



## NOISE ELEMENT



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*Avoiding harmful and annoying noise levels is important for maintaining Colma's tranquility.*

## **NOISE ELEMENT**

### **5.06.000 INTRODUCTION**

#### **5.06.010 PURPOSE**

The Noise Element is intended to describe the existing and projected future noise environments in Colma so that harmful and annoying sound levels can be avoided. In the Noise Element major noise sources are identified, noise levels throughout the community are recorded, the effects of noise on the community are discussed, and ways to minimize unwanted noise are outlined.

#### **5.06.020 RELATION TO OTHER ELEMENTS**

The Noise Element is closely related to the Land Use, Circulation and Housing Elements. In Colma vehicular traffic is the primary noise generator. Noise sensitive uses, such as cemeteries and residences, should be protected

from annoying noise levels. The Noise Element is to be used as a guide to determine noise compatible land uses.

#### **5.06.100 DEFINING NOISE**

Noise is defined as "unwanted sound" and is widely acknowledged as a form of environmental degradation. Whether or not a sound is unwanted depends on when it occurs, the activity of listener, the characteristics of the sound and how intrusive it is above background noise levels. Ambient noise is the composite of near and far noise sources and is considered the normal, or existing, level of environmental noise at a given location. Over time people become less aware of and less irritated by sound which is constant. The more a noise exceeds the ambient noise, the more intrusive and less acceptable the noise is to the community. Three qualities characterize the subjective effect of noise on the listener:

1. The frequency.
2. The intensity.
3. The time-varying character.

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Frequency is defined as the number of oscillations or vibrations an air particle undergoes in one second. One complete oscillation constitutes one cycle; sound frequency is measured in Hertz (Hz). One Hertz is equal to one cycle per second. Sound is comprised of a broad band of frequencies. The sound spectrum of the human ear is typically described in terms of octave bands which separate the audible frequency range into ten segments from 20 - 20,000 Hertz.

Intensity is the measurement of the sound energy or pressure. The human ear is sensitive to a wide range of intensity. The range of sound pressure levels between the faintest audible sound and the loudest sound the ear can withstand is in the order of one to one billion. In order to conveniently handle this enormous range of numbers, a logarithmic scale has been established so the entire range is compressed to a range of from 0 to 180. The sound pressure scale is expressed in decibels. Because the decibel scale is logarithmic, a small decibel change represents a large change in intensity. A doubling of the sound energy results in an increase of three decibels. The human ear, however, cannot usually perceive a three decibel change, in fact, it usually takes a change of about 10 decibels before a doubling is perceived. For example, 65 dBA is perceived to be twice as loud as 55 dBA.

The time-varying character of sound is particularly important to recognize. Noise levels throughout the community do not remain constant but rather fluctuate over both time and duration. Community noise consists of sources both distant and near to the listener. Distant sources may include traffic, wind and industrial activities. Nearby sources may include traffic, wind and industrial activities. Nearby sources may include individual vehicles passing by, aircraft flying overhead and trains passing by.

#### **5.06.110 MEASURING NOISE**

Because the human ear does not hear high and low frequency sounds, sound levels are measured with a sound meter using a filtering device that approximates the hearing response

of the human ear. This weighting of noise measurement is referred to as dBA (A weighted decibel scale). The A scale weights the frequency range between 20 to 20,000 Hz. It is one of the most accurate ratings for predicting loudness because both frequency and intensity are registered.

The A-weighted scale accurately describes environmental noise at any one particular time. However, community noise levels vary continuously, therefore all of the individual noise readings must be averaged over a period of time to give an equivalent level. The *leq* is the average A-weighted noise level during a stated measurement period and is represented by a single number descriptor. The equivalent noise level for a 24-hour time period, expressed as *Ldn* (Day-Night Average Level) can be plotted on a map to illustrate average noise levels throughout the community.

