



*City of*  
**SACRAMENTO**

## **City of Sacramento** **Arts and Entertainment Regulatory Review**

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### **PHASE 3: Sacramento Sound Policy Recommendations Final Report**

NOVEMBER 2025/ PREPARED BY SOUND MUSIC CITIES



**INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY SOUND MANAGEMENT IN SACRAMENTO**

Sacramento's sound challenges aren't about choosing between residents and entertainment; they're about creating a system where both can thrive. This report proposes a Community Sound Management™ framework that shifts from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention through education, clear standards, and coordinated accountability.

Community Sound Management™ is a participatory approach that actively embraces and solves sound-related problems with the people involved in those problems: businesses, residents, and city government. This requires partnership and asks people to embrace cooperation and collaboration between all parties. Each entity gains understanding of the various components of the underlying problem as well as the roles, goals, and boundaries of creating, regulating, and enforcing sound policy. People support solutions they help to create. While it may take more time and effort up front, a community-minded and participatory approach to sound management will lessen the need for costly enforcement.

The approach recognizes that lasting solutions emerge from shared understanding among residents, venues, producers, and City staff, not from penalties and complaints alone. By establishing measurable standards consistent across departments, Sacramento can make expectations clear for everyone while giving City staff the authority and training to act as neutral facilitators rather than adversaries.

At the core of this approach is trust. Residents need confidence their concerns will be heard and addressed fairly. Venues and event organizers need confidence the rules are applied predictably and consistently. City processes must be transparent and balanced, with clear paths for resolution when conflicts arise.

Community Sound Management™ defines regulation as government intervention through a set of rules identifying permissible and impermissible activity. The lens of this type of regulation focuses on compliance more than enforcement. That is not to say that enforcement is not necessary, but in our experience, compliance from well-understood regulation lessens the reliance on enforcement. Achievable and well-understood regulations provide transparency and successful compliance.



In addition to policy and regulations, well-trained and knowledgeable city staff are vital to achieve the optimal regulatory environment. Both neighbors and venues need to feel they have an informed, neutral advocate in city staff focused on advancing the process in an objective way.

Through modernizing Entertainment Licenses and Special Event Permits, the City creates a coordinated system that supports both neighborhood livability and a thriving creative economy. This isn't about limiting music; it's about managing it wisely so Sacramento's energy, culture, and community can coexist and grow together.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sacramento needs a sound management system that works for everyone, residents seeking quality of life, businesses and artists contributing to the city's cultural vitality, and City staff tasked with managing both. The current framework has created frustration on all sides through inconsistent processes, unclear standards, and limited coordination across departments and jurisdictions.

This report proposes a Community Sound Management framework that shifts Sacramento from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention. Built on community input from over 1,100 residents, businesses, and entertainment stakeholders, the framework establishes measurable standards, coordinated oversight, and practical tools that address sound issues before they escalate into conflicts.

### SEVEN CORE ELEMENTS FORM THE FOUNDATION OF A PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK:

- **Sound Impact Plans** require event organizers and venues to plan for sound management upfront, building accountability into every event rather than waiting for complaints.
- **Scaled requirements** match oversight to impact, streamlined processes for smaller community events, detailed review for major festivals, ensuring resources focus where they're needed most.
- **An Accountable Official** provides final authority on sound policy interpretation, eliminating departmental inconsistencies while maintaining each department's operational role.
- **Education and outreach** prioritize training, technical support, and communication tools over citations, helping operators succeed rather than penalizing failure.
- **Source-based measurement** at 150 feet from the sound source creates consistent, predictable standards while allowing site-specific flexibility through the permit process.
- **Fair enforcement** holds both permit holders and their designated staff accountable but treats enforcement as the last step after education and support.
- **The jurisdictional challenge remains critical.** Some of Sacramento's most significant sound impacts originate from Discovery Park and Cal Expo, venues the City cannot directly regulate. This report recommends reconvening an expanded interagency working group with County Parks, Cal Expo, and City departments to align monitoring methods, share data, and communicate consistently with residents. Coordination across jurisdictions is essential to public trust.

This framework creates the foundation for consistent, transparent, community-driven sound management in Sacramento, one that protects residential quality of life while supporting the cultural vibrancy that defines the city.

## SECTION 2: WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

This section summarizes the key insights from the Phase 2 Feedback Form and other public engagement conducted between June 20 and August 4, 2025. More than 1,100 residents, venue operators, event organizers, and business owners shared their experiences and priorities for improving how entertainment-related sound is managed in Sacramento. Appendices 1 and 2 share data gathered from the community responses.

Respondents described years of inconsistent enforcement, unclear processes, and limited communication between the City and the public. Yet most expressed cautious optimism that this new effort could finally create fairness, predictability, and accountability across departments.

### KEY THEMES

- **Low-End Sound and Jurisdictional Confusion:** Many residents identified low-frequency bass vibrations from large outdoor events, particularly at Discovery Park, Cal Expo, and the Railyards, as the most persistent source of disturbance. Although most of these events fall outside City jurisdiction, the feedback underscores the need for coordinated sound management among City, County, and State agencies.
- **Support for Modern Tools and Fair Oversight:** There was broad support for adopting Sound Impact Plans, Event Attendants, and an Accountable Official role to ensure consistent and transparent oversight. Respondents emphasized that these tools could build trust when implemented fairly and scaled appropriately so that small community events are not burdened by requirements designed for large-scale festivals.
- **Better Communication and Transparency:** Residents want earlier, clearer information about upcoming events, improved public dashboards that show sound-monitoring data, and better coordination between City and County 311 systems. Transparency and follow-through were described as the foundation for rebuilding public confidence.
- **Balanced Regulation and Livability:** Participants broadly supported a tiered approach to permitting that recognizes differences in scale and location. The goal expressed most often was not “less music,” but better management, a framework that allows venues and events to thrive while protecting neighborhood quality of life.
- **Common Ground:** Across all respondent groups, there was strong consensus that Sacramento needs a balanced and enforceable system that prioritizes communication, accountability, and coordination over reactive enforcement.

This feedback provides a clear mandate for a unified sound-management framework. The next section examines how Sacramento’s current system developed, where it falls short, and what structural changes are necessary to implement these community-driven priorities.



### SECTION 3: UNDERSTANDING SACRAMENTO'S CURRENT SYSTEM

Sacramento's entertainment-related sound framework has developed over many years through multiple chapters of City Code, special event permits, and exemptions. While each piece was well-intentioned, together they created a system that is inconsistent and difficult to apply.

