



City Council Work Session Sound in the City

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1. Ambient Sound:

Based on the results of the sound readings across the community, does Council wish to make adjustments to the ambient noise limits to reflect existing conditions?

- adjusting the baseline decibel standard,
- addition of enforcement based on a set increment above measured ambient levels (e.g., 5 dB over actual ambient)

2. Amplified Sound:

As part of Council's Creative/Nighttime Economy priorities, what level of flexibility is Council willing to consider for entertainment areas/venues?

- higher allowable sound levels,
- extended quiet hours, and/or
- geographically defined entertainment districts

Types of Sound & Opportunity Areas



Adequate Code Requirements

- Chronic Animal Sounds
- Construction Activities
- House Parties
- Idling Vehicles
- Industrial Operations
- Lawn Care Activities

Adopted 2008

Phase 1: Code Adoptions

- Agricultural Operations
- Fireworks
- Traffic/Vehicle Sounds

February - May 2025

Phase 2 Review

Step 1: Ambient Sound Levels
July 2025 – April 2026

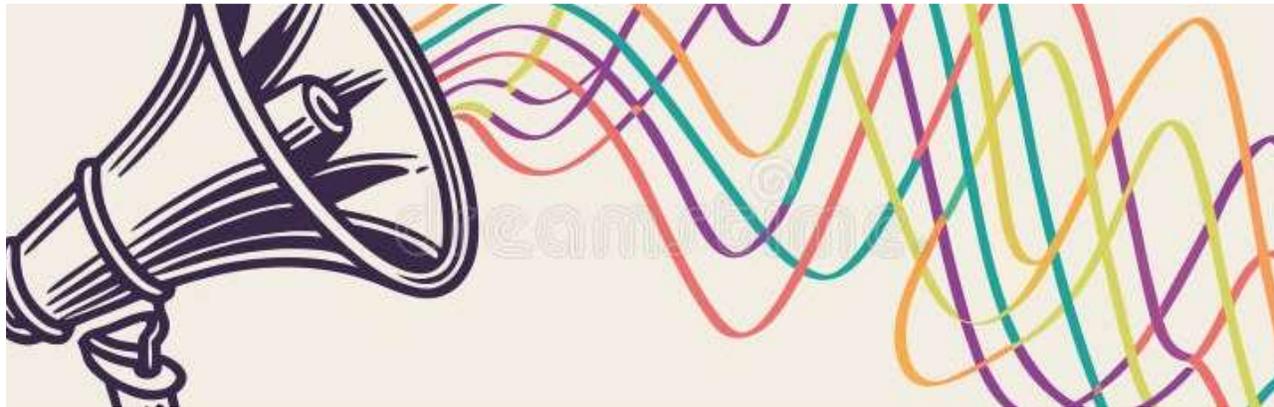
Step 2: Amplified Sound:
Entertainment Areas/Events
July 2025 – December 2026

Ambient versus Amplified



Ambient:

- Leaves in trees
- Weather
- Conversations
- Birds/animals
- Vehicles
- Natural acoustic sounds



Amplified:

- Audio volume increase by electrical, electronic, mechanical, or motor-powered equipment
- Includes:
 - Speakers
 - Amplifiers,
 - Megaphones,
 - Instruments connected to PA systems
 - Examples: Microphones, laptops, electric guitars

The City of Fort Collins is reviewing its **Noise Ordinance** to better reflect the needs of our growing and changing community.

The ordinance helps set expectations for:

- Acceptable sound levels in different areas (residential, commercial, etc.)
- Quiet hours and exceptions for common noise sources like lawn care, construction, and events

Our goal: **Balance vibrancy and livability**, and protect public health, safety, and quality of life.

Quiet Hours

- **All zone districts** must stay quiet during certain times:
 - 8:00 PM to 7:00 AM – All Week

How Loud is Too Loud?

The city uses **decibel levels** to measure noise. If the sound is over the allowed limit for that area and time, it could be a violation. Decibel limits vary based on the zone district.

Most limits are currently set between 50 and 60 decibels. To the average person, **50–60 decibels** is about the volume of a **normal conversation at home** or **background music** — noticeable, but not loud or disruptive.