#### **5.06.120 CUMULATIVE NOISE EXPOSURE - THE LDN**

Noise from a passing truck or airplane flying overhead typically increases as the noise source approaches the listener, and subsides as the source draws away. The measurement of one such occurrence is referred to as a 'single event'. In order to determine the total impact of all the single events that occur at a given location, all of the single events must be averaged together to form the equivalent of a steady noise value. The *Ldn* (Day-Night Average Level) scale provides this average and is particularly well-suited for the purpose because it recognizes that human sensitivity to noise increases during the nighttime. The *Ldn* divides the 24-hour day into daytime (7:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. and nighttime (10:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M.). The *Ldn* values represented on the noise maps include an addition of 10 dBA for nighttime levels within the 24 hour averages calculated. The community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) is another 24-hour average which includes adjustments for evening as well as nighttime noise levels. The *Ldn* and CNEL are very similar and for all practical purposes, measurements obtained from the two systems are the same. The national trend is toward using the *Ldn* system. This descriptor is recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency.

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### **5.06.130 HUMAN REACTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE**

At some point in time, noise pollution affects all people in an urbanized environment.

The seriousness of the effect of noise depends on the tolerance of the individual in the community, the types of activities taking place and the character of the noise. The effects of noise on people can be grouped in three categories:

1. Subjective Effects: annoyance, irritation, nuisance.
2. Interference in Activities: disruption of sleep, speech, learning.
3. Physiological Effects: stress, fatigue, temporary or permanent hearing loss.

Most sound levels produce effects in just the first two categories. No completely satisfactory measure of the subjective effects of noise can be made because of the wide range of individual reaction to noise.

High levels of noise for extended periods of time can cause a variety of physiological effects. In addition to hearing loss, continual exposure to excessive noise levels may cause symptoms of anxiety, anger and is apt to aggravate psychiatric disorders. The Environmental Protection Agency has identified 75 decibels as the highest eight-hour noise exposure threshold to prevent hearing loss.

When continuous noise levels reach 75 dBA and above, some hearing loss may begin to occur. Noise at this level is likely to be identified as a major source of annoyance by the community. The threshold of human hearing roughly corresponds to 0 dBA while the threshold of pain is approximately 120 dBA. Table N-1 lists typical A-weighted sound levels and shows; that 120 dBA corresponds to a jet plane taking off at 200 feet from listener.

### **5.06.140 NOISE COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS**

Over the years many studies have been performed to determine how much noise is

acceptable for different land uses. The Environmental Protection Agency has given emphasis to levels deemed appropriate for residential land uses.

The California Department of Health, Office of Noise Control, has developed a compatibility chart which attempts to match each land use type with an appropriate range of noise levels. The land use compatibility chart, used in conjunction with the noise exposure contours shown on the noise maps, provides a basis for decision making. Proposals for rezoning, for example, can be evaluated for potential noise conflict without much difficulty.

### **5.06.141 Relation of Noise Element to State Code of Regulations**

Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations requires that an acoustical analysis be prepared for new hotels, motels and multiple dwellings which are to be located where the Ldn is greater than 60 outdoors. The acoustical report must discuss how the exterior noise levels can be controlled to 60 Ldn, and how the noise environment inside these structures can be controlled so as not to exceed 45 Ldn. The acoustical analysis is appropriately included as part of an Environmental Impact Report or can be a separate report accompanying the building permit application when no EIR is required.

### **5.06.142 How to Use the Noise Compatibility Chart and Ldn Contours**

The Ldn contours on the noise maps are estimated values based on traffic volumes and known point noise sources. The calculated values have been adjusted to reflect noise measurements taken with a noise meter at a variety of locations and times in the community

The Ldn contours are not intended to be precise for a given location, but rather for use as a guide to determine when site specific acoustic analysis should be undertaken. As such, the noise maps provide an early warning system in the decision making process.

