

6 NOISE ELEMENT

The purpose of the Noise Element is to first identify sources of noise generation in the community and then establish goals, policies and actions to minimize problems from intrusive sound and ensure that new development does not generate unacceptable noise levels.

For the purposes of the General Plan, noise is defined as a sound or series of sounds that are deemed invasive, irritating, objectionable and/or disruptive to the quality of daily life. Noise varies in its range, source and volume and can derive from individual incidents such as landscaping equipment and construction activities, to sporadic disturbances such as car horns or airplane overflights, to more constant irritants such as freeway traffic. Hillsborough is unique in that most land uses within the Town are considered to be noise-sensitive, mainly because they are residences and schools.

The Noise Element is required by State law for all General Plans and provides a systematic approach to the measurement and modeling of noise, the establishment of noise standards, the control of major noise sources and community planning for the regulation of noise. The Noise Element provides baseline information on the existing conditions in Hillsborough and includes information from the noise study conducted for the General Plan. The Element identifies noise-sensitive uses and includes goals, policies and actions for controlling and minimizing adverse noise, especially as it may result from existing and future development.

The Noise Element contains the following two sections:

- ◆ **Background Information.** Depicts information on the existing conditions of noise sources and their existing and projected levels within Hillsborough.
- ◆ **Goals, Policies and Actions.** Provides policy guidance to minimize noise impacts on residents and action items to be pursued during the lifetime of the General Plan.

A. Background Information

The following provides a discussion of existing and future sources of noise within Hillsborough, as well as how these noise sources affect the various land use types in the Town.

1. Land Use Compatibility

Land uses deemed noise sensitive by the State of California include schools, hospitals, rest homes, long-term care and mental care facilities. Many jurisdictions also consider residential uses noise sensitive since families and individuals expect to use time in the home for rest and relaxation, and excess noise can interfere with those activities. Hillsborough considers residential uses as noise sensitive since the quiet community character is one of attractions to living in the Town.

Hillsborough is generally a quiet, primarily residential community. However, there are several noise generators that impact Hillsborough residents, including vehicular noise from major roadways and aircraft noise from the San Francisco International Airport (SFO). While a portion of the Town is within the San Carlos Airport's Area of Influence Boundary A, as discussed in the Circulation Element, noise from aircraft operations at this airport does not affect Hillsborough. To ensure that future development is not adversely impacted by noise generators, or is itself a negative noise source, the Town will utilize land use compatibility guidelines as part of planning and development decisions. Figure N-1 summarizes which land uses are compatible with different noise levels.

2. Vehicular Noise

One of the most common noise sources in Hillsborough, as with most communities, is automobiles. Larger roadways, such as Interstate 280, El Camino Real and State Route 92, generate higher levels of traffic noise that result in greater noise impacts on residents living close to these roads. Local and regional growth is not anticipated to create a large increase in traffic noise during the next 20 years. Figure N-2 depicts projected future noise levels for

Figure N-1: Land Use and Noise Compatibilities

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Figure N-2
Future Noise Contours

sample roadways based on future traffic levels in 2025. These contours are very similar to existing noise conditions, with a slight increase of noise levels occurring during the next 20 years along the major regional roadways. The majority of traffic increases will result from regional growth, over which the Town has no control. Noise levels are only shown for those roadways that were studied as part of the General Plan traffic analysis or where traffic counts were available. Roadways that were not modeled for noise contours also experience traffic noise, with noise levels along local streets anticipated to be similar or quieter on than those modeled streets.

Vehicle noise is regulated by the State's noise emissions standards and cities are generally prohibited from applying stricter standards to vehicles. The Police Department will continue to enforce the State's noise emission standards for all vehicles, including motorcycles.

