

# SoundSmart

an introduction to sound living  
in the City of Vancouver

## What the City is doing about noise

The City works to manage noise through land-use planning, bylaws, traffic management and policing. Here are some of the ways the City is dealing with noise:

### Noise control bylaw

The City's Noise Bylaw regulates construction, vehicle, and household noise within Vancouver. For bylaw details visit: [vancouver.ca/bylaws](http://vancouver.ca/bylaws).

### Urban noise task force

Growing concerns about noise and its effects on everyday life in Vancouver led to the creation of the Urban Noise Task Force. This citizens' group, with the assistance of City staff and Councillors, made a series of recommendations to the City for improving Vancouver's "soundscape" many of which have been, or are being implemented.

### Knight Street corridor

One of the busiest corridors in the City of Vancouver, Clark-Knight Street, runs through residential neighbourhoods, schools, parks, commercial areas and a community centre. The City is developing ways of better balancing its use.

### Urban sound study

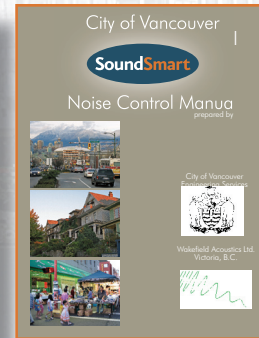
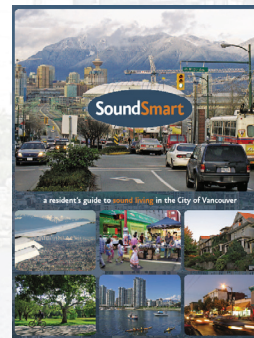
As part of the Clark-Knight Street review, an Urban Sound Study was initiated to measure sound levels on major arterials in the City. The sound study will present recommendations on measures that will help manage vehicle noise. Results of the study will be reported to Council in 2005.

### Quiet pavement

The City is considering noise-reducing pavement on major transportation corridors, based on a review of trial sections already installed on various streets.

## Sounds in the City

Although noise is a part of life, there are ways to make it more manageable. Equipped with information and a basic understanding of noise, you can create a lifestyle that works for you. For further information, please visit the SoundSmart website. [vancouver.ca/soundsmart](http://vancouver.ca/soundsmart)



For noise concerns/complaints  
E-mail: [noise@vancouver.ca](mailto:noise@vancouver.ca)  
Noise Hotline: 604.873.7753



City of Vancouver  
Engineering Services  
[vancouver.ca/soundsmart](http://vancouver.ca/soundsmart)



## Sound and noise

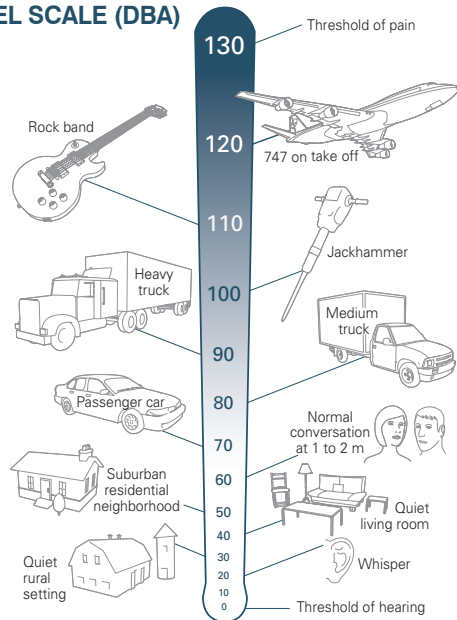
As Vancouver's population grows, so does the noise in our city. This brochure aims to inform you about what sound is, what the City is doing about it, and how to better control, reduce, or avoid it.

### What is sound?

Our ears are sensitive to tiny fluctuations in air pressure that are created by vibrating objects. The fluctuations and the sensations they produce in our ears are called sound.

Sound travels in waves, spreading out from its source like ripples on a pond. The stronger the motion of the source, the louder the sound. The faster the source vibrates, the higher the frequency or pitch.

### DECIBEL SCALE (DBA)

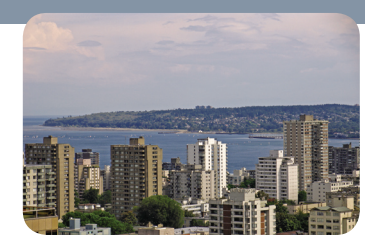


### How is sound measured?

Sound is measured on a decibel scale and expressed in dBA. This logarithmic scale is similar to a Richter Scale which is used to measure the magnitude of an earthquake. The range for normal hearing is generally between 0 and 130 decibels (dBA).

### A historical look at urban noise

Noise has been a concern for city dwellers since Roman times when rulers passed a bill that prohibited chariot driving through the cobblestone streets of Rome at night. Noise levels have increased steadily with the growth of mechanization. By 1899, excessive noise was the number one "quality of life" complaint in New York City. Today, electronic sources such as powerful stereos, video games, car alarms, background music in stores and cell phones have added to the urban din.



## Steps to a quieter lifestyle

### Location, location, location

Before buying or renting a house, carefully study the location of the residence to learn all the facts and decide if they match your lifestyle and needs. Decide which sounds are tolerable and which are unbearable.

### Home construction

Do your research and find out what type of materials have been used to construct the building. As well, consider the size, location and number of windows, the general floor plan and the position of the residence on the property. Remember fibreglass or mineral fibre is great at absorbing sound as well as being a very good insulator.

### Exterior design

Ensure all doors and windows are well insulated and tightly sealed. Walls and doors should be as heavy as possible. Double-glazed, heavy glass windows with a large air gap offer the best noise protection.

### Interior decorating

Porous materials such as pillows, curtains and throw rugs will absorb noise while also enhancing the look of a room. Closed windows will also allow for a quieter space.

### Floor finishing

Carpeting will help reduce noise. Install either wall-to-wall carpeting or throw rugs (with runners) particularly in high traffic areas.

### Appliances

Try to avoid placing noisy household appliances in noise-sensitive areas. For example, place a washer and dryer beside a kitchen instead of a bedroom. As well, be aware of the time of day that you are using such devices. Ensuring that appliances, lawn equipment, cars etc. are in good running condition will also reduce noise. Newer models are usually quieter and should come with noise ratings.

### Mechanical systems

Carefully consider the location of loud outdoor mechanical devices. For example, an air conditioning unit located in a side yard, the small space between your house and your neighbour's, will create a lot of noise for the people living next door.

### Be considerate

A few ways you can be considerate include: wearing slippers instead of shoes when inside, especially if there is no carpeting; carrying out noisy activities during the day and trying to avoid such activities on Sundays; and ensuring that stereo, video and computer game volumes do not disturb neighbours.

### Getting around

Try walking, biking or using public transit instead of driving in order to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. For a quieter and more relaxing experience, when walking or cycling, take side streets instead of busy roads.

### Finally...protect yourself

Your hearing is precious and it is important to protect it. A great way to safeguard your hearing is to wear ear muffs or plugs when possible and try to avoid excessively loud situations.

