



# NOISE

## 9.1 NOISE COMPATIBILITY

## Introduction

The General Plan provides goals and policies to guide compatible land uses and the incorporation of noise attenuation measures for new uses that will protect people living and working in the City from an excessive noise environment. The General Plan provides sufficient policy direction for noise-related issues. The policies in the Community Plan focus on specific noise land uses compatibility issues. Noise sensitive land uses include residential and schools for children. The Land Use Element provides policies and recommendations for future residential with commercial and business park uses. The Urban Design element addresses building and site design which can be used avoid and attenuate excessive noise levels. Uptown is an urban community with a mix of uses and major transportation facilities. The community has a higher ambient noise level from commercial, industrial, freeways, major streets, aircraft operations, and rail operations.

Figure 9-1 illustrates the future noise contours from freeways, major roads, and rail lines. The noise contours do not reflect changes in noise levels due to topography such as the freeway elevation above ground level or other physical barriers including vegetation, walls, or buildings. The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan contains the noise contours for the San Diego International Airport. (Insert figure)

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 A-weighted decibels (dBA), 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 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. The General Plan specifies that noise levels at or below 70 dBA are conditionally compatible for multi-family residential uses and mixed-use commercial-residential development if sound attenuation measures are included to reduce the interior noise levels to 45 dB. Typical attenuation measures are addressed in the General Plan.

## GOAL

- Development that is planned and designed to avoid or attenuate excessive noise levels.

## 9.1 Noise Compatibility

### COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Where residential and other sensitive receptor uses are present or proposed, the potential for noise impacts from commercial activities are important to evaluate, such as deliveries during late night and early morning hours, generate noise that can affect the nearby residential uses. Reducing the effect from commercial activity noise involves site planning and integrating noise attenuation measures in new buildings that will reduce interior sound levels. Refer to General Plan Policies NE-E-1 through NE-E6.

### MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC NOISE

Vehicle traffic noise is directly related to the traffic volume, speed, and mix of vehicles. Major roadways that include State Route 163 and Interstate 5, are the primary sources of motor vehicle noise within the community. Noise from trucks driving within, or parked and idling along roads in the community can also be a source of annoyance for noise sensitive uses. Uptown is affected by truck traffic associated with commercial land uses. Trucks in general generate more noise than cars and light trucks. Refer to General Plan policies NE.B.1 through NE. B.8.



Vehicle traffic along major roadways are the primary sources of noise within the community.

## RAIL NOISE

Rail noise is a source of noise in the community and primarily consist of single event noises coming from rail crossings located in the neighboring Midway/Pacific Highway community west of I-5. Freight trains, intercity rail (Amtrak), commuter rail (Coaster), and light rail transit (Trolley) can generate high, relatively brief, intermittent noise events within the vicinity of at grade rail crossings where horns and crossing bells are sounded. Federal regulations require trains to sound their horns at all roadway-rail grade crossings. Horns, whistles and bells on the moving trolley vehicles, and horns from freight trains, combined with stationary bells at grade crossings can generate excessive noise levels that can affect noise sensitive land uses. To minimize excess train horn noise, the federal government allows the establishment of train horn “quiet zones.”

This requires the implementation of safety measures to compensate for the loss of the train horn usage. Additionally, the Mobility Element supports roadway-rail grade separation since this will eliminate the need for bells and horns at the existing grade crossing which will reduce the noise level. Refer to General Plan policies NE.C.1 through NE-C.4.

## AIRCRAFT NOISE

Aircraft noise and overflight of aircraft from San Diego International Airport (SDIA) affects the Uptown community. Aircraft noise can affect people living and working in the community at varying degrees, depending on a person’s level of annoyance. The SDIA prohibits most late night takeoffs to help limit noise impacts and maintains 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. The community 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. Aircraft noise is one of the factors that the state-required ALUCP addresses with established policies for land use compatibility, as discussed in the Land Use Element.

The General Plan conditionally allows future multiple unit and mixed-use residential uses in the areas above the 65 dBA airport noise contour within the Airport Influence Area for SDIA to maintain and enhance the character and urban form. Refer to General Plan policies NE.D.1 through NE-D.6.

## POLICIES

- NE-1.1 Consider existing and future exterior noise levels when planning and designing developments with noise sensitive uses to avoid or attenuate excessive noise levels.
- NE-1.2 Utilize the Community Plan and the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan noise contours when making land use planning decisions.
- NE-1.3 Ensure that future residential use above the 60 dBA CNEL aircraft noise contour include noise attenuation measures to ensure an interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL and provide an avigation easement to the airport operator for SDIA.
- NE-1.4 Coordinate with members of the Midway/Pacific Highway community to establish a train horn “quiet zone” at the Old Town, Washington Street, Noell Street, Vine Street, and Sassafras Street at-grade rail crossings.



FIGURE 9-1: FUTURE NOISE CONTOURS

