

# NOISE AND LIGHT 9

- 9.1 MOTOR VEHICLE NOISE
- 9.2 TRANSIT-RELATED NOISE
- 9.3 COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE ACTIVITY
- 9.4 LIGHT

## 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 already 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.

Since no industrial, train, or airport facilities are located within close proximity to the North Park community, most of the noise generation within the community

results from roadway activity. 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 within the community is noise generated from commercial development. With North Park's popular night scene and growing hospitality industry, both residents and business owners have been faced with the issue of dealing with noise issues resulting from the success of commercial and entertainment areas and their effect on adjacent residential areas.

As North Park's commercial areas continue to grow and expand with the influx of 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 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.

## Noise and Light Element Goals:

1. *Minimal exposure of residential and other noise sensitive land uses to excessive vehicle noise and night time commercial activities.*
2. *A community that reduces light pollution by lowering elevated light levels while reducing waste of energy and improving the built environment.*
3. *Illuminated roadways, public, and private spaces while minimizing unnecessary light pollution.*
4. *Prevention of excessive glare, light at night, and light directed skyward to conserve energy and reduce obtrusive lighting.*
5. *Development projects that contribute to the reduction or elimination of light spillage into sensitive environments and preserve the night sky.*
6. *Community lighting projects that improve North Park's quality of life.*

## 9.1 Motor Vehicle Noise

The City's General Plan identifies motor vehicle noise as a major contributor of noise within the City emanating from arterial roads, interstate freeways, state highways. Within North Park significant motor vehicle noise is generated primarily from the community's commercial corridors of University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard as well as the Interstate 805 Freeway. 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. Additionally, reducing vehicular speeds for safety reasons have the added benefit of reducing roadway noise associated with cars.



*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 and reduce noise associated with cars, especially along streets where future mixed-use development will place residents in close proximity to neighborhood commercial corridors like 30th Street.
- 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 especially in low density residential areas through the incorporation of neighborhood identity-specific traffic calming measures such as thematic landscaping, community identity signs, and public art along streets such as 30th Street, Upas Street, Pershing Drive, Texas Street, Florida Drive, and Park Boulevard.
- NE-1.4 Actively pursue funding and grant opportunities for passive parks that could serve as landscape buffer areas along freeway corridors.
  - a. Include a dense planting of native and/or drought resistant trees and shrubs to prevent gaps in landscape buffers.
  - b. Use drought resistant evergreen trees within landscape buffer areas to provide year-long noise attenuation.
- NE-1.5 Encourage traffic calming and speed reduction awareness to effect positive change along neighborhood streets.

## 9.2 Transit-Related Noise

The implementation of Mid-City Rapid Bus service and the strong desire to reintroduce the streetcar in and El Cajon Boulevard, future streetcar service routes could include operating on 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 and future streetcar mass 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.



*Innovative noise minimizing technologies are available to reduce the amount of noise that transit riders and residents would be subject to.*

## 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. Additionally, the trend for eating and drinking establishments to incorporate open windows and patios that take advantage of San Diego's favorable climate and promote street activity has exposed surrounding neighborhoods to more urban noise.

### POLICIES

- NE-3.1** Implement operational measures in areas where commercial-residential adjacency issues exist that could:
- Institute appropriate open/close window hours for eating and drinking establishments;
  - Ensure that the volume of amplified music is lowered during the last hour of service;
  - Encourage the use of evening security staff to control loitering after hours and crowds;
  - Apply limitations on alcohol service on patios that would involve limiting the number of patios allowing alcohol service, as well as limiting the hours and maximum capacity/size of patio enclosures;
  - Allow bars to remain open to serve food after alcohol has stopped being served;
  - Evaluate the possible effect of remodels/new eating and drinking establishments that incorporate "open air" or large outdoor eating and drinking venues. Include acoustical studies or industry averages to evaluate potential noise as a condition of permit approval and/or during review of a change in type of business related to eating and drinking establishments;
- NE-3.2** Include acoustical studies to evaluate potential noise impacts as a condition of permit approval and/or during a review for a change in the type of business related to eating and drinking establishments.



North Park's increase in commercial activity is attributed to the popularity of its neighborhood eating and drinking establishments.

- NE-3.3 Locate the commercial portion of new mixed-use developments away from existing single-family residences.
- NE-3.4 Continue the promotion of "quiet-in-residential neighborhoods" signs to bring awareness to evening commercial patrons who walk through residential neighborhoods.
- NE-3.5 Incorporate sound attenuation measures such as sound walls, dense drought-tolerant landscaping, and visual-only confirmation order screens where commercial fast food drive thru's are permitted especially adjacent to residential areas.
- NE-3.6 Encourage truck deliveries to occur on commercial streets and so that residential streets and neighborhoods are not negatively affected.
- NE-3.7 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.

