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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 12/14/2023 2:46:32 PM
Subject: Memo - Noise Control By-law Review
Attachments: DBL - Memo to Mayor & Council - Noise Control By-law Review Update.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached Noise Control By-law Review Council memo provides a summary of the Noise Control By-law review findings including public engagement feedback themes, overview of complaints data, and options for next steps.

To summarize:

- The Noise Control By-law review identified that, while the By-law establishes a comprehensive framework for regulating noise in Vancouver, there are opportunities to improve the structure and clarity of the by-law. Staff will bring forward a report in Spring 2024 with recommended by-law amendments to address this.
- The By-law review identified some areas that require additional work to align with implementing the CoV UNDRIP Strategy and Council direction on outdoor events, Granville Street Planning and the Music Strategy. Staff will work across City departments and in collaboration with music and event partners to find opportunities to address their noise related concerns and bring forward a report to Council in Q3 2024.
- Public engagement highlighted a number of issues such as an overall increase in urban noise; significant concern about vehicle and traffic-related noise; noise from landscaping equipment, and gas leaf blowers in particular; private property generated noise; and construction noise. A separate memo will provide an Update on the Council motion Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape maintenance Equipment Future in Vancouver.
- Staff will continue to work across City departments to explore potential options to address street noise through approaches including enforcement, street use planning and the Motor Vehicle Noise and Emission Abatement By-law.

Should you have any questions, please contact Andrea Law at Andrea.law@vancouver.ca

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

December 14, 2023

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Lon LaClaire, General Manger Engineering Services
Doug Smith, Acting General Manger, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Steve Jackson, General Manager Parks & Recreation

FROM: Andrea Law, General Manager, Development, Buildings and Licensing and

SUBJECT: Update on Noise Control By-law Review

RTS #: 15581

This memo provides an update on the Noise Control By-law Review. Additional information about regulating noise and emissions from landscaping equipment can be found in the memo providing an update on the Council motion "Towards a Quieter and Emission-Free Landscape Maintenance Equipment Future in Vancouver" (RTS 015016).

Staff initiated a review of the Noise Control By-law (the "By-law") to streamline the structure and update the language of the regulations. Staff conducted a thorough review of the By-law's provisions and associated operational processes to identify opportunities for improvement. As a part of the review process, a jurisdictional scan was undertaken and the public provided feedback through an online survey. Staff also reviewed noise-related complaints data to identify the most common areas of public concern.

The review determined that overall, the current regulations provide a comprehensive framework for regulating noise in Vancouver. The By-law regulations are prescriptive, cover a variety of noise sources, establish decibel limits that are measurable for enforcement and define exceptions. In the spring of 2024, staff will bring forward for Council's consideration an updated By-law with enhanced structure and clarity, removing

outdated language and provisions. The review identified some areas that require input from other departments to strengthen internal processes and find opportunities to support economic and cultural growth in the city while responding to public concerns about noise. Staff will continue working with other City departments to improve procedures and identify potential opportunities to support Council's priorities.

In May 2023, the City engaged with the public to hear feedback on noise-related concerns and perceptions of current regulations through an online survey. The public expressed strong interest in the survey with almost 4,000 respondents sharing their views. A summary of the findings is attached in Appendix A. The majority of respondents indicated that the overall level of noise in the city has significantly increased in recent years, which is consistent with urban development and economic growth in a dense city. When asked about how concerned people are about specific sources of noise and sound, respondents were most uncomfortable with landscaping and building maintenance equipment (66%), construction noise (65%) and noise from residential premises (50%). Half of the respondents who provided feedback are concerned about noise from vehicles, motorcycles, commercial trucks, emergency vehicles' sirens and traffic noise in general. This type of noise is regulated through the Motor Vehicle Noise and Emission Abatement By-law and staff will work with other departments and the Vancouver Police Department to identify potential opportunities to address these concerns through tools such as street use planning and enforcement.

Staff reviewed noise-related complaints data and identified a significant increase in the number of complaints, doubling between 2017 and 2022 (Appendix B). The noise from private premises, construction activity noise and noise in parks continue to be the primary sources of concern.

The City initially responds to noise-related complaints with education and voluntary compliance approaches; if these prove unsuccessful, enforcement options are then considered. Given the particular concerns from the public about the noise from gas powered leaf blowers, staff considered specific regulations to better regulate them. In 2004, the City banned the use of all leaf blowers in the West End under the Noise Control By-law. The ban did not have the intended effect of reducing nuisance from such noise as over half of the noise complaints concerning leaf blowers in Vancouver are from residents living in the West End. Enforcement of leaf blower related noise complaints across the city has been challenging because a Property Use Inspector has to be present to witness the infraction, and a leaf blower is typically used for too short a time to attend and gather evidence. Additional information about regulating noise and emissions from landscaping equipment can be found in the memo RTS 015016.