3. Aircraft Noise

There are two airports in the vicinity of Hillsborough, the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and the San Carlos Airport. The noise impact of each is discussed below.

a. San Francisco International Airport

Aircraft noise is an issue in Hillsborough due to the Town's proximity to SFO. Although some residents have reported experiencing noise and vibrations from airport operations, airborne aircraft are not normally as significant of a problem for Hillsborough as for surrounding communities because typical departure and approach flight tracks do not pass over the Town. The greatest potential for noise impacts from aircraft operations at SFO is from the following sources:

- ◆ Single-event, low frequency, backblast noise from aircraft departures on Runways 1 Left and Right, which is a typical airport operation.
- ◆ Single-event noise impacts from aircraft departures on Runways 19 Left and Right during certain storm conditions, such as southeast winds.

- ◆ Engine run-up noise in the late night or early morning hours as a result of engine maintenance purposes.

Other less intrusive noise impacts from SFO operations occur from aircraft arrivals on Runways 28 Left and Right, under typical airport operations, and overflight noise impacts from aircraft that have departed on Runway 1 and are headed to Southern California.

i. SFO Noise Contours

SFO has been declared a “noise problem” airport by the County of San Mateo, in accordance with the relevant provisions in the California Code of Regulations, Title 21, Subchapter 6, “Noise Standards.” Therefore, the airport is required to measure and monitor aircraft noise levels in the airport environs, which includes the Town of Hillsborough. Part of the noise level data is obtained from the monitoring site located in Hillsborough. The airport is also required to publish aircraft noise contours maps that illustrate the configuration of the 65, 70 and 75 CNEL¹ aircraft noise contours for SFO. The State Noise Standards designate the 65 CNEL aircraft noise contour as the airport’s noise impact boundary. As shown in Figure N-3, Hillsborough is not within the most recent SFO noise contour.

ii. SFO Regulatory Environment

While airport noise remains a concern for Hillsborough residents, the Town is prohibited from regulating it because the Town cannot supersede the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controls. The establishment of noise standards and the definition of noise-impacted areas for SFO are established by the California Department of Transportation, in compliance with federal standards.

¹ **Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL).** A descriptor for the 24-hour A weighted average noise level. The CNEL concept accounts for the increased acoustical sensitivity of people to noise during the evening and nighttime hours. Sound levels during the hours from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. are penalized 5 dB; sound levels during the hours from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. are penalized 10 dB. A 10 dB increase in sound level is perceived by people to be a doubling of loudness.

Figure N-3: San Francisco International Airport 2001 Noise Exposure

State law requires the County Airport Land Use Commission, which is the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG), to prepare and adopt a comprehensive airport land use plan (CLUP) for each airport located in the County. The CLUP includes an airport influence area (AIA) boundary for each airport. The boundary consists of a combination of the configuration of the following parameters:

- ◆ The outer boundary of Federal Aviation Regulations FAR Part 77 Conical Surface, for airspace protection
- ◆ The 65 CNEL or 55 CNEL aircraft noise contour
- ◆ Safety Zones based on runway and aircraft operational parameters

The AIA boundary defines the area within which local agencies may be required to submit proposed land use policy actions to the Airport Land Use Commission for a formal CLUP consistency review, as required by State law. The AIA boundary also defines the area within which real estate disclosure of potential airport and aircraft impacts must be included in real property transactions.

A small portion of Hillsborough is located within the AIA boundary for SFO, as shown in Figure N-4. Any proposed land use policy action must be submitted to the Airport Land Use Commission for a CLUP consistency evaluation. In addition, any real property transaction within the area must include a real estate disclose notice of potential airport and aircraft impacts, as required by State law AB 2776.

iii. SFO Airport Noise Policies and Mitigation

SFO has established an Airport/Community Roundtable as a local forum consisting of delegates from Peninsula communities affected by the airport's operation. The Town will continue its participation in the Roundtable in order to understand and monitor the airport noise environment, and to ensure that the Town is aware of, and fully participates in, any future decision making that affects aircraft noise exposure from the airport.

Figure N-4 – Airport Influence Areas

b. San Carlos Airport

The San Carlos Airport is a small, busy general aviation airport located approximately 10 miles south of Hillsborough. This airport is located further from the Town than SFO and services smaller airplanes than SFO. As a result, residents of Hillsborough have not identified noise issues associated with the San Carlos Airport.