**How We Got Here:** The current structure was largely shaped by an effort to allow amplified sound through a carve-out in the City's special event process. This workaround allowed amplified sound events to operate outside of Title 8 (the Noise Ordinance) by establishing three possible sound thresholds for permitted special events: "No person shall use amplified sound exceeding a noise level of either

- 98 dBA at a distance of 150 feet from a noise source or sources,
- 80 dBA when measured from the nearest residential property, or
- 24 dBA above ambient noise levels, whichever noise level is lower."

These limits were intended to simplify the permitting process, but instead created confusion between operators, and residents.

**Why This Doesn't Work:** In practice, Sacramento's current approach to regulating amplified sound has produced inconsistent and often unworkable results. Under Chapter 12.48 (Special Events), the City established three separate sound provisions: 80 dBA at the nearest residential property line, 98 dBA at 150 feet from the source, and 24 decibels above ambient sound, whichever is lower.

The 80 dBA limit at the nearest residential property line has proven to be one of the weakest provisions in the code. It does not account for how far that property line may be from the event site, and in many cases, it is far more lenient than community protection standards used elsewhere. Most cities that measure at the receiving property line set limits between 60–70 dBA during the day and 50–55 dBA at night, which is consistent with California Title 24, which establish noise thresholds intended to maintain interior residential levels below 45 dBA. During the events observed in Sacramento, the 80 dBA measurement was often used by event producers as further evidence of compliance, rather than as an indicator of potential impact, further demonstrating how ineffective the provision has become.

The 24 dB above ambient rule is equally problematic. The City has not maintained reliable baseline ambient sound data across neighborhoods, making this standard virtually impossible to enforce. It has rarely, if ever, been used in practice. As a result, both event organizers and staff frequently defaulted to the 98 dBA at 150 feet limit, which was intended as a maximum cap for outdoor amplified sound but has since evolved into the assumed default for all events, regardless of their size or impact.

Further complicating matters, Chapter 8.68 (Noise Control) includes overlapping sound limits for entertainment licenses and ongoing activities, measured in similar ways but under a separate process. This fragmented framework has created confusion for both event organizers and enforcement staff, reinforcing the need for a unified, source-based system that reflects the diversity of event types across Sacramento.

**The Bass Problem:** Low-frequency sound, or bass, behaves differently from higher frequencies and can travel long distances depending on terrain, building patterns, and weather conditions. It is often felt as vibration rather than heard as volume, and its impact can extend well beyond what typical decibel readings capture. Because of this, managing sound at the source is the most reliable way to control its impact. Source-based measurement provides a clear, enforceable framework for City staff and event operators, especially during live events or in complex urban environments where conditions change quickly.

However, measurement at the receiving or residential property line remains an important element of sound management. In some cases, particularly when developing or evaluating a Sound Impact Plan, readings at the nearest residential property should be required to better understand real-world impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. Measuring sound in multiple locations, both at the source and at nearby residences, will help the City better understand how sound behaves in different conditions and refine what the appropriate source levels should be over time.

Certain low frequencies are more problematic than others, which will be addressed later in this report. Recognizing and managing those specific frequencies is key to minimizing vibration and maintaining a fair balance between entertainment activity and neighborhood livability.

### **JURISDICTIONAL COMPLEXITY: COUNTY AND STATE VENUES**

Many of Sacramento's most visible sound concerns originate from events held at Discovery Park and Cal Expo, two major event locations outside the City's direct regulatory authority. Although managed independently by the County and the State, their operations significantly influence how residents experience and perceive entertainment-related sound throughout Sacramento.

**Discovery Park**, managed by Sacramento County's Department of Regional Parks, operates under the County's Noise Ordinance, which exempts large, permitted concerts and festivals from local noise limits. In place of those limits, the County has adopted a department-wide Sound Monitoring and Control Plan that applies to all major music festivals held on park property. The plan provides operational guidelines for stage orientation, speaker placement,

and sound system design to minimize off-site impacts. It sets a maximum sound level of 105 dBA (five-minute Leq average) measured from the Front-of-House mix position, verified through real-time monitoring at each stage.

While the County's plan demonstrates a proactive approach, it relies exclusively on A-weighted measurements, which do not capture the low-frequency bass energy that residents most frequently report as disruptive. Each festival is required to provide a community hotline for noise concerns, with mailers sent to nearby residents in advance that list event dates, times, and contact information.

Complaint tracking, however, remains fragmented. Both the City and the County receive 311 calls about these events, but County 311 calls are forwarded to the City, and the City does not currently have a process to share that data back with the County. These systems are not technically integrated, and many calls terminate without confirmation or feedback between agencies. As a result, there is no clear record of how many complaints are received overall or how many calls reach the individual festival hotlines.

**Cal Expo** operates under a 1997 Compromise and Settlement Agreement with the City of Sacramento that established a cooperative framework for managing event-related sound. The agreement sets internal sound levels at 96 dBA (Leq, 60-minute average) for September and October, and 93 dBA for all other months, measured at 150 feet from the front edge of the permanent stage. The agreement calls for both A-weighted and C-weighted monitoring to better assess low-frequency impacts and created a working group of City, and neighborhood representatives to review annual reports and discuss recurring issues. It is unclear whether this group remains active or whether the collaborative provisions of the agreement continue to be implemented.

Although both agencies (Cal Expo and the County) have made good-faith efforts to monitor and control sound, their systems function independently and use different criteria. This creates gaps in communication and public accountability, particularly for residents unsure which agency to contact when problems arise.

**Reconvening and expanding the interagency working group to include County Parks, Cal Expo, and City staff would help close these gaps.** Shared monitoring methods coordinated complaint tracking, and consistent public communication would build trust and promote a unified approach to managing entertainment-related sound across jurisdictions. These challenges reveal why this proposed sound policy framework for Sacramento must focus not just on what happens within City jurisdiction, but also on creating clear lines of communication and coordination with County and State partners whose operations have direct impacts on Sacramento residents.



## SECTION 4: PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK

The proposed framework would modernize the City's sound management system by defining measurable standards, improving coordination, and giving staff and permit holders practical tools to resolve sound issues before they escalate into conflicts. The framework is built around seven core elements that work together to simplify permitting, improve communication, and ensure consistent enforcement.

**1. Sound Impact Plans (SIPs):** Each event or licensed venue would have a site-specific Sound Impact Plan outlining amplified sound hours, sound limits, monitoring points, and outreach steps. These plans create an opportunity to identify and address potential issues before an event occurs, reducing the likelihood of enforcement later. Sound Impact Plans also encourage event organizers to understand how their setup, programing and production choices affect nearby residents and businesses, building awareness and accountability throughout the process.