In response to construction noise complaints, staff reviewed current regulations and internal processes and identified opportunities for better alignment with the By-law. To support Council's strategic objective to build more housing in Vancouver as a response to the current housing crisis, staff do not advise any changes to the current construction activity noise regulations at this time.

Next Steps

Staff will bring a Council report forward in spring 2024 that includes recommendations for By-law amendments to remove antiquated sections, clarify unclear sections and update and modernize language to enhance readability. In addition, as the By-law review identified some areas that require additional work to align with implementing the

CoV UNDRIP Strategy and Council direction on outdoor events, Granville Street Planning and the Music Strategy, staff will bring forward a report with further recommendations to Council in Q3 2024. The work for this report will include:

- collaborating with Arts Culture and Community Services, the Park Board, special event organizers, the music industry and other City departments and partners who are implementing the CoV UNDRIP Strategy to review current noise-related regulations for special events on public and private property, including current regulations for sound/noise levels in and from commercial premises and the impact on music, art and culture opportunities in Vancouver. In addition, staff will work with industry partners to seek input on special events noise permits in Vancouver to minimize the impact on the neighbourhoods, while recognizing the value of these events for economic and cultural vibrancy of Vancouver; and
- exploring possible options to address street noise through approaches including enforcement, street use planning and the Motor Vehicle Noise and Emission Abatement By-law.

This work will require staff resources from multiple departments, the Vancouver Police Department and the Park Board. Additionally, some components of this work may require the technical expertise of an acoustical engineer consultant. Staff are reviewing the possibility of using departmental funding for this purpose.

Any questions regarding this update can be forwarded to Sarah Hicks, Chief Licence Inspector at 604-873-7546, sarah.hicks@vancouver.ca.



Andrea Law
General Manager
Development, Buildings & Licensing

Noise Control By-law Review Public Engagement Survey Public Feedback Outcomes/Results



In 2022, City staff began Phase I review of the Noise Control By-law with the goal of modernizing the language, restructuring content to bring relevant regulations together for easier interpretation and reference, and identifying gaps to be addressed in the subsequent stages of the review. As part of the first phase, staff engaged with the public to understand common concerns and issues that will inform prioritization of future work and inform policy options development in the upcoming phases. Public engagement was completed through the City's [Shape Your City](#) website platform and included the survey, open from May 9, 2023 to May 30, 2023, which received 3.9K responses, as well

as the Ideas tool to gather feedback from those who live, work and visit Vancouver.

The following main themes emerged from the survey:

- Respondents agreed that city noise increased over the recent years, with vehicle, landscaping/building maintenance equipment and construction noise being of significant concern. Vehicle noise included a number of issues such as traffic noise, motorcycle noise, emergency vehicle sirens, and noise from delivery trucks.
- More than half (52%) of respondents are not satisfied with the current construction noise regulations, with noise outside of permitted hours being the greatest concern. When asked about potential changes to the current regulations, the main themes that emerged included reducing permitted hours, avoiding construction on weekends, implementing noise mitigation measures, stronger enforcement, need for quieter communities, and addressing cumulative noise impacts in the city.
- Sounds/noise resulting from special events and commercial premises is not a significant area of concern. Almost half (46%) of respondents support the idea of regulating noise from special events through a noise exception permit, and the majority (54%) support the idea that these permits should only be issued in Intermediate, Activity and Event zones (not Quiet zone).
- Landscaping equipment has been identified as a significant area of concern with 65% of the respondents stating that it affects them. Almost half (49%) of respondents consider the current regulations for landscaping equipment as too relaxed, while another 40% consider them to be reasonable and sufficiently effective. The main themes that emerged through the open-ended responses in this area was a call to ban gas-powered leaf blowers in the city to reduce the unnecessary source of noise and pollution and to ensure consistent, equitable, and enforced regulations of this tool across the entire city (as there is presently a complete ban on leaf blowers in the West End only).

How were engagement opportunities promoted and shared?

An extensive communications plan to bring awareness to the survey was implemented.

Communications efforts included:

- Posters at all libraries, community centres, police stations and public facing work areas across the City
- Media outreach including a news release, interviews and statements
- Extensive digital campaign across the City's social media channels.
- Email outreach to industry stakeholders

The survey was promoted in 6 languages, and participants could utilise the auto-translation function, available in 16 languages, on the Shape Your City platform during the survey.