Noise level in dB	Common Environment	Your conversation would be...
120	— Jet engine nearby 	IMPOSSIBLE
110	— Police siren nearby 	
100	— Inside subway train 	
90	— Using hair drier 	DIFFICULT
80	— Truck passing by 	LOUD VOICE REQUIRED
70	— Street with car traffic 	
60	— Normal conversations at office 	EASY
50	— Moderate rainfall 	
40	— Quiet residential area 	
30	— Whispering 	
20	— Rustling leaves 	
10	— Breathing 	

Reference: <https://www.toa.co.in/support/sound-talks/16771>

- **Community Outreach:**

- Sound in the City Survey (July 2025 – September 2025)
- Community Roundtable Event (October 2025)

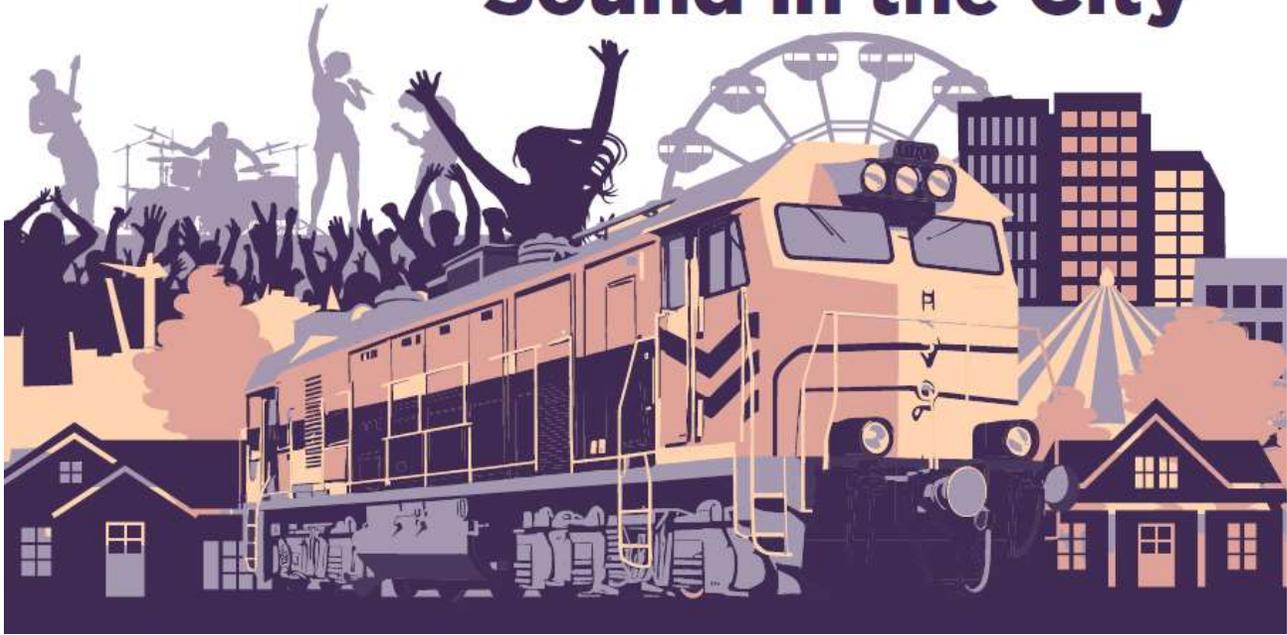
- **Research:**

- Sound readings across the City (April 2025 – November 2025)
- Analysis of survey responses and other data gathered
- Review peer city noise ordinances

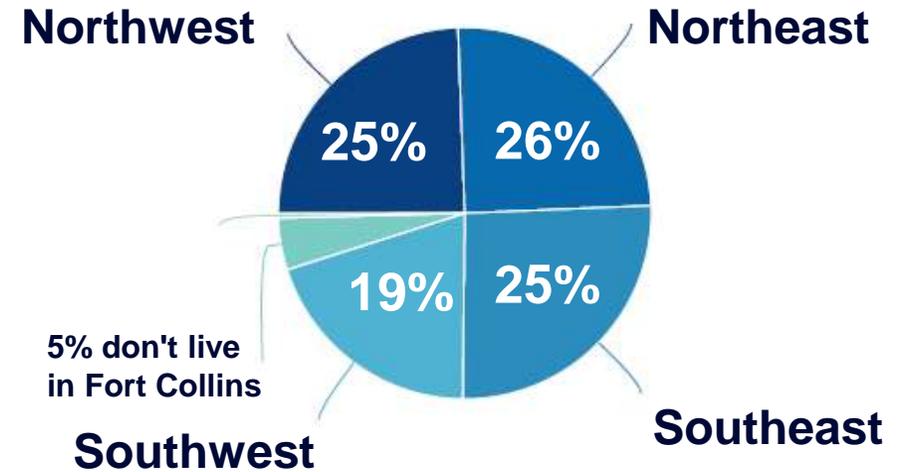
Survey from July through September 2025



Sound in the City



2600 Responses



<https://ourcity.fcgov.com/sound-in-the-city>

1. Residents Are Divided on Changing Quiet Hours

Half (50%) support keeping current hours (8 PM–7 AM), while 31% favor a change.

