A RESIDENTS’ GUIDE TO SOUND IN MIXED-USE AREAS

Mixed-use areas, including City, town and group centres, are lively and exciting places to live, with plenty happening day and night. Being close to shops, restaurants, transport, employment and entertainment, they are convenient for residents. However, mixed-use areas generate different sounds to suburban areas, so if you are considering moving to one of these places, please think about the sounds you may experience.

This fact sheet outlines some things to consider and provides a quick overview of noise regulation in the ACT.

Noise in mixed-use areas can come from everyday activities such as garbage collection, construction, traffic, people talking or your neighbour’s speakers. It can also come from music from licensed premises or the occasional major event.

Regular exposure to loud noise can have a range of effects on health and wellbeing, particularly when sleep is interrupted. It can cause stress, annoyance and tiredness. The experience of noise is not the same for all people—sounds that are acceptable for some may be intolerable to others.

HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE CITY BEFORE YOU MOVE

If you are considering living in a mixed-use area near businesses, it’s a good idea to familiarise yourself with the sounds of where you wish to live. Investigate the activities and opening hours of nearby venues that may create noise.

Visit the area at different times, as sound and activity can vary throughout the day and night. Consider spending a night in a hotel or apartment close to where you intend to live and leave the window open to listen to the sounds nearby.

Be aware that urban areas are dynamic and may change. A restaurant may become a nightclub or gym, or an office building may be replaced with residential units.
Types of Noise You May Experience

Clubs, hotels and bars
Check the location of any nearby late-night entertainment venues and the hours of operation. Noise sources may include music, patrons entering and leaving and rubbish disposal. Consider the direction a venue’s windows and doors face, as noise can travel when they are opened.

Roads and carparks
Vehicles driving on nearby streets and pedestrians walking along footpaths can be sources of noise. Carparks with late-night operating hours may cause sleep disturbance for nearby residents. Check the location of nearby carparks, their entry and exit points and opening hours.

Goods deliveries and waste removal
Check for nearby loading docks and delivery areas. Deliveries can occur throughout the day and night and noise may be generated from vehicle movements and reversing beepers.

Waste removal from nearby supermarkets, restaurants and commercial premises is another potential noise source. Consider the location, number of bins, waste collection routine and number of collections per week. Collection is allowed from 2am–10pm in the city and town centres, 5am–10pm in the Manuka and Kingston group centres, and 6am–10pm in other group centres.

Air conditioning and ventilation equipment
Some buildings have externally-located fans or air conditioning cooling towers, which can be noisy. Be sure to consider nearby equipment of this type for possible noise generation.

Building work
In the city and town centres, building work is allowed from 6am–8pm daily# (including public holidays). In group centres, building work is allowed from 7am–8pm daily (including public holidays). This is another potential noise source when construction is underway nearby.

# There are some restrictions to these periods and times dependent on the nature and length of the works. See Schedule 2, Table 2.3, Item 6 of the Environment Protection Regulation 2005: https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/sl/2005-38/

Noise from residential neighbours
Just like in any other residential setting, your neighbours may enjoy listening to loud music or having friends over for a party. This may affect you more if you share a common wall with your neighbours. Often noise concerns of this type can be resolved with a simple conversation with your neighbours.

How is Noise Regulated in the ACT?

The Environment Protection Act 1997 (the Act) and the Environment Protection Regulation 2005 aim to protect people from undue noise while facilitating business and social activities. Noise levels in the ACT are measured in decibels with a similar weighting to how the human ear perceives sound, called dB(A).

Noise can also be noted as dB(C), which considers bass sounds that are also felt as vibrations. This legislation does not apply to noise generated by aircraft, vehicles on public roads, animals and people.
WHAT LEVEL OF NOISE CAN I EXPECT?

The ACT is divided into noise zones based on the predominant land use. Noise Standards (noise levels) are set for each zone, with standards permitting the highest noise levels in industrial areas and lowest in residential areas. The noise standards are lower overnight compared to the day. Selected noise standards are as follows:

### NOISE ZONES AND NOISE STANDARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday to Thursday</th>
<th>Friday/Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday/Public Holidays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic centre and town centres (Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and Woden)</td>
<td>Day 60, Night 50</td>
<td>7am - 10pm</td>
<td>7am - 12am</td>
<td>8am - 10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group centres such as Dickson, Kippax, Kingston, and Erindale</td>
<td>Day 55, Night 45</td>
<td>7am - 10pm</td>
<td>7am - 11pm</td>
<td>8am - 10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller local centres such as Griffith, Lyneham, Farrer, Richardson and Evatt</td>
<td>Day 50, Night 35</td>
<td>7am - 10pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>8am - 10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential areas</td>
<td>Day 45, Night 35</td>
<td>7am - 10pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>8am - 10pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW CAN I REDUCE NOISE COMING INTO MY HOME?

Whether you are looking for a new place to live or have already found your perfect home, consider the building materials that can help to reduce noise coming in, such as window shutters, double glazing and wall insulation. In some instances, furnishings such as heavy drapes can help to block noise. Internal ventilation and cooling options can reduce exposure to external noise so you don’t need to open windows when there is noise outside.

FOR MORE INFORMATION


You can also contact the EPA by calling Access Canberra on 13 22 81 or email environment.protection@act.gov.au.

The [Unit Titles and Owners’ Corporations portal](http://www.act.gov.au) includes guidance for residential buyers who are considering units in mixed use developments:

**Contact options**

For enquiries or complaints on specific types of noise:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of noise</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>ACT Policing</td>
<td>131 444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft, including drones and hot air balloons</td>
<td>Air Services Australia</td>
<td>1800 802 584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic noise</td>
<td>Access Canberra</td>
<td>act.gov.au/fixmystreet or 13 22 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other noise</td>
<td>Access Canberra</td>
<td>act.gov.au/fixmystreet or 13 22 81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>