



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 24, 2026

TO: HONORABLE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FROM: PLANNING & BUILDING SERVICES

SUBJECT: CONSISTENCY REVIEW FOR PROPOSED NOISE CONTROL REGULATIONS

The proposed Noise Ordinance has been reviewed by Mendocino County Department of Planning and Building Services ("PBS") for consistency with the Mendocino County General Plan and for California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") compliance. The following memorandum summarizes General Plan consistency and CEQA compliance of the proposed ordinance.

General Plan Consistency

The Noise Element of the Mendocino County General Plan is contained within the Development Element. The Development Element sets forth goals and policies related to noise and land use compatibility. General Plan Policy DE-101 shows the noise compatibility guidelines for use in determining the general compatibility of planned land uses and Policy DE-102 defines the levels of noise compatibility (Completely Compatible, Tentatively Compatible, Normally Incompatible, and Completely Incompatible).

General Plan Policy DE-101 contains noise compatibility guidelines for use in determining the general compatibility of planned land uses, as shown in Table 3-K below.

**TABLE 3-K
NOISE COMPATIBILITY GUIDELINES (EXPRESSED AS A 24-
HOUR DAY-NIGHT AVERAGE ORLDN)**

Land Use	Completely Compatible	Tentatively Compatible	Normally Incompatible	Completely Incompatible
Residential	Less than 55 dBA	55-60 dBA	60-75 dBA	Greater than 75 dBA
Commercial	Less than 65 dBA	65-75 dBA	75-80 dBA	Greater than 80 dBA
Industrial	Less than 70 dBA	70-80 dBA	80-85 dBA	Greater than 85 dBA

General Plan Policy DE-102 defines the levels of noise compatibility as follows:

- *"Completely Compatible" means that the specified land use is satisfactory, and both the indoor and outdoor environments are pleasant.*
- *"Tentatively Compatible" means that noise exposure may be of concern, but common building construction practices will make the indoor living environment acceptable, even for sleeping quarters, and the outdoor environment will be reasonably pleasant.*
- *"Normally Incompatible" means that noise exposure warrants special attention, and new construction or development should generally be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of noise reduction requirements is made and needed noise insulation features are included in the design. Careful site planning or exterior barriers may be needed to make the outdoor environment tolerable.*

- *“Completely Incompatible” means that noise exposure is so severe that new construction or development should generally not be undertaken.*

The proposed Noise Control Regulations Ordinance defines “Disturbance” as *“the playing or operating of any radio, loudspeaker, sound amplifier, or other musical device or instrument, or noise produced by any machine, or device, or by any other means, which impacts any residential property and exceeds sixty (60) dBA, constant or seventy-five (75) dBA intermittent, as measured from an adjacent residential property line using a sound decibel meter, if occurring between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.”* The recommended dBA standards within the proposed Noise Control Regulations Ordinance are appropriate for Mendocino County and consistent with Table 3-K of the General Plan. The definition of “Disturbance” contained within the proposed Ordinance is specifically related to noise disturbance that impacts any residential property and therefore it is appropriate to utilize the residential standards in Table 3-K in establishing thresholds for enforcement actions. In review of Table 3-K for residential uses, it provides that noise exceeding 60 dBA is normally incompatible such that the noise exposure warrants special attention to ensure the outdoor environment is tolerable, and that noise exceeding 75 dBA is completely incompatible and that such noise exposure is so severe that generally new construction or development should not be undertaken. The proposed thresholds in the Noise Control Regulations Ordinance are consistent with General Plan Policies DE-101 and DE-102 and the Ordinance will implement these existing noise compatibility limits.

For reference on noise levels for common outdoor and indoor activities, please see Attachment A which is Figure 4.10-1 from the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Mendocino County General Plan Update, dated September 2008.

California Environmental Quality Act

The proposed Noise Control Regulations Ordinance is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to the “common sense exemption” set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). This exemption is applied where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed Ordinance contains thresholds for noise disturbance that are consistent with and based on the Mendocino County General Plan noise compatibility guidelines for residential land uses and establishes penalties for violation of those thresholds. The proposed Ordinance does not have potential to cause a significant effect on the environment as it implements existing noise compatibility limits contained within the Mendocino County General Plan and leverages existing violation processes available to public agencies for enforcement of violations. The proposed Ordinance may have a positive effect on the noise environment within Mendocino County by creating an enforcement mechanism for noise disturbances that can be detrimental to the quality of the environment.

Attachments

- A. Figure 4.10-1 from the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Mendocino County General Plan Update, dated September 2008

4.10 NOISE

FIGURE 4.10-1
TYPICAL NOISE LEVELS

Common Outdoor Activities	Noise Level (dBA)	Common Indoor Activities
Jet Fly-over at 300m (1000 ft)	110	Rock Band
Gas Lawn Mower at 1 m (3 ft)	100	
Diesel Truck at 15 m (50 ft), at 80 km (50 mph)	90	Food Blender at 1 m (3 ft)
Noisy Urban Area, Daytime	80	Garbage Disposal at 1 m (3 ft)
Gas Lawn Mower, 30 m (100 ft)	70	Vacuum Cleaner at 3 m (10 ft)
Commercial Area		Normal Speech at 1 m (3 ft)
Heavy Traffic at 90 m (300 ft)	60	Large Business Office
Quiet Urban Daytime	50	Dishwasher Next Room
Quiet Urban Nighttime	40	Theater, Large Conference Room (Background)
Quiet Suburban Nighttime	30	Library
Quiet Rural Nighttime	20	Bedroom at Night, Concert Hall (Background)
	10	Broadcast/Recording Studio
Lowest Threshold of Human Hearing	0	Lowest Threshold of Human Hearing

Source: Caltrans, 2008