The product of site specific acoustic analysis should be a recommendation of ways in which outdoor noise levels can be controlled to the level set forth in the compatibility chart for the

land use type under consideration, and, for uses covered by the California Administrative Code, recommended ways in which exterior noise can be controlled from intruding to interior spaces. Standards for the preparation of acoustical reports are as follows:

1. Minimum Contents of Acoustical Reports - Site specific reports should contain a brief description of the project and the sensitivity of the land use type to noise, an accurate map describing the setting with surrounding uses and noise sources identified, and a quantitative description of the noise environment. For multi-story structures the report should discuss noise effects for the upper floors. Field noise sample measurement should be taken over several days and the average Ldn calculated should be based on daytime and nighttime readings.

2. Qualifications for Preparing an Acoustical Report - Noise reports should be prepared by an acoustical engineer holding a degree in engineering, architecture, physics or allied discipline able to demonstrate a minimum of two years experience in the following areas of acoustics: transportation noise forecasting, building acoustics, field measurement of noise and mitigation.

**5.06.143 Present Noise Environment in Colma**

Due to the character of Colma as a Town of cemeteries, the noise environment is generally a peaceful one. A minor amount of noise is generated from residential and cemetery areas by equipment such as lawn motors, air conditioners, backhoes and power tools. Noise from heavy equipment at the Hillside Landfill and from the Town's one industrial activity, Christy Vaults located on Collins Avenue, have limited impact on the overall noise environment.

The primary contributor to the Colma noise environment is vehicular traffic on major thoroughfares. Peak noise levels are generated by truck and commuter traffic on Interstate 280 and El Camino Real, along Serramonte and Junipero Serra Boulevards. To a lesser extent the noise environment is influenced by commuter and shopping traffic on Hillside and Colma Boulevards.

Noise generated from San Francisco International Airport flyovers have little noise impact on Colma. According to airport land use compatibility criteria and noise contours adopted by the San Mateo County Airport Land Use Commission March 1981, impact on the Colma noise environment is less than 65 dBA.

**TABLE N-1  
TYPICAL A-WEIGHTED SOUND LEVELS**

SOUND SOURCE	dBA READING	RESPONSE	
Carrier Deck Operation	145	Painfully Loud	noises can cause hearing impairment ↑
	130	Limited amplified speech	
Jet Takeoff (listener at 200 feet)	120		
Auto Horn (listener at 2 feet)	115	Maximum vocal effort	
Disco			
Jet Takeoff (listener at 2000 feet)	100	Very annoying loudness	
Garbage Truck			
New York Subway Station	90	Very annoying loudness	
Heavy Truck (listener at 50 feet away)			
Alarm Clock	80	Annoying	
Freight Train (listener at 50 feet away)	70	Telephone use difficult	
Freeway Traffic (listener at 50 feet away)			
Air Conditioning Unit (listener 20 feet away)	60		
Light Auto Traffic (listener 100 feet away)	50	Quiet	
Residential Living Room	40		
Library (soft whisper at 30 feet)	30	Very quiet	
Broadcasting Studio	20		
	10	Just audible	
	0	Threshold of hearing	

Noise measurements were taken at a total of four different locations in Colma, using a Quest, Model 215, Sound Level Meter during August 1988. The locations at which readings were taken are shown on the 1988 Noise Map. Ldn contours were plotted using standard statistical methods based on traffic volume information supplied from city-wide traffic counts taken June 1988. The field noise measurements indicate the calculated noise contours to be conservative and the field readings coincide with the calculated contours within a 3 dBA variation.

Analysis of the contour map indicates that a very small portion of the population may be exposed to high noise levels (above 70 dBA). At specific sites the shielding effects of topography and other noise barriers such as solid walls and fences may reduce actual sound levels below that shown in the noise contours. However, the likelihood of noise impact is shown for properties; fronting on El Camino Real, Junipero Serra Boulevard and Serramonte Boulevard west of El Camino Real.