**2. Scaled Requirements:** Event requirements will be scaled appropriately to match their size and potential impact. Low-impact community events may receive waivers or simplified requirements, while larger or higher-impact events would undergo more detailed review. This approach ensures that sound management expectations remain fair and proportional, allowing the City to focus staff time and resources where they are needed most. The goal is for every event and venue, whether or not it requires a Sound Impact Plan, to be mindful of its setup and how it may affect surrounding areas.

**3. Accountable Official and Cross-Department Coordination:** The Accountable Official, designated by the City Manager, provides the City with a clear point of responsibility for entertainment-related sound. This role ensures that when departments interpret the code differently, there is one final authority to make a determination and keep the process moving. The Accountable Official does not review or approve every permit. Each department involved in sound management continues to handle permitting, inspections, and enforcement within its scope. The Accountable Official serves as the backstop when questions arise, providing interpretation, consistency, and coordination across departments. Equally important, this role promotes collaboration by convening staff from Convention and Cultural Services Department, Community Development Department, Police Department, and the Office of Innovation and Economic Development, along with other departments that play a role in entertainment-related sound or special event permitting. The intent is to clarify responsibility, not add bureaucracy, so Sacramento's entertainment sound management system functions as intended: coordinated, fair, and proactive.

**4. Outreach and Education:** The Entertainment Services Division, in collaboration with other departments, should focus on training, communication, and technical support for venues, event producers, and City staff. This includes helping operators understand sound management expectations, reviewing Sound Impact Plans, and using available tools such as the City's calibrated sound meter and public-facing sound dashboard. These coordinated outreach efforts have proven to be among the most impactful approaches in practice, helping to build trust, promote compliance, and empower venues and event organizers to prevent sound issues before they occur.

**5. Source-Based Measurement:** Sound will be measured at a consistent distance from the source, typically 150 feet. This ensures fairness and predictability while allowing the City to make adjustments through the permit process when conditions warrant. Source-based measurement provides a consistent standard for enforcement while supporting impact-based monitoring through Sound Impact Plans.

**6. Enforcement and Fairness:** The enforcement model focuses on accountability and fairness. Permit holders and their designated responsible parties will both be held accountable for compliance. The goal is compliance, ensuring that operators understand and meet regulatory expectations through clear standards and consistent processes. Enforcement remains an important tool, but it should be applied only when compliance is not achieved. This approach emphasizes education and prevention first while maintaining the City's ability to respond firmly when necessary to protect community quality of life.

**7. Reconvene Expanded Interagency Working Group:** The jurisdictional challenge remains critical. Some of Sacramento's most significant sound impacts originate from Discovery Park and Cal Expo, venues the City cannot directly regulate. Reconvening an expanded interagency working group with County Parks, Cal Expo, and City departments will be important in order to align monitoring methods, share data, and communicate consistently with residents. Coordination across jurisdictions is essential to public trust.

## SECTION 5: PROPOSED ORDINANCE LANGUAGE

The following proposed draft ordinance language has been developed to serve as the foundation for Sacramento's modernized entertainment-related sound management framework. It is intended to replace existing inconsistent provisions and create a clear, enforceable system that emphasizes prevention, fairness, and accountability.

This proposed ordinance language is written to be understandable by the community while providing the City with a practical administrative structure for implementation.

### § X-0. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this chapter:

1. ACCOUNTABLE OFFICIAL means the City officer or employee designated by the City Manager with a particular administrative or enforcement responsibility under this chapter, including the authority to approve, deny, suspend, revoke, or modify permits and Sound Impact Plans.
2. AMPLIFIED SOUND means sound projected or transmitted by artificial means, including but not limited to loudspeakers, microphones, public address systems, musical instruments with pickups, and any other sound equipment powered by electricity or battery.
3. DECIBEL (DBA) means sound pressure level as measured by a sound level meter using the "A-weighting" network and either the slow or fast meter response as specified by the American National Standards Institute. Measurements made with this weighting are designated "dBA."
4. C-WEIGHTING (DBC) means a frequency response adjustment of a sound level meter with a "C-weighting" filter, as defined by the American National Standards Institute, that analyzes the sound source signal with approximately equal weight across most audible frequencies. Measurements made with this weighting are designated "dBC."
5. ENTERTAINMENT LICENSE means a license issued by the City authorizing amplified sound and entertainment activity at a fixed location. For purposes of this chapter, all entertainment permit types established in Sacramento City Code § 5.108 are included (limited entertainment permit, general entertainment permit, temporary entertainment permit) . Unless expressly stated otherwise, all references to an Entertainment License shall be interpreted to include all types.
6. ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES DIVISION means the division or working group of a City department designated by the City Manager with advisory, planning, coordinating, and administrative functions related to the permitting and oversight of amplified sound, Entertainment Licenses (including general and limited), Special Event Permits, and Film



Permits. The Division may consult with other City departments as needed, but it retains responsibility for establishing permit conditions and ensuring compliance under this chapter.

7. MODIFICATION OF SOUND IMPACT PLAN means any amendment, adjustment, or replacement of an approved SIP, whether initiated by the Accountable Official or requested by the permit holder, subject to review and approval under this chapter.

8. PERMIT HOLDER means the individual, organization, or entity to whom an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit has been issued.

9. PERMIT TERM means the period of validity for an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit, as established by their respective chapters.

10. RESPONSIBLE PARTY means the individual designated by the permit holder to remain on-site or immediately reachable during hours of amplified sound, with authority to carry out permit conditions and direct operations. The Responsible Party acts on behalf of the permit holder, who remains legally responsible for compliance with this chapter and all Sound Impact Plan conditions.

11. SENSITIVE RECEPTORS means land uses identified by the State of California Noise Element guidelines as requiring protection from excessive noise exposure. These include, but are not limited to, residences, hospitals and medical facilities, schools and libraries, places of worship, nursing homes, senior housing or assisted living facilities, and similar uses where quiet is an essential element of their purpose. For purposes of this chapter, the Entertainment Services Division may treat these and similar facilities as sensitive receptors when preparing or reviewing a Sound Impact Plan.

12. SOURCE means the principal point of sound projection, typically the speaker or speaker array, from which amplified sound emanates.

13. SOUND IMPACT PLAN (SIP) means a written plan required in connection with approval of an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit, prepared in consultation with the Entertainment Services Division. A SIP establishes hours of operation, sound level limits, monitoring locations, mitigation strategies, and other conditions to manage amplified sound impacts. A SIP remains in effect for the duration of the associated permit unless modified or amended pursuant to this chapter.

14. SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT means a permit issued by the City authorizing amplified sound and entertainment activity at a temporary site or public space, subject to the provisions of this chapter.