Preferences for start time vary widely, with the largest group (33%) favoring 10 PM and 23% saying it depends on the day.

2. General Support for Amplified Sound at Public Events

Nearly 60% are supportive (34% strongly, 25% somewhat).

However, 19% say support depends on time, location, or event type — suggesting context matters.

3. Strong Support for Area-Based Flexibility

61% favor more flexible noise rules in certain areas.

Downtown, parks, outdoor venues (90%) and festival/holiday zones (80%) are most supported for flexibility.

4. Overall Noise Management Viewed as Adequate but Not Strong (across all enforcement departments)

42% rate current management positively,

21% negatively,

19% neutral — indicating room for targeted improvement rather than systemic overhaul.

Events/Amplified Sound

Theme	Key Points
Support for Flexibility	Later event curfews (10 PM), more live music, support for public culture
Volume Concerns	Events too loud; need better sound management (especially schools, downtown)
College Party Noise	Persistent issues with late-night parties; request landlord accountability
Unequal Enforcement	Discrepancies in how rules are applied across venues and neighborhoods
Better Communication	Calls for notifying residents before loud events or construction
Contextual Rules	Consider noise based on location, cultural value, or holiday relevance

Key Themes

- Strong desire to protect **Fort Collins' livability and character**
- Recognition that sound is an inevitable part of a growing, active city
- Broad agreement on the need for:
 - Clearer standards
 - More consistent enforcement
 - Better coordination across City departments
- Support for a **balanced approach** that values both community vitality and peace



Topic 1: Quiet Hours

- Broad support for maintaining current quiet hours: **8:00 p.m. – 7:00 a.m.**

Topic 2: Amplified Sound & Events

- Mixed views, but shared desire for clearer, enforceable standards

Common Areas of Agreement

- **10:00 p.m. end time** for amplified sound near residential areas
- Clear volume limits and predictable enforcement