**5.06.144 Future Noise Environment in Colma**

Traffic on most thoroughfares in Colma is expected to increase by two to three percent per year over the next 15 years as a result of increased development in Colma and the surrounding area. Noise contours along roadways will shift outward with major noise increases occurring along Interstate 280 and El Camino Real. Noise levels are also expected to increase due to increased traffic on El Camino Real and Junipero Serra Boulevard. Increases in noise levels along Hillside Boulevard are expected to occur due to development in South San Francisco. Noise generated by the Colma BART station at the northwest border of the

Town has not significantly increased the environmental noise levels in Colma. An increase in noise level at the south end of Colma is anticipated due to construction of the Hickey Boulevard extension between El Camino Real and Mission Road as part of the South San Francisco BART station development. The BART line extension through Colma will be constructed underground following the former Southern Pacific right-of-way.

Noise levels will increase along the south border of Colma following construction of the Hickey Boulevard extension between Mission Road and Hillside Boulevard. This route may modify the noise input farther north on Hillside Boulevard by redirecting traffic flow to the new route.

Table N-2 shows the estimated percentage of population that may be exposed to various intensities of exterior noise levels by the year 2005. This population estimate is based on projected development policies consistent with the Colma Land Use goal of regulating population growth so as not to exceed 1500 total population by the year 2005. The number of persons expected to be living in exterior noise environments exceeding 60 Ldn would decrease from about 26 percent in 1988 to about 25 percent in 2005.

Multi-family dwellings within 359 feet of El Camino Real and within 250 feet of Hillside Boulevard, having direct line of sight to these roadways, will be impacted by noise. Specific locations may be protected by topographic or man made barriers. Where the future use falls within noise contours exceeding 60 dBA acoustic reports should be required in advance of issuing Building Permits.


**TABLE N-2  
ESTIMATE OF RESIDENTIAL POPULATION AFFECTED BY NOISE**

<b>Ldn NOISE LEVELS (dBA)</b>	<b>1988 TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>PERCENT POPULATION</b>	<b>PROJECTED 2005 TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>PROJECTED PERCENT POPULATION</b>
Below 60	527	74.2%	882	75.4%
60-65	143	20.1%	152	13.0%
65-70	28	4.0%	96	8.2%
70-75	12	1.7%	40	3.4%
<i>Sub-total Above 60</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>25.8%</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>24.6%</i>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>100.0%</b>


**TABLE N-3  
LAND USE COMPATIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY NOISE ENVIRONMENTS**

LAND USE CATEGORY	COMMUNITY NOISE EXPOSURE LEVEL (cnel)					
	55	60	65	70	75	80
Residential: Low Density, Single-Family Homes, Duplex and Mobile Homes	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable		Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Residential: Multi Family	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable		Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Motels and Hotels	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable		Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Schools, Libraries, Churches, Hospitals and Nursing Homes	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable		Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Sports Arenas, Outdoor Spectator Sports	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable		Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Playgrounds and Neighborhood Parks	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable	Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable	
Golf Course, Riding Stables, Water Recreation, Cemeteries	Normally Acceptable		Conditionally Acceptable	Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable	
Office Buildings	Normally Acceptable				Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Industrial, Manufacturing, Utilities and Agriculture	Normally Acceptable				Normally Unacceptable	Unacceptable

INTERPRETATION

 Normally Acceptable

 Conditionally Acceptable

 Normally Unacceptable

 Unacceptable



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## 5.06.200 COMMUNITY NOISE ENVIRONMENTS

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### 5.06.210 INTERPRETATION OF THE LAND USE COMPATIBILITY CHART

Normally Acceptable. The range of noise levels in this category are compatible with the specified land use type. No special noise insulation is required in buildings of conventional construction.

Conditionally Acceptable. The range of noise levels in this category are higher than those normally acceptable for the specified land use type. A detailed acoustic study should be undertaken to set forth design features that will reduce exterior noise levels and for construction to control the amount of exterior noise reaching interior use spaces.

Normally Unacceptable. New construction or development of the specified land use type should be discouraged. If development is to proceed, a detailed acoustic study must be prepared and needed noise insulation features incorporated into the design.

Unacceptable. New development of the specified land use type should not be undertaken when the site falls within the range of noise levels in this category.