*Policy Note: Definitions are included to eliminate ambiguity and ensure consistent interpretation of key terms. This section establishes who has authority, what is covered under "amplified sound," the responsibilities of permit holders and responsible parties, and provides alignment with state-recognized standards for sensitive receptors such as hospitals, schools, and senior housing.*

#### **§ X-1. ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES DIVISION SOUND REVIEW**

(A) In addition to its role in processing Entertainment Licenses, Special Event Permits, and Film Permits, the Entertainment Services Division shall conduct a review of potential sound impacts whenever a Sound Impact Plan is required.

(B) The Division's sound review shall focus on how amplified sound associated with the proposed activity may affect surrounding areas and may include:

1. On-site inspections and sound measurements;
2. Consideration of the size, capacity, and layout of the site or venue covered by the permit;
3. Discussions with nearby residents and businesses;
4. Evaluation of outreach documentation and compliance history;
5. Review of proposed sound mitigation measures, including building or stage design, stage construction and orientation, speaker size, placement, and orientation, and natural or built buffers;
6. Consideration of topography, nearby sensitive receptors (such as civic uses), and other conditions necessary to protect public health, safety, and quality of life; and
7. Cumulative impacts of permitted or pending amplified sound activities in the vicinity of the proposed activity.

(C) Following sound review, the Entertainment Services Division shall incorporate a Sound Impact Plan as part of the licensing or permitting decision. The Division may recommend approval, conditional approval, or denial, and may impose site-specific conditions that exceed general citywide standards.

(D) The Accountable Official retains authority to adopt the Division's recommendations, modify conditions, or impose additional requirements as necessary.

*Policy Note: This section clarifies that the Entertainment Services Division's role in licensing and permitting is expanded to include a focused review of potential sound impacts. By integrating sound review into the existing permit process, the City avoids duplication while ensuring noise considerations are fully addressed before an event or entertainment license is approved. The addition of cumulative impact review provides the City with flexibility to account for overlapping or recurring amplified sound activities in the same area, helping to balance activity levels with neighborhood impacts.*

## **§ X-2. SOUND IMPACT PLAN (SIP)**

**(A) A sound impact plan (SIP)** shall be required as a condition of approval for all Entertainment Licenses and Special Event Permits issued by the City, unless waived by the Accountable Official upon a determination that the activity poses no substantial risk of adverse sound impacts.

**(B) The elements of a sound impact plan shall include, at minimum:**

1. prescribed hours of operation and sound levels;
2. availability and use of decibel meters on site;
3. monitoring locations and methods;
4. sound mitigating design features to address bass travel, and sensitive receptors;
5. contact information and hours of availability for an individual responsible for sound;
6. any other elements required by the accountable official.

**(C) Modification and Measurement Authority**

1. The Accountable Official may modify an approved sound impact plan at any time based on documented violations, substantial changes in conditions, or new information.
2. Permit holders may request modification of an approved sound impact plan, subject to review and approval.
3. The sound impact plan may require use of C-weighting or other specialized measurement protocols in addition to A-weighting, where necessary to address low-frequency impacts.

**(D) Duration**

1. For Entertainment Licenses, the sound impact plan remains valid for the license term unless modified.
2. For Special Event Permits, the sound impact plan applies only to the specific permitted event.
3. The City may require an updated sound impact plan upon renewal if violations or substantial changes in conditions have occurred.

**(E) Enforceability**

The terms and conditions of the SIP are enforceable. Violations of the sound impact plan constitute violations of this chapter and may result in administrative penalties, suspension, modification, or revocation of the associated license or permit.

*Policy Note: The Sound Impact Plan is the City's central tool for managing amplified sound. This section preserves flexibility for staff to tailor requirements, ensures accountability for permit holders, and provides authority to address complex issues like low-frequency bass travel without overburdening all events.*



### **§ X-3. HOURS AND SOUND LEVELS FOR AMPLIFIED SOUND**

**(A) Permit Required.** No person or business shall operate or cause amplified sound outdoors without an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit issued by the City.

**(B) Hours of Operation. Except as otherwise provided through conditions of a sound impact plan:**

1. Sunday through Thursday: 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
2. Friday, Saturday, and City-recognized holidays: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

**(C) Sound Level Determination**

1. Where a sound impact plan is required, the Entertainment Services Division shall establish the maximum allowable sound levels and monitoring locations for the activity based on their review.
2. Where a sound impact plan is not required, the Entertainment Services Division or Accountable Official shall set a maximum allowable sound level as a condition of the Entertainment License or Special Event Permit.

**(D) Maximum Allowable Levels**

1. No permit shall authorize Amplified Sound exceeding 98 dBA at the source, measured at a standard reference distance of one hundred fifty (150) feet.
2. Lower levels may be imposed based on site-specific review, nearby Sensitive Receptors, topography, or other relevant conditions.
3. The sound impact plan may require additional or alternative measurement locations, including one hundred (100) feet from the source or other monitoring points.
4. The sound impact plan may also require modified cut-off times or reduced hours of operation.

**(E) Violations**

1. Amplified Sound is operated without an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit; or
2. Amplified Sound exceeds the levels or conditions established in the Entertainment License, Special Event Permit, or Sound Impact Plan.

**(F) Relationship to Other Codes**

Nothing in this section authorizes amplified sound beyond what is otherwise permitted under the City's Noise Control Ordinance or Parks and Public Property Code when no Entertainment License or Special Event Permit has been issued.

**Policy Note:** This section establishes a clear baseline of 98 dBA measured 150 feet from the source

*and standard cut-off hours, while ensuring that permits or Sound Impact Plans can impose lower sound levels, establish alternative or additional monitoring points such as 100 feet, or shorten hours when conditions warrant. It also closes loopholes by requiring a permit for all amplified sound and by distinguishing violations of the code from violations of permit conditions. This approach aligns Sacramento's ordinance with California's Noise Element guidelines, which recommend protecting sensitive receptors, such as residential uses, hospitals, schools, and senior housing, from outdoor noise exposure above 60 dB CNEL (Community Noise Equivalent Level), equivalent to approximately 60 dBA averaged over 24 hours.*

## **§ X-4. ENFORCEMENT AND REPEAT OFFENSES**

### **(A) Permit Holder Liability**

The permit holder is legally responsible for compliance with this chapter, with all Entertainment License or Special Event Permit conditions, and with any Sound Impact Plan. Designation of a Responsible Party for on-site compliance does not relieve the permit holder of liability.

### **(B) General Enforcement**

The City may suspend, revoke, or deny renewal of any Entertainment License or Special Event Permit upon a finding that the permit holder has engaged in repeated or egregious violations of permit conditions, Sound Impact Plans, or this chapter.