Due to the type of aircraft that operate at San Carlos Airport, their flight patterns and average number of annual aircraft operations, the 55 CNEL noise contour defines the airport's noise impact boundary, as adopted by the Airport Land Use Commission. However, no portion of Hillsborough is located within the 55 or higher CNEL aircraft noise contour related to aircraft operations.

While the residents have not identified San Carlos Airport as a major noise concern and the Town is outside the 55 CNEL noise contour, the airport's CLUP has identified that the southern portion of Hillsborough, south of Chateau Drive and Barroilhet Drive, does receive some noise impacts from general aviation aircraft overflight originating from San Carlos Airport. This area has therefore been included in the San Carlos AIA Boundary A, as shown in Figure N-4. As a result, any real property transaction within this area is required to include a real estate disclosure notice regarding potential airport and aircraft impacts that may affect the property, as required by State law. However, proposed land use policy actions within the AIA Boundary A are not required to be referred to the Airport Land Use Commission, unlike the SFO AIA.

4. Non-Vehicular Noise

Generally, Hillsborough enjoys a peaceful and quiet environment without many on-going noise issues. The Hillsborough Police Department reports that the majority of noise complaints they receive are associated with construction activities, such as construction beginning too early in the morning or continuing too late into the evening, loud radios and idling trucks.

The Town has a Noise Ordinance that limits noise levels from any and all sources within the Town. Noise exceptions are granted to construction equipment Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Powered gardening devices are permitted Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Property owners, residents and their family members are permitted extended hours to operate powered gardening devices, Monday through Friday from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., however gas-powered leaf blowers are not permitted on Saturdays. These noises are not allowed on Sundays or Town Hall holidays. Non-excessive noise from domestic animals, vehicle traffic, forces of nature, and human voices is considered under the Noise Ordinance to be normal, inevitable noise.

Another occasional noise complaint identified within Hillsborough is juvenile parties. To address this issue, the Police Department has put together an informational document to assist parents with planning for teen parties. The Town also has adopted a Response to Unruly Gatherings Ordinance to help the Town recuperate costs related to multiple police visits to loud parties. Additionally, the Town has also adopted an Ordinance to address excess noise made by skateboards, rollerblades and scooters, and identify appropriate locations for their use.

B. Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal N-1	Minimize noise levels within neighborhoods so that residents may enjoy the benefits normally associated with residential communities.
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Policy N-1.1: Encourage new development in noise impacted areas to provide effective noise insulation measures.

Policy N-1.2: Eliminate excessive noise within the community to the extent feasible. When noise cannot be eliminated completely, regulate noise generation to minimize impacts.

Policy N-1.3: Continue to enforce local and State noise regulations to minimize noise impacts associated with construction and public and private activities.

Policy N-1.4: Work with State, regional and local governments and agencies to reduce noise from roadways adjacent to Hillsborough.

Action N-1.1: The Town will continue to advocate that noise abatement measures be taken by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for Caltrans roadways affecting the Town, whenever feasible. A representative from Hillsborough should attend any Caltrans meetings or public hearings where improvements or modifications to roadways affecting the Town may be discussed.

Action N-1.2: The Town will continue to enforce the existing Noise Ordinance, Response to Unruly Gatherings Ordinance and Toy Ordinance.

Action N-1.3: The Hillsborough Police Department will continue to enforce the California Vehicle Code pertaining to noise standards for cars, trucks and motorcycles.

Goal N-2	Continue to monitor airport operations and influence airport policy to minimize the impact of airport-generated noise on Hillsborough.
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Policy N-2.1: Advocate ongoing noise remediation efforts at the San Francisco International Airport.

Policy N-2.2: Continue to participate in regional airport planning efforts.

Action N-2.1: The Town will continue to participate on the Airport/Community Roundtable and coordinate with the SFO Airport Land Use Commission and SFO's Aircraft Noise Abatement Office. All noise issues affecting the Town should be monitored and the City Council should be briefed on all issues so that required actions can be implemented.

Action N-2.2: The Town will cooperate with the Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plans' requirements for review of proposed land use policy actions and real estate notification for property located within an influence area for the San Francisco International Airport or the San Carlos Airport.

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