### 5.06.220 NOISE MITIGATION METHODS

In a situation where the range of noise levels are higher than that considered normally acceptable for a specified land use type, it may be possible to reduce the effective noise level to achieve better compatibility. Each site has its own characteristics and problems, thus mitigation measures which are effective for one project may not apply to another. For this reason it is not appropriate to predetermine the method by which noise levels should be reduced or controlled throughout the community. Regardless of the mitigation measure or combination of measures which is used, it is almost always less costly to include the mitigation in the design phase rather than dealing with the problem later.

The measures or combinations of measures that can be used to mitigate noise fall into four general categories:

1. Site Planning
2. Architectural Treatment
3. Noise Barriers
4. Construction Modification

#### 5.06.221 Site Planning

By taking advantage of the natural shape and contour of sites it is often possible to orient buildings and other uses in a way that will reduce or eliminate noise impact. The ways in which site planning can be used to reduce noise impacts are as follows:

1. Increase the distance between the noise source and the receiver.
2. Place non-noise sensitive land uses (parking lots, maintenance facilities, utility areas) between the source and the receiver.
3. Use non-noise sensitive structures (garages) to shield noise sensitive areas.
4. Orient buildings so that outdoor areas are shielded from noise sources.

#### 5.06.222 Architectural Layout

By attention to the types of uses being accommodated in a structure, the noise-sensitive uses can be moved to the quiet side of the building. Some typical examples are listed:

1. Put bedrooms on the side of the house furthest from roadways.
2. Do not locate outdoor balconies facing major roadways.
3. Design 'U' shaped buildings to shield patios.

#### 5.06.223 Noise Barriers

Solid barriers between the noise source and the noise-sensitive area block out sound waves. The minimum acceptable surface weight for an effective noise barrier is four pounds per square foot (equivalent to 3/4 inch plywood) with no

cracks or openings. To be effective the barrier must interrupt the line of sight between the noise source and the receiver. Noise barriers are created by topographical features in Colma. For instance, the bluff area east of El Camino Real interrupts the line of sight to residences further east. Earth berms can be created by grading to achieve the same result in some instances. It should be noted that short barriers are not effective, regardless of height, because sound waves will pass around the end of them and still reach the receiver. This effect, called flanking, can be minimized by bending the wall or barrier back from the noise source at the ends of the barrier.

**5.06.224 Construction Modification.**

Indoor noise levels due to exterior noise sources can be controlled by the noise reduction characteristics of the building's shell. In general, windows and doors are the weakest links in the acoustic skin of a building. The amount of insulation and sealing required depends on the amount of noise reduction required. The following approaches may be considered:

- Use solid core doors having an acoustic door gasket.
- Use double paned glass or completely seal windows.
- Add insulation material to walls, ceilings and floors.

<b>TABLE N-4 CNEL (Ldn) LEVELS MEASURED AT SPECIFIC POINTS IN THE COMMUNITY</b>	
Readings were taken at four positions in the community as a check on the calculated Ldn contours and to demonstrate the effects of topographic shielding. The Ldn levels at each position are listed below, and shown on the 1998 Noise Level Map.	
<b>El Camino Real and Serramonte Boulevard</b>	70 dBA
<b>El Camino Real and F Street</b>	72 dBA
<b>Hillside Boulevard and F Street</b>	67 dBA
<b>Hillside Boulevard and Serramonte Boulevard</b>	68 dBA

TOWN OF COLMA  
GENERAL PLAN

1998 NOISE  
CONTOURS

EQUIVALENT NOISE  
LEVEL (dBA)



