noise attenuation measures, as discussed above, to maintain and enhance community character and urban form. The San Diego Regional Airport

Authority also operates the Quieter Home Program to retrofit existing homes in areas above the 65 dBA noise level contour to reduce interior noise levels to an acceptable level.

Policies

- NE-1.1** Refer to the Community Plan and the San Diego International Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) noise contours and General Plan and ALUCP noise compatibility policies when making land use planning decisions.
- NE-1.2** Ensure that future residential use within the 60-70 dBA CNEL aircraft noise contours include noise attenuation measures to ensure an interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL and provide an avigation easement to the airport operator for San Diego International Airport.
- NE-1.3** Reduce the potential effects of commercial activity noise through careful site planning and integrating noise attenuation measures in new buildings to reduce interior sound levels (also refer to General Plan Policies NE-E-1 through NE-E6 and Urban Design Element, *Commercial-Residential Use Compatibility*).
- NE-1.4** Implement operational measures to reduce noise in areas where eating, drinking, entertainment and assembly establishments are adjacent to residential uses.
- NE-1.5** Locate the commercial portion of new mixed-use developments away from existing single-family residences.
- NE-1.6** Incorporate sound attenuation measures such as sound absorbent interior materials, exterior sound walls and dense landscaping where commercial uses such as restaurants and bars are permitted adjacent to existing residences.