### **(C) Factors Considered**

In determining appropriate enforcement action, the Accountable Official may consider:

1. The number and severity of violations;
2. The permit holder's history of compliance;
3. Impacts on surrounding communities; and
4. The permit holder's cooperation with corrective actions or outreach efforts.

### **(D) Modification of Sound Impact Plans**

The Accountable Official may amend an approved Sound Impact Plan at any time if violations, unanticipated impacts, or changed circumstances warrant additional mitigation. Amendments may include new monitoring locations, stricter decibel limits, adjusted hours of operation, or other conditions necessary to protect public health, safety, and quality of life.

### **(E) Denial of Future Permits for Repeat Offenses**

The Accountable Official may refuse to issue or renew a permit if:

1. The permit holder has been cited for two or more violations within a 12-month period;

2. The property has been the site of more than two violations within a 12-month period, regardless of applicant;
3. The applicant has a documented history of repeated noncompliance in other entertainment-related operations;
4. The applicant has failed to satisfy conditions of prior enforcement, including fines, corrective actions, or required post-event reviews; or
5. The applicant has demonstrated a pattern of refusing to cooperate with residents, City staff, or law enforcement regarding sound-related complaints.

**(F) Duration of Denial**

Denial of a permit may extend for a period of up to twelve (12) months, as determined by the Accountable Official, based on the severity and frequency of violations.

**(G) Bad Actor Clause**

The Accountable Official may impose additional restrictions, including enhanced monitoring, stricter Sound Impact Plan conditions, or extended denial of permits, on any permit holder who demonstrates a continuing pattern of disregard for sound management requirements.

**(H) Appeals**

Any enforcement action taken under this section may be appealed to the City Manager or designee within ten (10) business days.

*Policy Note: This enforcement framework balances community protection with fairness to operators. By holding permit holders solely accountable, Sacramento avoids confusion over who is liable while ensuring there is always a responsible on-site contact. The ability to modify Sound Impact Plans mid-term gives the City flexible tools to respond to emerging issues without automatically revoking permits. Combined with the strike system and bad actor provisions, this section promotes consistent enforcement that protects residents while supporting responsible venues and events.*

**Relationship to Existing Fine and Penalty Provisions**

Enforcement under this framework aligns with existing City Code authority. Chapter 5.108 (Entertainment Establishments) establishes clear penalties, including civil fines ranging from \$250 to \$25,000 per day, misdemeanor charges for most violations, and administrative penalties under Chapter 1.28. These provisions apply primarily to fixed-location venues operating under entertainment licenses. For temporary or outdoor activities permitted under Chapter 12.48 (Special Events), enforcement relies on the City's administrative penalty procedures in Chapter 1.24, which allow the City Manager to revoke, modify, or deny permits for non-compliance. Together, these chapters create a tiered system of accountability, using administrative remedies for temporary events and civil or criminal penalties for licensed venues, ensuring consistent and proportional enforcement across Sacramento's entertainment and event landscape.



**§ X-5. CONTROLLING PROVISION**

In the event of a conflict between this chapter and other provisions of the City Code relating to sound, noise, or amplified sound, the provisions of this chapter shall be controlling for any activity conducted under an Entertainment License or Special Event Permit.

*Policy Note: This section eliminates confusion from conflicting provisions in multiple City Code chapters by designating this chapter as the controlling standard for permitted entertainment and event-related amplified sound.*



## SECTION 6: IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUED DIALOGUE

The success of this proposed ordinance update will depend not only on its language, but on how it is implemented, communicated, and maintained over time. Sacramento's approach should continue to emphasize prevention, education, and shared responsibility between residents, event producers, venues, and the City.

**Interdepartmental Working Group:** An interdepartmental working group, convened by the Accountable Official, will guide implementation of the City's sound management framework and oversee progress on all recommendations outlined in this section. The group will include representatives from the Convention and Cultural Services Department, Community Development Department, Police Department, and the Office of Innovation and Economic Development, along with other departments that play a role in entertainment-related sound or special event permitting.

The working group's purpose is to strengthen coordination across departments, improve communication with event producers and residents, and ensure consistent interpretation of policies and procedures. It will also be responsible for advancing the recommendations that follow in this section, including those related to staffing, training, sound impact planning, community outreach, and cost recovery. By maintaining regular communication and evaluation, the group will help ensure that Sacramento's sound management approach remains adaptive, balanced, and community-informed.

**Event Attendants:** The requirement for Event Attendants is not a new provision. It already exists in the City's current special-event permitting process but has rarely, if ever, been used or codified. The role of the Event Attendant is to ensure compliance with all permit conditions, not only sound. In practice, many events take place without a City representative present to confirm that conditions are being met. While public-safety personnel may be on-site, they typically do not monitor compliance, particularly for sound.

Sacramento has long treated the Event Attendant as an operational City role used during special events, primarily to provide on-site support such as assisting with logistics and monitoring amplified sound levels. The earliest known reference appears in the City Council Fee Update adopted September 24, 2012, which lists an "Event attendant – \$20 per hour (parks or streets; unlock gates, monitor decibel level, etc.)" under the Parks and Recreation Department schedule. This description shows that the position was created to support the City's sound management and site-access functions during permitted events.

The City's special-event ordinance, Sections 12.48.050 and 12.48.060, authorizes the City Council to establish all special-event-related fees by resolution rather than within the Municipal Code itself. In practice, the Event Attendant role has continued under this structure, appearing in successive Council fee schedules.

In the current master fee schedule, Fee ID 5975 lists “Special Events – Event Attendant” at \$22 per hour, effective July 1, 2024, with an approved fee range of \$25 to \$28 per hour for future adjustments. This confirms that the charge remains active and recognized by City Council as part of the City’s special-event operations. While the position is referenced in the City’s Special Event Permit Application, it is not defined or codified within Chapter 12.48. Instead, it continues to function as a City service provided under the Council-adopted fee schedule.

The goal is to ensure that attendants are available for higher-impact events, where amplified sound levels, crowd size, or operating hours create a greater potential for community impact. In these cases, the Event Attendant serves not only as an on-site compliance role but also as a trust-building and communication link between the City, residents, and event producers.

**3-1-1 Complaint Response Improvements:** A key priority in this implementation phase is improving how the City receives, tracks, and learns from entertainment sound-related complaints. During this project, it became clear that many residents were unsure where to direct their concerns, and follow-up often varied depending on which department received the service request.

The primary recommendation is for the City to establish two distinct 3-1-1 service request types: one for residential noise complaints and one for commercial entertainment-related sound. This distinction will make data gathering more efficient, ensure complaints are routed to the correct department, and allow the City to better understand how and where sound impacts occur.