Ldn CONTOURS

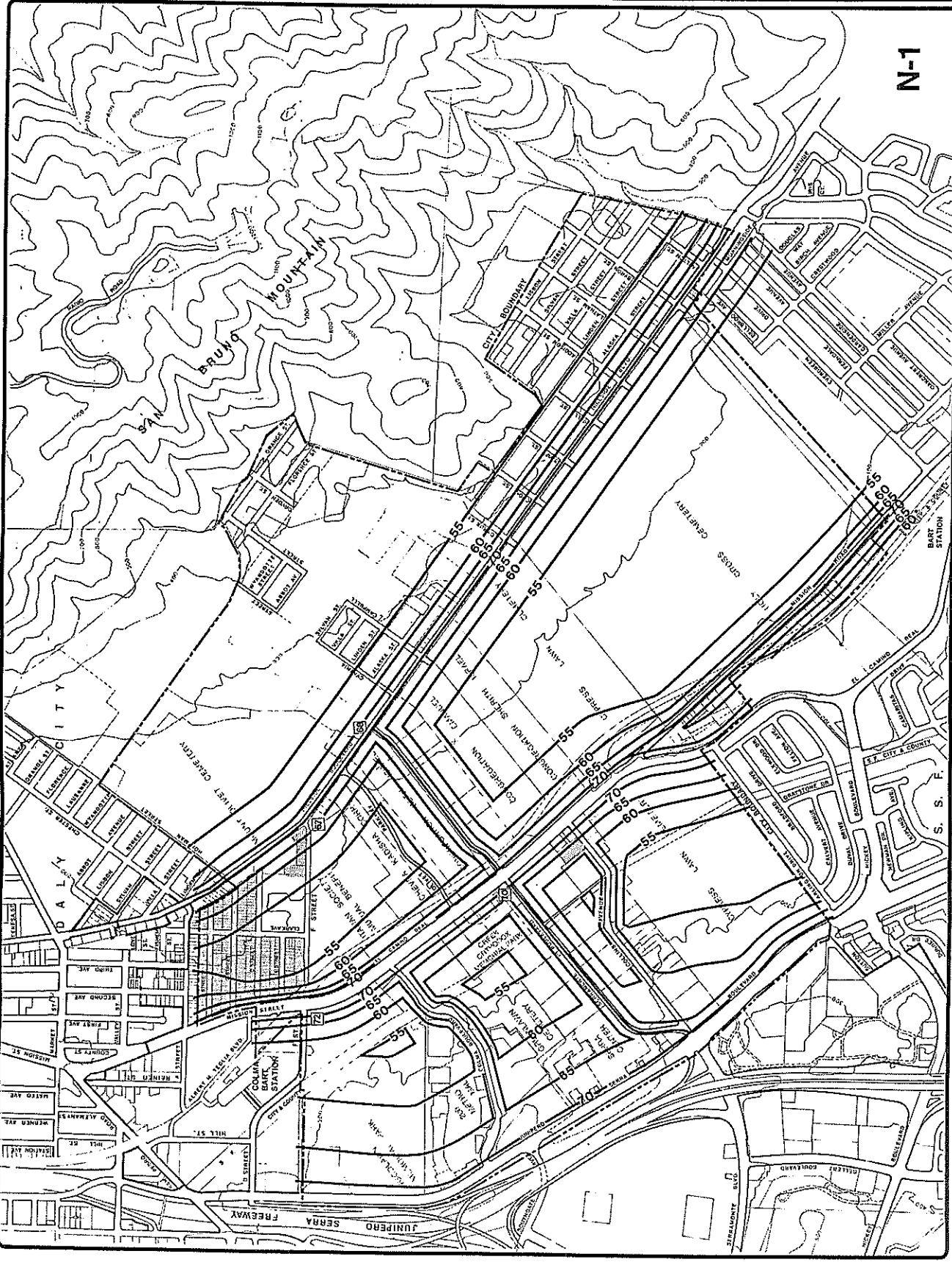
FIELD MEASUREMENT  
Leq



SENSITIVE  
RECEPTORS



MALCOLM CARPENTER ASSOCIATES  
CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNERS  
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N-1