Topic 3: Flexibility by Location

General Sentiment

- Cautious openness to location- and time-based flexibility

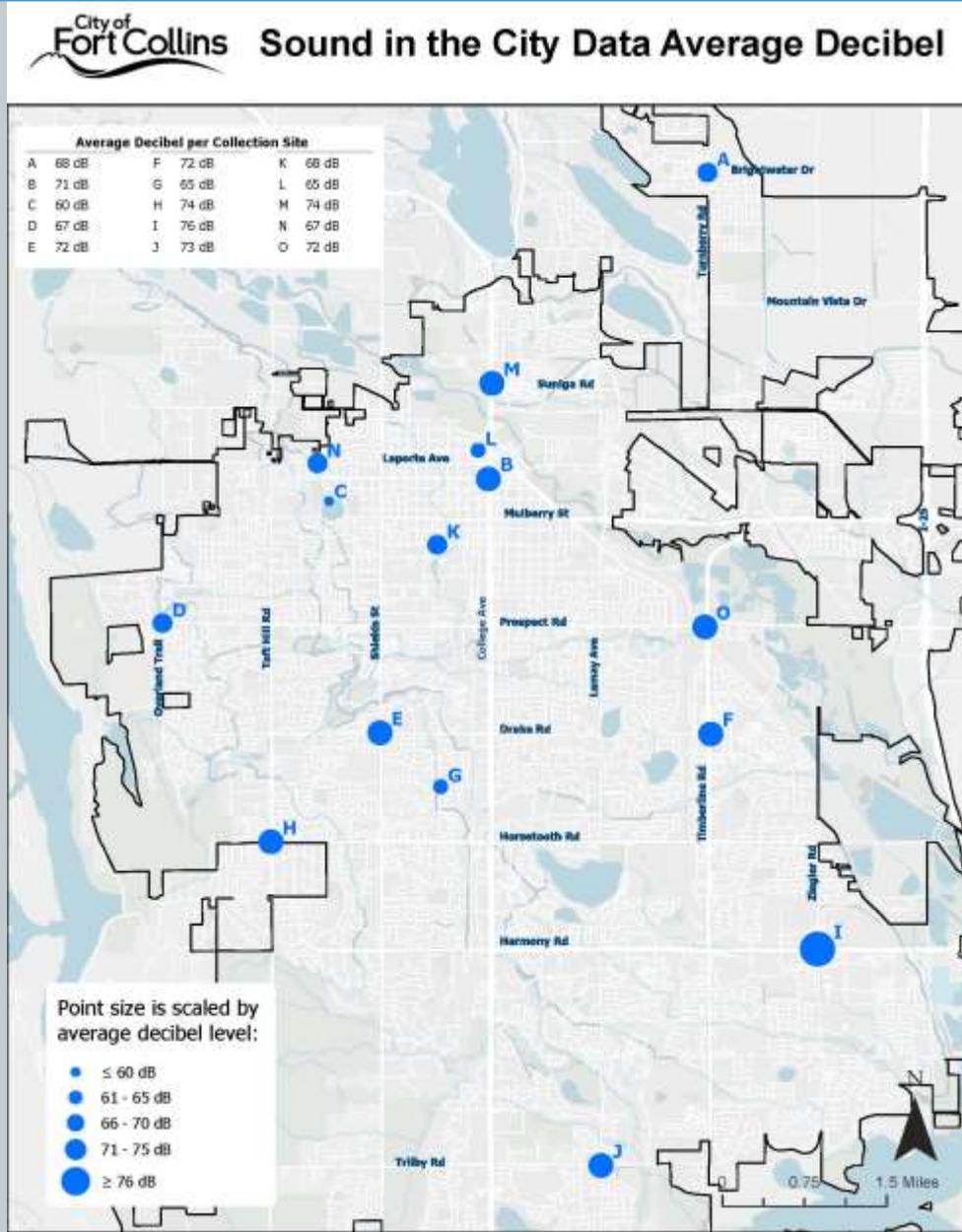
Key Points

- Support for higher thresholds in commercial areas
- Strong concern when commercial areas border residential neighborhoods
- Recognition of planned noise-generating facilities near homes

Tradeoffs Discussed

- Economic and social benefits of events vs. quiet character
- Growth-related noise vs. quality of life
- Mixed-use area challenges

Sound Readings Across the City



- Geographically dispersed across city and noise regulation zones
- April 2025 – November 2025
- Readings taken from 7am – midnight through various seasons
- Key Takeaways:
 - Ambient sound readings are most closely tied to traffic volumes and speed
 - The overall ambient sound in the city has increased 5-10dB from current ordinance limits, specifically in residential and downtown /neighborhood commercial
 - There may be a need to refine classifications based on changing conditions.

Options for Ambient Sound Levels

District	Timeframe	
	Day: 7am - 8pm	Night: 8pm - 7am
Residential & Mixed Use	Current: 55dB Proposed: 60dB, or 10dB above the background noise level, whichever is lower	Current: 50 dB Proposed: 55dB, or 5dB above the background noise level, whichever is lower
Downtown & Commercial	Current: 60dB Proposed: 65dB, or 10dB above the background noise level, whichever is lower	Current: 55dB Proposed: 60dB, or 5dB above the background noise level, whichever is lower
Employment	70dB – no change proposed	65dB – no change proposed
Industrial	80dB – no change proposed	75dB – no change proposed

Proposed Discussion Areas for Council feedback

- Higher allowable sound levels:
 - Support for Downtown being considered separately from other commercial areas
 - 55dB for night; currently measuring 65+dB
- Extended quiet hours:
 - There is broad support for maintaining existing quiet hours 8pm – 7am
 - There is willingness to consider flexibility on weekends and related to entertainment areas/districts
 - 10pm was suggested as limit for extended weekend or entertainment related areas/districts.
- Geographically defined entertainment districts
 - Primary concerns relate to adjacency to residential areas and transitioning sound levels
 - Mixed-use areas seen as a challenge
 - Improved event layout and bass control
 - Proactive communication with nearby neighborhoods

Downtown: Q2, in alignment with ambient sound adjustments

- Adjustment to the sound levels based on decibel readings
- Adjustment to the quiet hours for weekends to 10pm
- Level of Engagement: Inform of Council's decision

Commercial Center Work Plan: December 2026 (end of Q3-Q4)

- Alignment with Land Use Code, specifically for noise regulation category
- More specific standards for music venues
- Mixed Use zoning district considerations
- Level of Engagement: Further engage most affected areas

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Questions?