Real-time feedback from 3-1-1 is valuable for understanding neighborhood sound conditions, but it should not be viewed solely as an immediate response system. The data collected can help identify recurring hotspots, reveal impact zones from high-impact events, and track changes in sound patterns over time. These insights can then guide both short-term responses and long-term improvements in how sound is managed citywide.

Better coordination between Sacramento County, the City, and the State is also needed. Many residents who report noise from major events at Discovery Park or Cal Expo are referred back and forth between City and County 3-1-1 systems, even though those venues fall under County or State jurisdiction. At present, it is unclear whether Cal Expo consistently receives or reviews resident complaints following large events. Establishing a clear referral and data-sharing process among all three entities would reduce resident frustration, improve accountability, and ensure future event planning reflects real community feedback.

The first six to twelve months of implementation should be treated as a learning phase, with City staff spending time in neighborhoods during high-impact events to better understand how sound is experienced on the ground. Ongoing evaluation, regular data review, and better collaboration from County and State counterparts will be essential to building a consistent, transparent, and trusted complaint response system for Sacramento residents.



**Next Steps for 3-1-1 Collaboration**

- Create distinct 3-1-1 service request types for residential and commercial/entertainment sound to improve routing and data analysis.
- Develop a shared referral protocol between City, County, and State entities to ensure complaints are directed to the correct jurisdiction.
- Establish quarterly coordination meetings between City, County, and Cal Expo staff to review complaint trends and discuss recurring issues.
- Implement data-sharing and reporting tools such as heat maps or dashboards to track sound hotspots and event-related impacts over time.
- Provide clear public information on which agency to contact for event-related noise concerns to reduce confusion and improve resident experience.

**Better Notification and Outreach:** During the Phase 2 engagement process, one of the most frequent community concerns involved notification for special events. Unlike entertainment licenses, where the City manages notification as part of the permit fee, special-event applicants are responsible for notifying nearby residents and businesses. In practice, this has resulted in inconsistent outreach, unclear expectations, and, in some cases, no notification at all.

The City already maintains a Neighborhood Registry that could serve as the foundation for a more reliable notification system. While the registry's contact information may require periodic updates, it remains an existing asset that can be better utilized to support more consistent outreach. Integrating the registry with the special-event permitting process would allow staff to quickly identify neighborhood contacts and distribute notices more efficiently.

Improving special-event notification could include:

- Using the Neighborhood Registry as a centralized contact database for event-related notifications, maintained in collaboration with the Office of Community Engagement.
- Standardizing notification templates that clearly identify event dates, times, locations, sound expectations, and a designated Responsible Party for day-of inquiries.
- Differentiating by event impact. Larger or higher-impact events should require broader notification, while smaller community events could use simplified templates.
- Providing the option for electronic notifications through an opt-in email or online system to ensure timely delivery and transparency.

Clear, consistent, and centralized notification would not only reduce confusion and duplication, but also help build trust between residents, event organizers, and the City.

**Outreach and Education to the Entertainment Community:** The Entertainment Services Division, in partnership with the Office of Nighttime Economy, should lead targeted outreach and education efforts for the entertainment community, including special-event organizers and venue operators. The goal is to build a shared understanding of sound-management expectations, provide clear guidance on best practices, and create stronger working relationships between the City and those producing or hosting amplified sound.

Recommended actions include:

1. Providing practical guidance and resources on sound-management strategies such as speaker placement, low-frequency control, and event layout considerations.
2. Offering orientation sessions for permit holders and venue operators to review requirements of the updated ordinance and Sound Impact Plan process.
3. Creating a clear communication channel for event producers and venue managers to ask questions and receive consistent information from City staff.

Ongoing outreach and education will help ensure that members of the entertainment community understand both the City's sound standards and the intent behind them. When operators are equipped with the right knowledge and tools, they are more likely to manage sound responsibly and maintain positive relationships with surrounding neighborhoods.

**Alignment with State Standards for Sensitive Receptors:** As part of implementation, the City should ensure alignment between the new entertainment-related sound ordinance and Title 8 of the Sacramento City Code (Noise Control). This includes updating local definitions, terminology, and measurement methods to be consistent with the State of California's Noise Element guidelines, which provide the foundation for local noise control policies throughout the state. The California Noise Element, a required component of every city and county General Plan, establishes standards for protecting sensitive receptors—areas where people live, sleep, or receive care or education—from excessive or prolonged noise exposure. These receptors include residences, hospitals, schools, and senior housing, which the State identifies as needing protection from outdoor noise levels above 60 dB CNEL (Community Noise Equivalent Level), equivalent to approximately 60 dBA averaged over 24 hours.

Aligning Title 8 with these state standards will improve internal consistency across Sacramento's sound and noise regulations, ensuring that entertainment-related sound management operates within the same policy framework used for community-wide noise planning. This alignment also supports General Plan and CEQA compliance, positioning the City to address future environmental and land-use considerations with clear, measurable criteria.

Ultimately, bringing Title 8 into alignment with the State's Noise Element guidelines will modernize Sacramento's approach to sound management, shifting from outdated, one-size-fits-all limits to a system that is health-based, data-informed, and responsive to both neighborhood livability and the realities of a growing entertainment economy.

**Continued Dialogue and Evaluation:** Sustained dialogue between residents, event producers, venues, and City departments is essential for this process to succeed. The City should consider forming a standing advisory committee or sound working group that meets periodically to review data, assess progress, and recommend adjustments to policies or procedures as needed. This group should include representatives from the entertainment industry, neighborhood associations, residents, and City staff. Its role would be advisory, with a focus on evaluation, transparency, and continued improvement.

Continued conversation and collaboration among all stakeholders will ensure that the City remains responsive to changing conditions, maintains community confidence, and adapts effectively as Sacramento's entertainment landscape evolves.

These implementation steps represent the City's collective commitment to managing entertainment-related sound responsibly. By emphasizing education, coordination, and consistent follow-up, Sacramento can strengthen public trust and ensure that this ordinance achieves its intended balance between a vibrant entertainment culture and livable neighborhoods.

**Utilizing the City's Brüel & Kjær Sound Meter:** The City of Sacramento already owns a Brüel & Kjær (B&K) mobile sound level meter, a professional-grade ANSI Type 2 instrument capable of A-, C-, and Z-weighted measurements. This meter is the same class of equipment used in airport and environmental noise monitoring worldwide, providing precise and reliable data on both overall sound levels and low-frequency energy.

The B&K meter offers an opportunity for the City to transform how sound is managed and understood, not just as a compliance tool, but as a platform for learning, transparency, and collaboration.