5.06.11

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**NOTES:**

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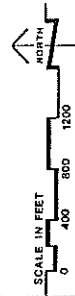
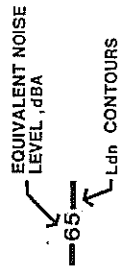
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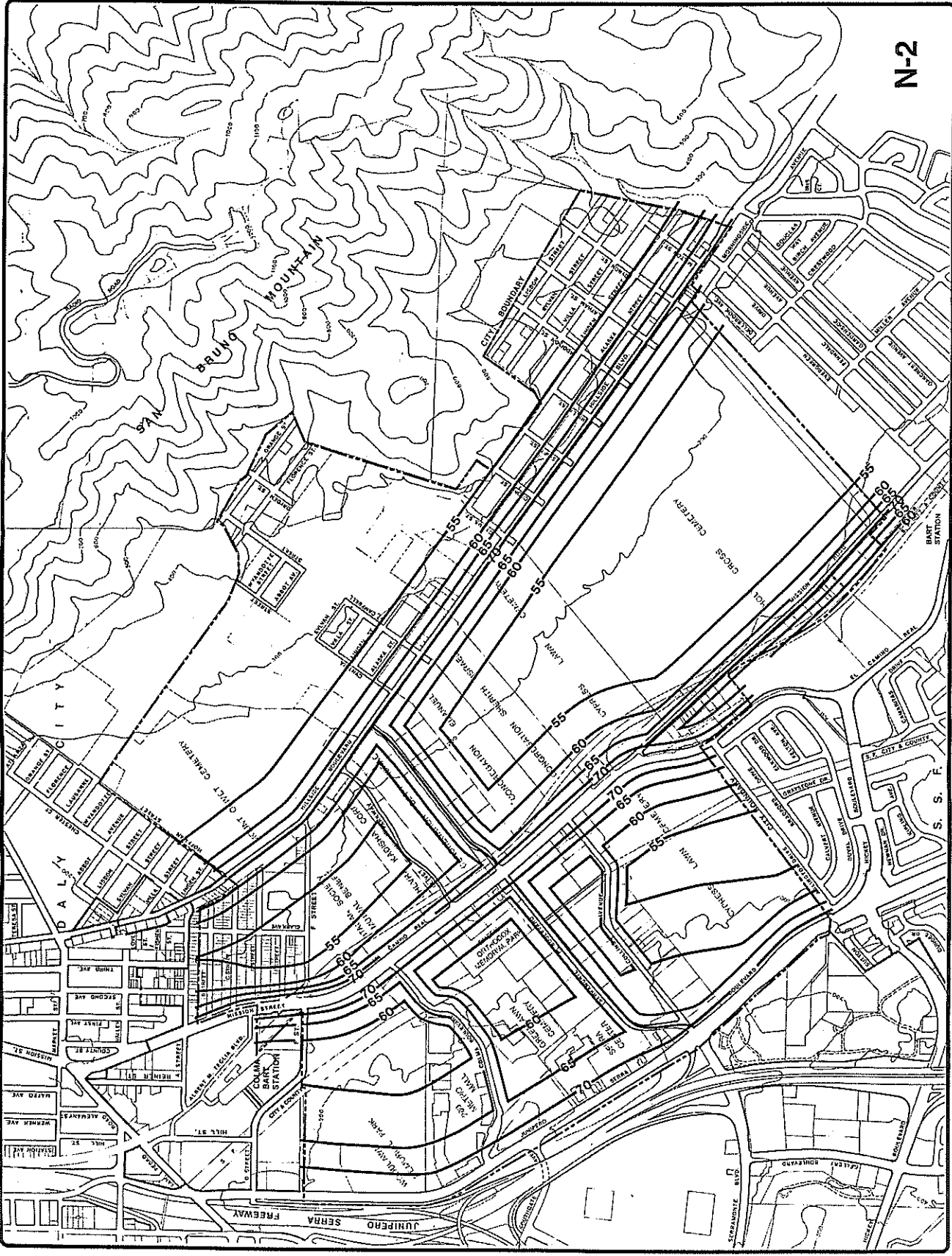
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TOWN OF COLMA  
GENERAL PLAN

PROJECTED 2015  
NOISE CONTOURS



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6/99



5.06.13



**5.06.300 NOISE ELEMENT POLICIES & IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

The following policies are set forth as a guide to help decision making with regard to noise impacts in Colma. Programs necessary for the implementation of those policies are described in the program section below.