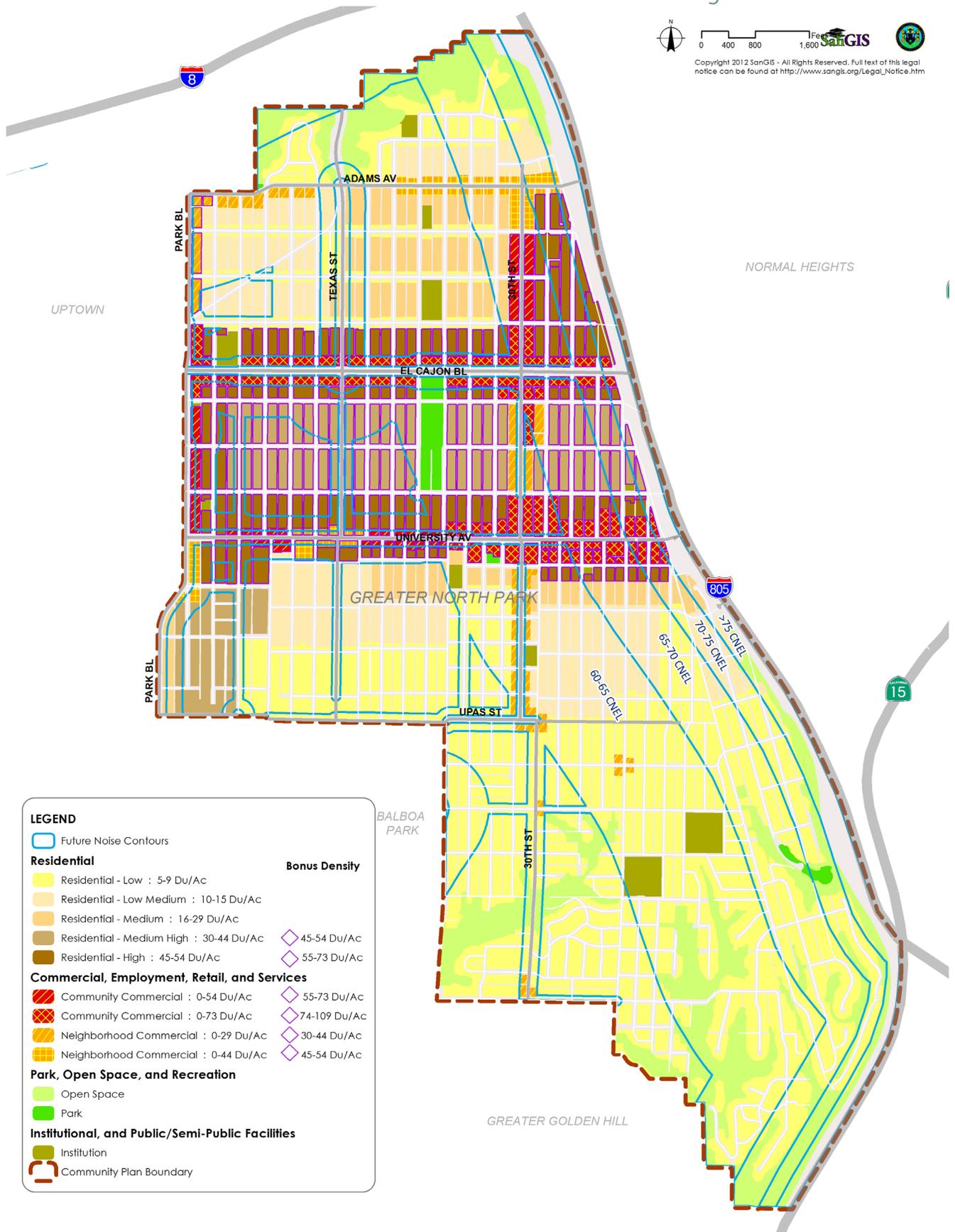
## 9.4 Light

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. In 2012, the City of San Diego adopted modifications to its Green Building regulations to reduce light pollution from residential buildings. These modifications 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 Encourage the use 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 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 quality materials in new development that will reduce light reflection and glare.

Figure 9-1: Noise Contours



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**LEGEND**

- Future Noise Contours
- Residential**
  - Residential - Low : 5-9 Du/Ac
  - Residential - Low Medium : 10-15 Du/Ac
  - Residential - Medium : 16-29 Du/Ac
  - Residential - Medium High : 30-44 Du/Ac
  - Residential - High : 45-54 Du/Ac
- Bonus Density**
  - 45-54 Du/Ac
  - 55-73 Du/Ac
- Commercial, Employment, Retail, and Services**
  - Community Commercial : 0-54 Du/Ac
  - Community Commercial : 0-73 Du/Ac
  - Neighborhood Commercial : 0-29 Du/Ac
  - Neighborhood Commercial : 0-44 Du/Ac
  - 55-73 Du/Ac
  - 74-109 Du/Ac
  - 30-44 Du/Ac
  - 45-54 Du/Ac
- Park, Open Space, and Recreation**
  - Open Space
  - Park
- Institutional, and Public/Semi-Public Facilities**
  - Institution
- Community Plan Boundary