Recommended uses include:

1. **Learning Tool:** Deploy the meter during the first year of implementation to help City staff and event producers understand how sound behaves across different environments and event types.
2. **Public Transparency:** Use the meter's dashboard feature to share real-time and historical data with residents and the entertainment community, helping build trust through open access to information.
3. **Event Review and Planning:** Incorporate sound data into post-event evaluations to improve Sound Impact Plans and adjust sound management practices where needed.
4. **Training Resource:** Use data from the meter to train staff, engineers, and event producers on frequency management, monitoring techniques, and practical approaches to reducing community impact.

## SECTION 7: LOW-FREQUENCY MANAGEMENT: RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES

Low-frequency (sub-bass) energy travels much farther than mid- and high-frequency sound and is the leading cause of off-site disturbance. The following best practices are recommended for inclusion in Sound Impact Plans for high-impact events where amplified low-frequency sound is expected.

### KEY FREQUENCY BANDS

Octave Band	Frequency Range	Typical Source	Behavior
<b>31.5 Hz</b>	25 – 45 Hz	High-impact events and extended-range subwoofers	Felt as vibration; travels through air and ground; most common source of complaints
<b>63 Hz</b>	45 – 90 Hz	Kick drums, bass cabinets, subwoofers	Travels farthest and is most perceptible indoors
<b>125 Hz</b>	90 – 180 Hz	Bass instruments, low-mid buildup	Adds “boominess,” contributes to nuisance

The 31.5 Hz band is especially relevant for high-impact events that use large or extended-range systems. While not every event generates significant energy in this range, it should be specifically measured and managed when present.

### SUGGESTED PERFORMANCE TARGETS

These are guideline, not regulatory limits, and can be refined based on site layout, event size, and time of day.

Frequency Band	Recommended Maximum (Leq, 15 min)	Reference Distance
<b>31.5 Hz</b>	≤ 65 dB	≈ 150 ft from source
<b>63 Hz</b>	≤ 75 dB	≈ 150 ft from source
<b>125 Hz</b>	≤ 80 dB	≈ 150 ft from source

During late evening or under inversion conditions, consider lowering targets by 3-5dBs.



**Recommended Techniques:** Professional sound engineers have long used proven mix and system-tuning methods to manage low-frequency content without sacrificing sound quality. The following approaches are encouraged for inclusion in Sound Impact Plans:

- Frequency balancing ("swapping") – Reduce output below 60 Hz by 3–6 dB and boost slightly around 80–120 Hz to maintain warmth and clarity.
- Directional subwoofer arrays – Cardioid or end-fire configurations can reduce rearward bass energy by up to 20–30 dB.
- Stage and sub orientation – Aim primary energy away from residential areas or reflective surfaces.
- Delay and fill control – Apply high-pass filters or reduced levels on delay towers to prevent re-radiating low-frequency energy.

Professional engineers have been applying these techniques for years. While individual methods vary, they remain among the most effective ways to minimize off-site bass impact while maintaining a strong, balanced live mix.

**Implementation and Coordination:**

- Encourage inclusion of low-frequency management strategies in Sound Impact Plans for high-impact events.
- Coordinate early between event producers, engineers, and City staff to agree on measurement points and monitoring methods.
- Conduct test measurements during sound-check to confirm predicted off-site levels.
- **Review data and community feedback after each event to refine future approaches.**

**Measurement Guidance:** When low-frequency monitoring is performed:

- Use Type 1 or Type 2 meters capable of octave-band or C-weighted measurement.
- Measure approximately 5 ft above ground and 150 ft from the source, unless otherwise approved.
- Record Leq, 15-minute averages for the 31.5 Hz, 63 Hz, and 125 Hz octave bands.
- Document environmental conditions such as temperature, wind direction, and humidity.

**Interpretation:** These references consistently identify 63 Hz and 125 Hz as the most important control bands for managing off-site disturbance, with 31.5 Hz representing the greatest potential for vibration-based complaints at high-impact events. The recommended target values ( $\leq 65$  dB @ 31.5 Hz,  $\leq 75$  dB @ 63 Hz,  $\leq 80$  dB @ 125 Hz) are aligned with these standards and adapted for Sacramento's urban context.

## Source Validation

Topic	Key Reference / Source	Summary
Frequency-specific limits (31.5 Hz, 63 Hz, 125 Hz)	<i>Noise Council Code of Practice on Environmental Noise Control at Concerts</i> (UK, 1995)	Establishes octave-band criteria and recommends limiting 63 Hz and 125 Hz levels to reduce disturbance at residences.
Outdoor concert monitoring & off-site control	<i>Manchester City Council: Noise Control for Open Air Concerts and Events</i> (2021 update)	Reinforces the same 63 Hz / 125 Hz framework and references 70–75 dB guidance levels for off-site measurement.
Low-frequency propagation & complaints	Anderson & Davies, <i>Acoustics Bulletin</i> (DEFRA / IOA, 2014)	Identifies 63 Hz and below as dominant contributors to perceptual disturbance and vibration complaints.
Directional subwoofer performance	Hedden et al., AES Paper 8475 (Meyer Sound, 2012); L-Acoustics and d&b system design manuals	Demonstrate 15–30 dB rear rejection achievable with cardioid and end-fire sub arrays.
Frequency balancing / mix techniques	<i>Meyer Sound System Design Reference</i> (2015); <i>Sound On Sound</i> , <i>ProSoundWeb</i>	Document common EQ strategies that trade sub-50 Hz energy for 80–120 Hz presence.
Sound propagation modeling standard	<i>ISO 9613-2 – Acoustics: Attenuation of Sound During Propagation Outdoors</i> (ISO, 1996)	Defines the standard method for predicting sound levels and low-frequency reach during event planning.

## SECTION 8: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This FAQ highlights key parts of the proposed Sacramento Sound Policy update. These recommendations are still in draft form and reflect feedback from residents, event organizers, and community partners collected through the Phase 2 Report Feedback Form.

The goal of this update is to modernize how the City manages sound from venues and events. It emphasizes prevention, communication, and accountability rather than relying on enforcement alone.

### 1. How will sound be measured under the proposed ordinance?

Sound will be measured at the source, typically about 150 feet from the speakers, rather than at nearby homes. This creates consistency and fairness across events and venues.

Once sound leaves a speaker, wind, terrain, and humidity can change how it travels. The only place sound can truly be controlled is where it begins. Measuring at the source allows event producers and engineers to make real-time adjustments before issues reach neighborhoods. The 98 dBA limit is a ceiling, not a target. Most events operate well below it, and specific limits can be set lower through the Sound Impact Plan process.