<b>5.06.310 NOISE ELEMENT POLICIES</b>			
<b>REFERENCE NUMBER</b>	<b>POLICY</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE</b>	<b>CROSS REFERENCES WITH OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS</b>
5.06.311	The Town should review proposed development with regard to potential noise generation impacts, to ensure that the tranquil atmosphere for the Town's memorial parks is maintained.	The City Planner will make recommendations consistent with this policy to the Town Council for new development projects.	Open Space/ Conservation 5.02.311
5.06.312	Land use decisions should include consideration of the noise compatibility chart and acoustic reports required for all development in locations where noise levels exceed the "normal acceptable" range for specified land use types. Mitigation measures should be required if recommended in the acoustic report.	Acoustic reports will be required for applicable new projects, consistent with this policy. The City Planner will make recommendations consistent with this policy to the Town Council for new development projects.	
5.06.313	A detailed acoustic report should be required in all cases where hotels, motels and multiple-family dwellings are proposed in areas exposed to exterior noise levels 60 Ldn or greater. Mitigation measures should be required if recommended in the report.	Acoustic reports will be required for applicable new projects, consistent with this policy. The City Planner will make recommendations consistent with this policy to the Town Council for new development projects.	
5.06.314	All BART tail tracks and line extensions through Colma shall be located underground along the former Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way so that environmental noise impacts is minimized.	The design for the BART line through Colma is consistent with this policy. Any future additions or modifications to the BART line through Colma must be consistent with this policy.	Open Space/ Conservation 5.02.351
5.06.315	An ordinance should be adopted limiting days and hours of construction to provide quiet time.	The City Planner will work with the City Engineer to prepare an ordinance for City Council consideration.	

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### **5.06.400 PROGRAMS FOR NOISE ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION**

Listed below are both existing and proposed actions programs for Plan implementation. Reference is made as to whether the program is existing or proposed, the responsibility for its operation and the noise policies which are affected by its operation.

#### **5.06.410 CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCEDURES (EXISTING)**

In some cases where an initial study of a project indicates that noise may be a significant impact, an acoustic study is undertaken and noise mitigation measures recommended in the EIR.

#### **5.06.411 Responsibilities**

##### ***City Planner***

Prepares initial study; coordinates review process.

##### ***Interested Citizens***

Provide input regarding report adequacy.

##### ***City Council***

Decision making body; certifies report.

#### **5.06.420 ZONING ORDINANCE (EXISTING)**

Includes Section 5.336(a) which can be used to establish appropriate conditions for the establishment of uses having possible noise impacts. Requirements for the establishment of buffer zones can be made a part of project approval in cases where an environmental report has not been required under CEQA.

#### **5.06.421 Responsibilities**

##### ***City Planner***

Evaluation of projects; coordinates project review.

##### ***Interested Citizens***

Provide input regarding suitability of noise mitigation and suitability of uses in specific locations.

##### ***City Council***

Decision making body - recommends, approves, denies proposed project, with or without conditions, based upon findings set forth in the ordinance.

#### **5.06.430 COMMUNITY NOISE ORDINANCE (PROPOSED)**

An enabling ordinance setting forth performance standards for various land uses and mechanical devices, measuring techniques to be used and procedures to be taken for the resolution of noise complaints in the community. (Proposed)

#### **5.06.431 Responsibilities**

##### ***Police Department***

Responsible for recording noise complaints; maintains noise monitoring equipment of the City; informs City Planner of ongoing land uses which are in violation of ordinance standards.

##### ***City Planner***

Responsible for preparing reports for City Council on projects; suggests conditions of project approval consistent with ordinance standards; in cases where existing uses are violating City noise standards the City Planner shall be responsible for initiating abatement proceedings.

##### ***Interested Citizens***

Provide input on chronic noise problems.

##### ***City Council***

Decision making body; adopts ordinance.