

City Attorney's Office
Special Events

Proposed Changes to Outdoor Amplified Sound for Commercial Establishments

Tuesday, October 7th, 2025



Why We're Here Today



- Background
 - Council directed the City Attorney and staff to review the Noise Ordinance on outdoor amplified sound at commercial establishments
- Community Engagement
 - Online survey with 807 responses
 - Focus group with Glenwood South residents
 - Weekend nighttime residential visits
 - One-on-one meetings with venue operators
 - Walkthroughs of districts
- Consultant Findings and Recommendations
- Draft Ordinance

Sound City Planning

- Reviewed current and past noise ordinances
- Conducted fieldwork in Raleigh (*two visits for data collection and community engagement*)
 - Collaborated with City staff
 - Measured on-site sound levels with decibel readings
 - Held meetings with venue operators
 - Engaged with residents
- Developed recommendations for Council

Recommendations – Approach and Process



- Balanced approach that supports both vibrant hospitality and residential quality of life
- Based on key principles for effective entertainment-related sound management
- Informed by in depth observations, sound data collection, and stakeholder engagement
- Customized for Raleigh

Recommendations – Establish Decibel Levels



- Amplified sound at commercial establishments to abide by decibel standard
- Measuring both dBA and dBC – capturing high frequencies and low frequencies (bass)
- Three key components of a solution for Raleigh
 - Citywide baseline standard
 - Permit option (for businesses citywide, *outside of Glenwood South*, to obtain additional amplified sound above the citywide baseline)
 - Unique standard for Glenwood South District (*no additional permit required*)

Recommendations – Citywide Baseline



- *Customization options with districts and permits*

Weekdays (Sunday – Thursday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Limits
Daytime	10AM-10PM	70dBA 75dBC
Nighttime	10PM-2AM	55dBA 60dBC
Overnight	2AM-10AM	No plainly audible sound from 25 ft

Weekends (Friday / Saturday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Level
Daytime	10AM-11PM	70dBA 75dBC
Nighttime	11PM-2AM	55dBA 60dBC
Overnight	2AM-10AM	No plainly audible sound from 25 ft

Recommendations – Citywide with permit



- *Permit not needed for Glenwood South District businesses*
- *Permit only allows additional decibels during daytime hours*

Weekdays (Sunday – Thursday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Limits
Daytime	10AM-10PM	Up to 80dBA Up to 88dBC

Weekends (Friday / Saturday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Level
Daytime	10AM-11PM	Up to 80dBA Up to 88dBC



Recommendations - Glenwood South District

- Different decibels limits and time frames for weekday nights vs weekend nights
 - *(no additional permit required)*

Weekdays (Sunday – Thursday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Limits
Primary	10AM-10PM	80dBA 88dBC
Late Night	10PM-2AM	75dBA 80dBC
Overnight	2AM-10AM	No plainly audible sound from 25 ft

Weekends (Friday/Saturday)

Time Period	Times	Sound Level
Primary	10AM-12AM	82dBA 92dBC
Late Night	12AM-2AM	80dBA 88dBC
Overnight	2AM-10AM	No plainly audible sound from 25 ft



Implementing Sound City Planning Recommendations



Proposed Ordinance

- Implements Sound City Planning recommendations for dB levels.
- Replaces current noise standard for commercial amplified sound with decibel standard. Sound exceeding dB limit is a violation.
- Current rules continue for all other noise.



Citywide Standard (not GWS) + Permit

	Day and Time	Maximum dB
Citywide	10 a – 10 p Sunday-Thursday 10 a – 11 p Friday and Saturday	70 dB(A), 75 dB(C)
Citywide	10 p – 2 a Sunday-Thursday 11 p – 2 a Friday and Saturday	55 dB(A), 60 dB(C)
Citywide	2 a – 10 a	Not plainly audible from 25'

	Day and Time	Maximum dB
Permit	10 a – 10 p Sunday-Thursday 10 a – 11 p Friday and Saturday	Up to 80 dB(A), 88 dB(C)