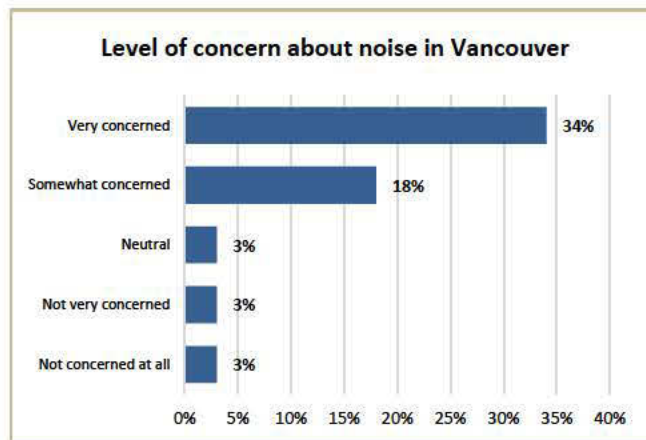


Survey Respondents Demographics

In terms of participants, 78% identified as residents and another 18% stated that were business operators and industry representatives or workers in Vancouver. Among industry representatives that indicated their area of work, the top three included event organizers and entertainers (42%), commercial industry (34%) and restaurant/hospitality (15%). Additionally, a majority (61%) of the respondents live in an apartment or condo building followed by single detached house residents (25%). Almost 80% of respondents were between 30 and 69 years old.

General Noise Concerns

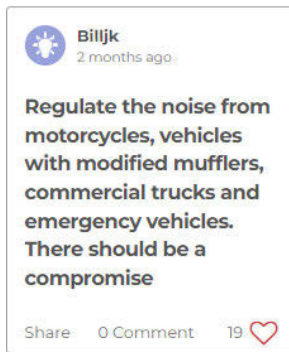
With respect to noise in Vancouver, over half (52%) indicated that they are either very or somewhat concerned about it. An overwhelming majority (85%) of respondents said that the city noise has significantly or somewhat increased over the recent years. When asked about familiarity with noise regulations in Vancouver, more than half of the respondents (61%) stated they are somewhat or very familiar with how sound/noise is regulated by the City.



The survey also provided an opportunity to submit general feedback on noise-related issues in Vancouver and received almost 2,600 responses. The main themes identified in these submissions are similar to the concerns reflected in the first part of the survey with one additional area (vehicle noise). The main issues identified through the open-ended feedback are:

- Vehicle noise such as excessive traffic noise, loud motorcycles, and sirens of emergency vehicles are considered to be a nuisance and health issue by the respondents.

- Noise from landscaping equipment such as gas-powered leaf blowers are also considered to be a common noise and pollution concern. Respondents called for stricter regulations that are consistent across the city.
- Several respondents identified a need for quieter spaces in the city and the necessity to enhance enforcement of the existing regulations
- Construction noise was also identified as a major noise concern with the need for stronger enforcement in this area, especially with multiple or large construction projects in close proximity to or in residential neighbourhoods.



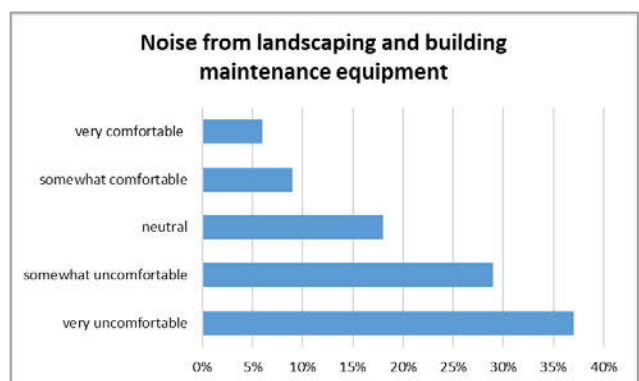
The Ideas tool also provided an opportunity for the respondents to provide unstructured input on noise issues in Vancouver. 79 ideas were submitted using this tool with 684 overall contributions (commenting, voting). The main themes that emerged through this engagement platform were concerns about vehicle and motorcycle noise (including modified exhaust systems on cars and motorcycles, emergency vehicle sirens, delivery and garbage collection trucks, etc.) and traffic noise, call for stronger enforcement of existing noise regulations, call for ban of gas-powered leaf blowers and concerns about other types of noise in public spaces.

