

Introduction

Noise is often a nuisance, and is sometimes a genuine danger to human health and safety. The adverse impacts of noise on wildlife can also be significant, and the intrusion of noise into quiet, rural environments can rob them of their attractiveness, and deprive them of their unique qualities.

New development doesn't have to mean more unacceptable noise! The policies and noise standards established in this Element of the General Plan will help preserve the quality and character of our existing communities and natural areas. The policies in the Noise Element thus directly implement several of the Twelve Guiding Objectives:

Guiding Objective #1

Preserve the unique character of areas throughout Monterey County as represented by the different Area Land Use Plans.

Guiding Objective #3

Preserve a distinction between urban and rural areas. Channel new growth to areas already committed to an urban level of development (e.g., cities, areas directly adjacent to cities, and densely developed unincorporated communities). Preserve rural areas for resource-based industries (e.g., farming, livestock grazing, mining), natural resource protection, and open space recreation uses.

Guiding Objective #5

Promote the development of walkable communities that meet the daily needs of their residents, offer a high quality of life for their residents, and reduce the need for automobile trips.

Noise – Goal #1

MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HEALTHY AND QUIET ENVIRONMENT BY REDUCING ANNOYING AND HARMFUL LEVELS OF NOISE FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS AND WORKERS

Noise – Policy #1

Noise Control Ordinance – The Board of Supervisors will adopt and periodically update a Noise Control Ordinance containing noise control standards at least as protective as those contained in this Noise Element of the General Plan.

Noise – Policy #2

Noise

Development Controls - New projects shall be required to meet acceptable noise exposure levels as established in Table N-1, Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Guidelines, or as specified in the County's Noise Control Ordinance. Development may be allowed in areas identified as "normally unacceptable" only if measures are incorporated into the development to reduce both the indoor and outdoor noise levels to acceptable levels. Maps 22 A-G and Maps 23 A-J shall be used as a preliminary basis for implementation of this policy.

Noise – Policy #3

Evaluating Noise Impacts – Acoustical analysis shall be part of the environmental review process. Acoustical analyses shall evaluate noise impacts on the natural environment, including impacts on wildlife. Mitigation measures shall be described within the document when:

- a. Noise sensitive land uses are proposed in areas exposed to existing or projected noise levels are shown as "normally unacceptable" or higher in Table N-1, the Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Guidelines; or
- b. Proposed projects are likely to produce noise levels exceeding the levels shown in the County's Noise Control Ordinance for existing or planned noise-sensitive uses.

Noise – Policy #4

Mitigation Measures -- Site planning and project design will be emphasized where noise mitigation measures are required to achieve acceptable levels of noise according to Table N-1 or the Noise Control Ordinance. These measures shall include building location and orientation, building design and landscaped setbacks from noise sources. Where these measures would render the site unusable, other measures, including natural appearing, landscaped earthen berms may be considered. The use of sound walls for noise control is prohibited.

Noise – Policy #5

Significance Thresholds (Noise Standards) – The County shall develop and adopt significance thresholds to be incorporated into a County Noise Control Ordinance for areas where existing noise-sensitive uses may be exposed to increased noise levels. The following criteria shall be used as a guideline for developing these thresholds:

- a. Where existing noise levels are less than 55 dB CNEL at outdoor activity areas of noise-sensitive uses, a 5 dB CNEL increase in noise levels will be considered significant;

- b. Where existing noise levels are between 55 and 60 dB CNEL at outdoor activity areas of noise-sensitive uses, a 3 dB CNEL increase in noise levels will be considered significant; and
- c. Where existing noise levels are greater than 60 dB CNEL at outdoor activity areas of noise-sensitive uses, a 1.5 dB CNEL increase in noise levels will be considered significant.

Noise – Policy #6

Noise Impacts on Surrounding Uses – New development shall be required to incorporate design elements and equipment necessary to eliminate adverse noise impacts on surrounding land uses.

Noise – Policy #7

Roadway Projects – the County shall require roadway projects to achieve and maintain outdoor noise standards shown in Table N-1. The use of sound walls for noise control is prohibited.

Noise – Policy #8

Construction Noise – The County shall regulate construction-related noise to reduce impacts on adjacent land uses in accordance with the County’s Noise Control Ordinance.

Noise – Policy #9

Development Near Airports – The County shall not allow the development of new residential land uses in areas exposed to existing or projected levels of noise from aircraft operations at any airport or air base that exceeds 60 CNEL.

Table N-1 Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Guidelines

Land Use Category	Level (CNEL)					Indoor Outdoor Noise
	Standard					
	45	50	55	60	65	
Open space and park uses where quiet is a prime objective						--
Auditoriums, concert halls (-/20) ¹						40
Residential-low density Single family, duplex, mobile homes (10/20)						45 (60 outdoors)
Residential-multi-family (10/20)						45 (60 outdoors)
Transient lodging—motels, hotels (10/20)						45
Schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, nursing homes (10/20)						45
Actively used open spaces—playgrounds, neighborhood parks, sports fields						--
Golf courses, riding stables, water recreation, cemeteries						--
Office buildings, business commercial and professional (10/25)						50
Industrial, manufacturing, utilities, agriculture (10/25)						60

- Normally Acceptable:** Specified land use is satisfactory, based upon the assumption that any buildings involved are of normal conventional construction, without any special noise insulation requirements.
- Conditionally Acceptable:** Conventional construction will achieve indoor noise standards, but closed windows and fresh air supply systems or air conditioning will be required.
- Normally Unacceptable:** New construction or development should be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of noise reduction requirements is made and needed noise insulation features are included in design. Closed windows and fresh air supply systems or air conditioning will be required. Other building upgrades will probably be needed and should be specified in the acoustical report to meet indoor noise standard. Additionally, residential uses must show that they will achieve an outdoor noise standard of 60 CNEL or less.
- Clearly Unacceptable:** New construction or replacement of an existing structure or use shall be disallowed.

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¹Numbers in parenthesis indicate the minimum outdoor to indoor noise reduction provided by typical construction with and without windows open. For example, residential buildings will have a least a 10 dBA noise reduction with windows open and a 20 dBA outdoor to indoor noise reduction with windows closed.