Permit for Citywide (*not GWS*) Additional Sound

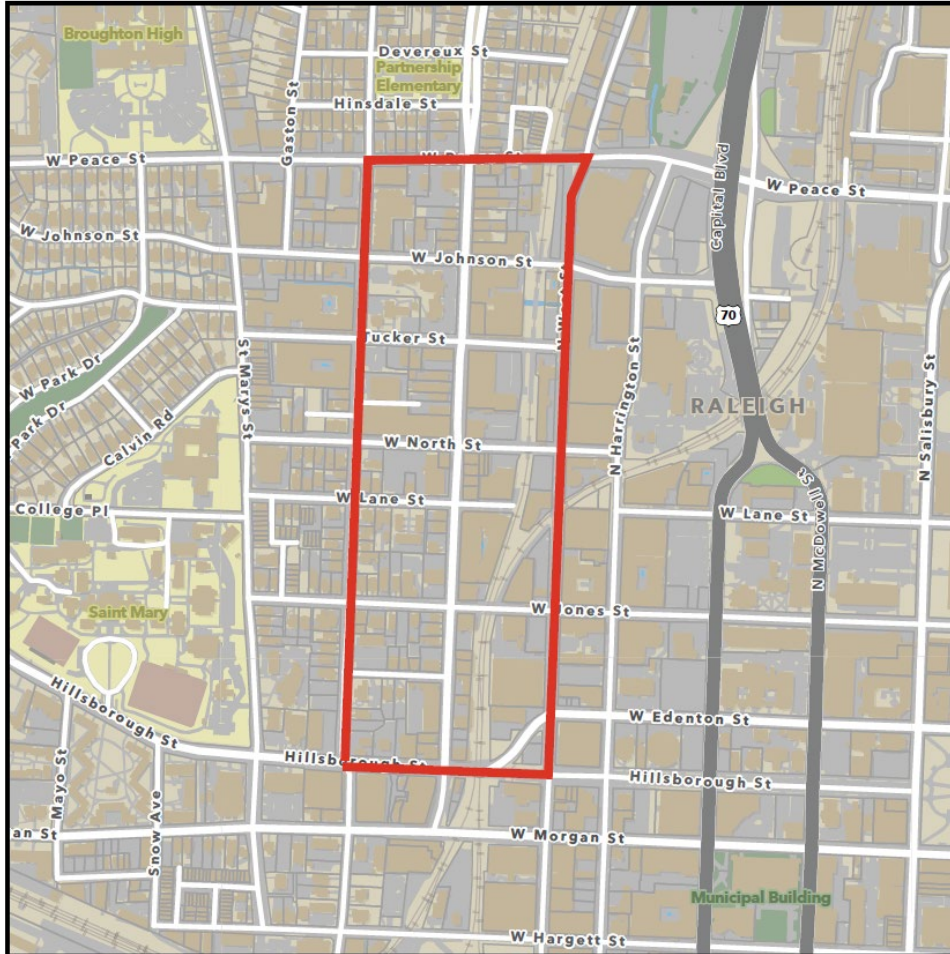
- Sets maximum dB level; actual permit may be lower.
- Expires no later than one year after issuance.
- Cancellation:
 - *may* be cancelled if additional sound is detrimental.
 - *must* be cancelled if the business receives a verified noise violation while using the permit to exceed normal dB limits.
- Permit fee (\$500).



Standards for Additional Sound Permit

- Noise mitigation plan required—and business must comply with it.
- Permit issued if additional sound generated will not cause a significant harmful impact to the community. Ordinance lists factors that must be considered.
- Business cannot be located
 - in a residential zoning district.
 - within three hundred (300) feet of a *noise sensitive area*.
- Permit not allowed if business had a verified noise violation within the prior 12 months.

Proposed Glenwood South District



- Proposed ordinance defines the Glenwood South District.
- Only businesses fronting on the south side of Peace Street are included, per feedback.
- For other streets, businesses fronting on either side are included.



Raleigh

Glenwood South District Standard

WEEKDAYS Sunday (beginning at 2:00 a.m.) – Thursday			WEEKEND Friday (and Saturday morning from midnight through 2:00 a) Saturday (and Sunday morning from midnight through 2:00 a)		
	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sound Level</i>		<i>Times</i>	<i>Sound Level</i>
Primary	10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	Up to 80 dB(A) or 88 dB(C)	Primary	10:00 a.m. to midnight	Up to 82 dB(A) or 92 dB(C)
“Step down” to Late Night	10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.	Up to 75 dB(A) or 80 dB(C)	“Step down” to Late Night	Midnight to 2:00 a.m.	Up to 80 dB(A) or 88 dB(C)
Overnight	2:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Sound plainly audible from twenty-five (25) feet is prohibited.	Overnight	2:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Sound plainly audible from twenty-five (25) feet is prohibited.



Additional Proposed Changes

- Strengthened definition of “plainly audible.”
- Measurement: at property line or any point beyond.
- Business must identify managers; City must publish names and contact info.
- Continued existing exceptions (e.g., special events already governed by sound restrictions in permit).



Proposed Changes - Enforcement

- City Manager can designate any City employee to issue civil citations, not just RPD.
- Any dB reading over the limit is a violation.
- Can be enforced as a misdemeanor.
- Adds \$1,500 penalty for 3+ verified violations within 12 months.
- For 4+ verified violations in 12 months, using outdoor sound equipment is prohibited for 18 months. Applies to the business violator and the property on which the business is located.

Next Steps

- State law requires that the Council receive the proposed ordinance at one meeting (today) and vote on the ordinance at a later meeting.
- Revisions to the proposed ordinance follow the two-meeting process required by State law.
- Directions are needed on how the Council wishes to proceed to consider the proposed ordinance.



Comments and Questions?