

# Live Entertainment (Amplified Sound) Workshop April 11, 2017

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### **What is amplified sound?**

Sounds that are made louder than would normally occur through some “sound-amplifying equipment”.

- Includes: Microphones, speakers, public address systems
- Does NOT Include: Car radios, emergency sirens, or horns

### **What is ambient noise?**

Background noise level made up of sounds that are generally consistently heard over a period of at least 15 minutes.

- Includes: Traffic noise, people talking, environment (animals, wind), mechanical equipment
- Does NOT Include: Fire station alarm, plane flying overhead, train horn, emergency sirens

### **How is noise measured?**

Noise levels are typically measured in decibels (dB) which is a unit of measurement indicating the relative amplitude of sound. A zero on the decibel scale is based on the lowest sound level that the healthy, unimpaired human ear can detect. The table below is from the City’s General Plan, which lists a range of decibel levels and corresponding common noise equivalents.

**Benicia Decibel Levels for Common Noises**

Decibel Level	Common Noise Equivalent
20	Soft whisper
40	Quiet office, living room, bedroom—away from traffic
50	Light traffic at a distance, refrigerator, gentle breeze
60	Average conversation, air conditioner at 20 feet, sewing machine
65	Quiet typewriter
70 (This level may begin to affect hearing if one is constantly exposed)	Busy traffic, office tabulator, noisy restaurant
75	Vacuum cleaner
80 (Dangerous if exposure continues for more than eight hours)	Subway, heavy city traffic, ringing alarm clock at two feet, average factory noise
85 (Dangerous, even if exposure is less than eight hours)	Truck traffic, noisy home appliances (washing machine, blender, food processor), power lawn mower
95	Noisy factory, shop tools
100 (Dangerous, even if exposure is less than two hours)	Elevated train, chain saw, pneumatic drill
120 (Danger is immediate)	Rock concert in front of speakers, sandblasting, thunderclap
140 (Any length of exposure is extremely dangerous.)	Jet airplane at 200 feet, gunshot blast

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### ***What are the City's current Noise Standards?***

The City's General Plan (Community Health and Safety Element) establishes general performance standards for noise sensitive uses (e.g., residential, lodging, hospitals, schools) with maximum interior and exterior noise standards for daytime and nighttime hours.

The City's Noise Ordinance implements the General Plan and establishes base level ambient noise levels (standards) for daytime and nighttime hours for each land use type. While the City has interior and exterior noise standards, potential impacts associated with amplified sound (live entertainment) are based on exterior noise levels measured at the property line. The table below lists the ambient noise levels at the time the Noise Ordinance was adopted in 1977. When the City reviews potential noise impacts, they measure the current ambient noise level using a noise meter. The City has the ability to review and approve maximum noise levels that are up to fifteen decibels above the ambient level listed in the table.

Land Use	Ambient Base Noise Level (Decibels)	
	Daytime 7 am to 10 pm	Nighttime 10 pm to 7 am
Residential	60	55
Commercial	60	55
Industrial	75	70

### ***Can the City grant exceptions to the Noise Standards?***

The City allows for relief from these noise standards for both permanent uses and temporary uses for amplified sound through the following processes:

#### Permanent Uses/Exceptions

1. Use Permit (public hearing/decision by Planning Commission)

#### Temporary Uses/Exception

2. Temporary Relief Petition (for private property – public hearing/decision by City Council)
3. Sounds Amplified Equipment Registration Process (for amplified sound in the public property and right-of-way – decided by City Manager/Fire Department)
4. Special Events Process (decided by Parks Department)

### ***Who should I contact if I have additional questions?***

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