### 2. What is a Sound Impact Plan (SIP)?

A Sound Impact Plan is a site-specific plan that outlines how amplified sound will be managed for a venue or event. It includes:

- Amplified sound hours and sound level limits
- Speaker setup and direction
- Monitoring locations
- Outreach steps and community contact information

These plans help identify potential problems before an event and create accountability afterward. They can be scaled based on event size and potential impact.

### 3. Why is the proposal focused on source-based measurement?

Because sound can only be effectively managed where it starts. Measuring at homes or property lines often gives inconsistent results that depend on distance, buildings, and weather.

Low-end bass, for example, can travel for miles and is often felt more than heard. The most reliable way to manage that is by adjusting frequencies, direction, and speaker placement at the event site.

You fix sound at the source and confirm it in the community.

**4. Will this make events louder?**

No. The 98 dBA level is a maximum cap, not a goal. It prevents events from exceeding safe limits but does not require higher volume.

This proposal does not simply raise or lower existing limits. It redefines how sound is measured and managed, creating a more predictable and enforceable system for everyone involved.

**5. What is being done about low-end bass that travels long distances?**

The proposed ordinance adds C-weighted (dBC) sound limits to capture and measure lower frequencies that standard dBA readings often miss. It also allows the City to require specific mitigation steps, such as:

- Adjusting subwoofer placement and direction
- Fine-tuning low-end frequencies
- Using buildings, trees, or structures as natural sound barriers

These are standard best practices in modern sound management and help reduce low-frequency impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

**6. What is an Event Attendant and why is it important?**

Event Attendants already exist within the City's current permit process, but their use has been inconsistent. The role of an Event Attendant is to help ensure compliance with permit conditions, including sound. This proposal formalizes that role under the Interdepartmental Working Group, which will identify a cost-effective solution for how the City can source, train, and assign Event Attendants for high-impact events. Event Attendants serve as neutral monitors who verify compliance and support communication between residents, event producers, and City staff.

**7. Who would be held accountable for sound violations?**

The permit holder and the designated Responsible Party would be jointly accountable. The Responsible Party must be present or immediately reachable during hours of amplified sound and have the authority to make adjustments as needed.

The intent is to make accountability clear and direct rather than dependent on reactive enforcement.

**8. What is the Accountable Official?**

The Accountable Official is not a new position. It is an existing City staff role with the authority to interpret code, coordinate departments, and make final determinations when needed.

This ensures one clear point of accountability within the City for sound-related matters, rather than multiple interpretations across departments.

**9. How would smaller or community events be handled?**

The Accountable Official would have the discretion to simplify or waive Sound Impact Plan requirements for smaller, low-impact, or nonprofit events. This keeps the process fair while avoiding unnecessary costs or administrative burden.

**10. What are "Sensitive Receptors" and why are they included?**

Sensitive Receptors are locations such as homes, schools, hospitals, and senior housing that need extra protection from noise. The ordinance aligns with state noise guidelines and allows the City to set additional restrictions for these areas when needed.

**11. How would residents report sound complaints?**

Residents would continue to use 3-1-1, but improvements are recommended to ensure sound-related complaints are routed to the right department.

Most sound complaints related to events on County or State property, such as Discovery Park or Cal Expo, are routed to the City even when the City has no jurisdiction. Better coordination between Entertainment Services, Code Enforcement, Police, and Sacramento County would help ensure that complaints are tracked accurately and addressed efficiently.

**12. How will the City ensure communication with neighborhoods?**

Notification is already required through the existing Special Event Permit process. However, stronger coordination and verification will be built into the new framework. Each Sound Impact Plan would document proof of neighborhood notification and include clear outreach steps for organizers to notify nearby residents in advance and provide a contact number for the Responsible Party. The City already has the assets to assist permit applicants in ensuring a more efficient and effective notification process.

**13. How will repeat offenders be handled?**

The ordinance includes a Bad Actor Clause. Repeat offenders may face stricter permit conditions, additional monitoring, or temporary suspension of permits.

This approach focuses on ongoing patterns of noncompliance rather than one-time mistakes.

**14. Why is the City not moving forward with Entertainment Priority Areas?**

Based on public feedback, the City will not advance the Entertainment Priority Area concept at this time. Future consideration could occur only after more engagement and clear public support.



**15. Are there low-cost or no-cost ways to manage sound?**

Yes. Many of the most effective sound management practices cost little or nothing.

For venues:

- Keep doors and windows closed during amplified sound
- Direct speakers away from shared walls or open doors
- Schedule bass-heavy acts earlier in the night
- Walk the property perimeter during performances

For events:

- Aim speakers away from homes
- Use trees, walls, or buildings as natural sound barriers
- Notify nearby residents before the event

These steps can significantly reduce complaints and reflect the prevention-first approach.

**16. What are the next steps?**

These recommendations remain in proposal form and will continue through community review and refinement. A series of community meetings should take place in the coming months to gather additional input.

If adopted, the next steps will include staff training, public education materials, and guidance for event organizers and residents.

**For Further Reading**

The appendices provide additional data and community input that informed these final recommendations. Readers are encouraged to review the appendices for detailed survey results, public comments, and supporting information that reflect the voices and lived experiences behind this report.



## ABOUT SOUND MUSIC CITIES

Based in Austin, Texas, Sound Music Cities is a national leader in community-driven music ecosystem development and entertainment-sound policy. Founded by Don Pitts, often called the Sound Whisperer for his innovative approach to resolving long-standing conflicts between venues and neighborhoods, the firm brings decades of hands-on experience in sound management and cultural strategy.

During his tenure with the City of Austin, Pitts led reforms that achieved a 74 percent reduction in sound complaints, pioneering what became known as Community Sound Management and establishing the Sound Impact Plan model now recognized nationally. Those principles continue to shape the firm's work today.

The Sound Music Cities team blends policy expertise with deep community insight, balancing data, listening, and on-the-ground collaboration to identify the real challenges and opportunities within local music ecosystems. Their focus is on practical, actionable solutions that strengthen music economies while maintaining neighborhood livability. Since its founding, Sound Music Cities has worked in over 30 cities across the United States, helping communities modernize entertainment-sound management, conduct local music censuses, and design data-informed music strategies. The firm's approach emphasizes collaboration, transparency, and measurable results that build trust among residents, venues, and local governments.

In addition, Sound Music Cities curates the Music Cities Think Tank, an invitation-only gathering that brings together music-policy leaders from across North America and beyond to exchange ideas and strategies for supporting sustainable, inclusive music communities.

[www.soundmusiccities.com](http://www.soundmusiccities.com)