Types of Noise Concerns

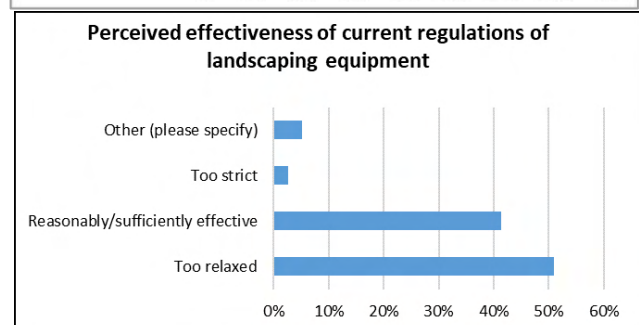
When asked about how concerned people are about specific sources of noise and sound, respondents were the most uncomfortable with landscaping and building maintenance equipment (66%) and construction noise (65%). Indoor special events noise received the lowest rating for concern. Half of the respondents also identified noise from residential premises as a concern, such as parties, music and loud talking/shouting. Comparatively, sound and noise from the commercial premises (bars and restaurants, etc.) was only identified as a concern by less than a third of all respondents.

Landscaping equipment

When asked about how concerned people are about specific sources of noise and sound, respondents were most uncomfortable with landscaping and building maintenance equipment (66%).



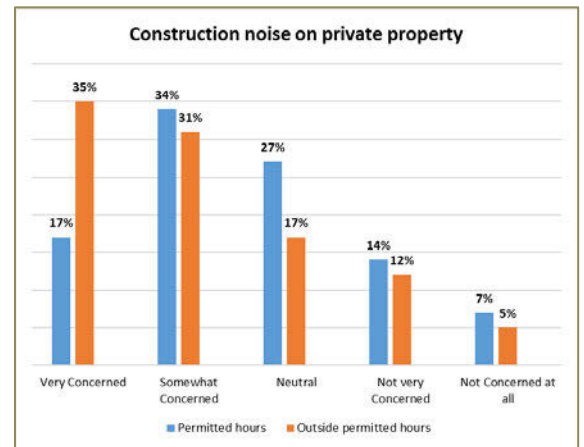
The majority (51%) of respondents also consider the current regulations to be too relaxed, while 41% considered the current regulations to be sufficiently effective. People commented on the need for stronger enforcement, consistent regulations across



the city and call for ban of gas-powered leaf blowers for noise and environmental reasons.

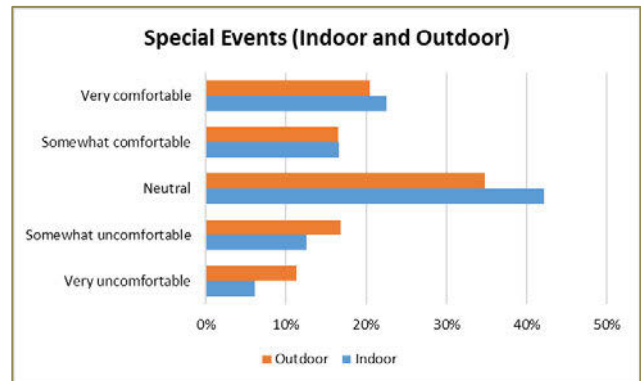
Construction noise

Construction noise has been identified as one the main noise concerns in the city both through the complaints data and through the survey. Over half (52%) of respondents indicated their overall dissatisfaction with how the current By-law regulates construction noise. Two thirds of respondents were especially concerned about private property construction noise occurring outside of permitted hours. Almost all respondents who provided additional feedback on this issue called for shorter hours of construction (later start and/or earlier end time), stronger enforcement and/or not allowing construction on weekends. Construction on the public property such as street or sidewalk repair was tolerated slightly better.



Special events

The majority (52%) of respondents expressed their support for more arts, culture and community events in Vancouver, with stating they have little or no concern about noise from special events. With respect to attitudes towards allowing the City to issue special event noise exemption permits almost half of the respondents (46%) supporting this initiative, 18% being neutral to it and 36% not in support. The majority (54%) of the respondents also supported the special event noise exemption permit to be issued only in Intermediate, Activity and Event zones.



Conclusion

This public engagement exercise provides detailed information to Council on how the public feels about noise in Vancouver, its current regulations and what areas and types of noise are of most concern. Based on these findings, staff will seek Council’s direction to prioritize future work in these areas to address public concerns and consult with industries to reduce potential impact, wherever possible, and to find effective solutions in an evolving urban landscape.

Reported Noise Complaints and Concerns

