



## Noise Ordinance Revision Recommendations

To: Davidson Board of Commissioners  
From: Penny L. Dunn, Chief of Police  
Date: August 29, 2018  
Re: Study Results and Recommendations for Changes to Noise Ordinance

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### 1. OVERVIEW

A study of like-environment-towns/cities was completed along with gathering of information related to noise related complaints and safe sound levels. The number of complaints for noise in the Town of Davidson for 2017 was 103 in total. Eleven complaints were from residents complaining of noise emanating from the Davidson College campus with seven of the eleven complaints made by one resident on Naramore Street. Other noise complaints are for a variety of reasons, including a neighbor walking or stomping loudly, music, people talking/arguing loudly, construction equipment operating, etc.

The study revealed inconsistency for municipal areas home to a small college (less than 6,000 students) for levels of sound, type of environment, location of the source, and measuring. The study included several colleges in North Carolina and one each from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. (Belmont Abbey, Elon, Guilford, Lenoir-Rhyne, High Point, Dickinson, Denison, and Washington & Lee.) State statutes may influence enforcement capabilities. One fairly consistent factor was the time of night for infractions to be enforced. The night time hours of 11p – 7a, with no distinction for day of the week, was consistently listed for quieter levels of sound disruption and enforcement by police. Those municipalities that used decibel measuring for enforcement ranged from 52 decibels to 80 decibels. Fines for infractions ranged from \$50 to \$1,000 per infraction with some escalating for subsequent infractions. Measuring distance was split between options of a specific distance from the violators property and measuring from the complainant's property line.

Information on safe sound levels from the Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organization recommend a maximum of 70 decibels when there is continuous exposure. Continuous exposures are likely to occur in a work environment where hearing protection would be recommended.

The recommended changes for the Town of Davidson noise ordinance are for the ease of understanding for residents and officers, establishment of reasonable and measurable levels of sound, and clearly defining the measuring location for officers responding to a complaint.

### 2. RELATED TOWN GOALS

Core Values:

- Citizens are the heart of Davidson, so town government will treat all people fairly, with courtesy and respect.
- Open communication is essential to an engaged citizenry, so town government will seek and provide accurate, timely information and promote public discussion of important issues.
- Davidson’s traditional character is that of a small, historic college town, so land planning will reflect its historic patterns of village-centered growth including connection of neighborhoods, preservation of our historic resources, conservation of rural area, and provision of public spaces.

### 3. OPTIONS/PROS & CONS

Pros:

- Provides consistency in ordinance language
- Establishes measuring standards and decibel levels using comparative data and scientific research
- Reduces confusion for officers and citizens with consistent days and times for infractions
- Comparison to like municipal environments
- Institutional property was added to encompass properties not previously included
- Responds to requests from board members, students, and citizens to review current ordinance

Cons:

- Extends hour for higher decibel level
- Increases decibel range

### 4. FYI or RECOMMENDED ACTION

Providing Board with information on ordinance as requested following study.

### 5. NEXT STEPS

Board consider proposed changes

Board makes recommendations

Board revises current ordinance and passes approved changes to ordinance