



**ROUND ROCK TEXAS**

# **MU-1 District Noise Ordinance proposal Open House Meeting**





# What's the problem?

Regarding noise, we're trying to find balance between an active downtown with entertainment and quality of life for downtown residents.

Here is the vision statement from the Downtown Master Plan, approved by City Council in June 2010:

*"Downtown Round Rock can become a thriving town center featuring a viable mix of residential, commercial, retail, dining, entertainment and public space uses in a walkable and historically sensitive environment to enhance Round Rock's economy, quality of life, and sense of place."*

The current noise ordinance is not effective in achieving that vision.



# What has the City done about this issue?

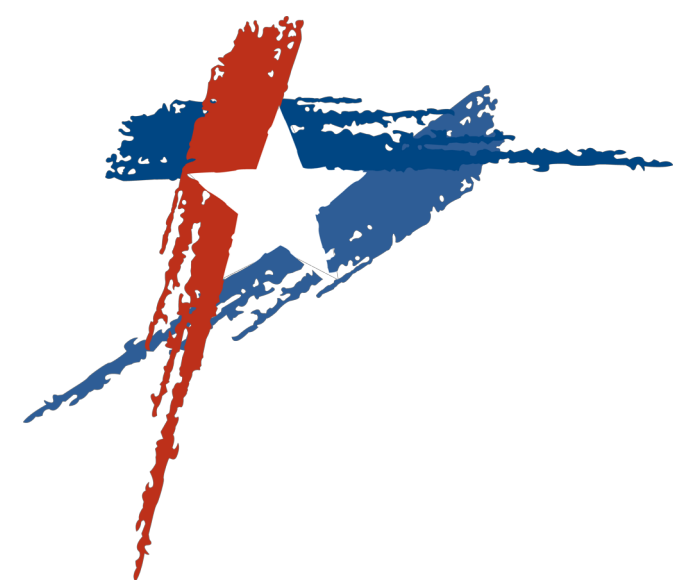
- City Council approves Downtown Master Plan in June 2010, establishing vision for the area
- MU-1 zoning approved by City Council in July 2013. Previous zoning was mostly commercial. Noise ordinance standards are the same for MU-1 zoning and commercial.
- City downtown staff and police officers visited with downtown businesses in 2016, and provided a copy of noise ordinance, after City began receiving complaints from nearby residents about noise
- In April 2017, City Council approves a cap on the number of stand-alone bars that can be located in MU-1 district





# What has the City done about this issue?

- Beginning in 2018, City began focusing on enforcement of noise ordinance due to increased number of complaints, and also began collecting data on noise downtown. Police found there were very few violations of current ordinance. Here are specific numbers:
  - From Jan. 1 to Dec. 13: Police acted on 65 noise complaints in downtown, 25 of which were officer-initiated; La Esquina Cantina and Long Branch Saloon had the most complaints, 27 and 22, respectively.
- In spring 2018, City staff met with downtown residents and collected noise readings at various properties downtown to better understand the level and nature of noise in the area
- Noise complaints from nearby residents have continued, and data gathered shows the existing ordinance is not effectively addressing the problem in the MU-1 district
- In fall and winter 2018, the Police Department reviewed other noise ordinances and found there is no single, accepted standard for decibel (dB) levels; many cities have different standards for different types of zoning districts and most newer ordinances measure dB levels at the property line
- Beginning in October, police officers have been monitoring sound twice an hour between 8 p.m. and midnight in downtown



# What has the City done about this issue?

- In November 2018, Round Rock voters approved standardizing mixed-drink laws throughout City limits
- City Council voted Dec. 20 to extend alcohol serving hours to 2 a.m. throughout City limits, and directs staff to review options to amend noise ordinance to address specific problem in downtown. Goal is set to have a proposal to review in January.
- City staff (police, planning, legal, communications) met in late December to discuss findings of police review of other ordinances and review data collection results
- Staff moves forward based on notion that MU-1 district is unique with mix of residential and commercial, and thus a solution should balance the needs of both groups.



# What has the City done about this issue?

- Staff presented an overview at Dec. 18 City Council packet briefing that would significantly limit sound at 10 p.m. weekdays, midnight weekends, and reduce noise during the day as well in the MU-1 district.
- On Dec. 19, City sets up an email box, [noise@roundrocktexas.gov](mailto:noise@roundrocktexas.gov), to accept public input on the proposal
- On Jan. 8, City Manager sent email outlining the proposal to downtown area residents who have spoken at Council meetings about the issue; Communications staff sent email to downtown businesses outlining the proposal; a letter is mailed from City Manager to bars and restaurants in downtown outlining the proposal, including certified letters to owner of La Esquina Cantina and Long Branch Saloon, Rockey's Piano Bar and Coco's Lounge.
- Based on a Jan. 6 citizen email to [noise@roundrocktexas.gov](mailto:noise@roundrocktexas.gov) alerting staff that outside speakers directed to the public right of way are prohibited in MU-1 district, Code Enforcement officers notified eight businesses of the violation. As of Friday, Jan. 11, speakers have been removed at all eight businesses.



# What is the proposal?

The amendment, which applies only to the MU-1 district, would require outdoor music venues to apply for a permit.

The amendment defines an outdoor music venue as a commercial property where sound equipment is used to amplify sound that is: not fully enclosed by permanent, solid walls and a roof; or allowed to project out of an exterior doorway that is routinely opened.

Sound equipment means a loud speaker, public address system, amplification system, or other sound producing device.





# What is the proposal?

Permit holders would be required to follow the time of day restrictions below:

- They shall not operate sound equipment in excess of 80 decibels *as measured at the property line of the business* from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; and from 10 a.m. to midnight on Friday and Saturday.
- At all other times, permit holders shall not operate sound equipment in excess of 50 decibels *as measured at the property line of the business*.



# What is the proposal?

- It will be a violation for the owner and/or tenant of an outdoor music venue to use sound equipment without possessing an amplified sound permit
- The Chief of Police will be responsible for the review of applications and the issuance of amplified sound permits
- The amplified sound permit will expire one year from the date of issuance
- A decision by the Chief of Police to approve or deny a permit under this section may be appealed to the City Manager, whose decision shall be final

**Three violations of this new section of the noise ordinance within a 12-month period of time would result in the loss of the permit for a period of one year.**



# How will this amendment to noise ordinance reduce sound levels?

Currently, noise cannot exceed 75 decibels from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., *measured from 200 feet from the property line*, in the MU-1 district.

To give an example of the practical difference in the current ordinance and proposed amendment:

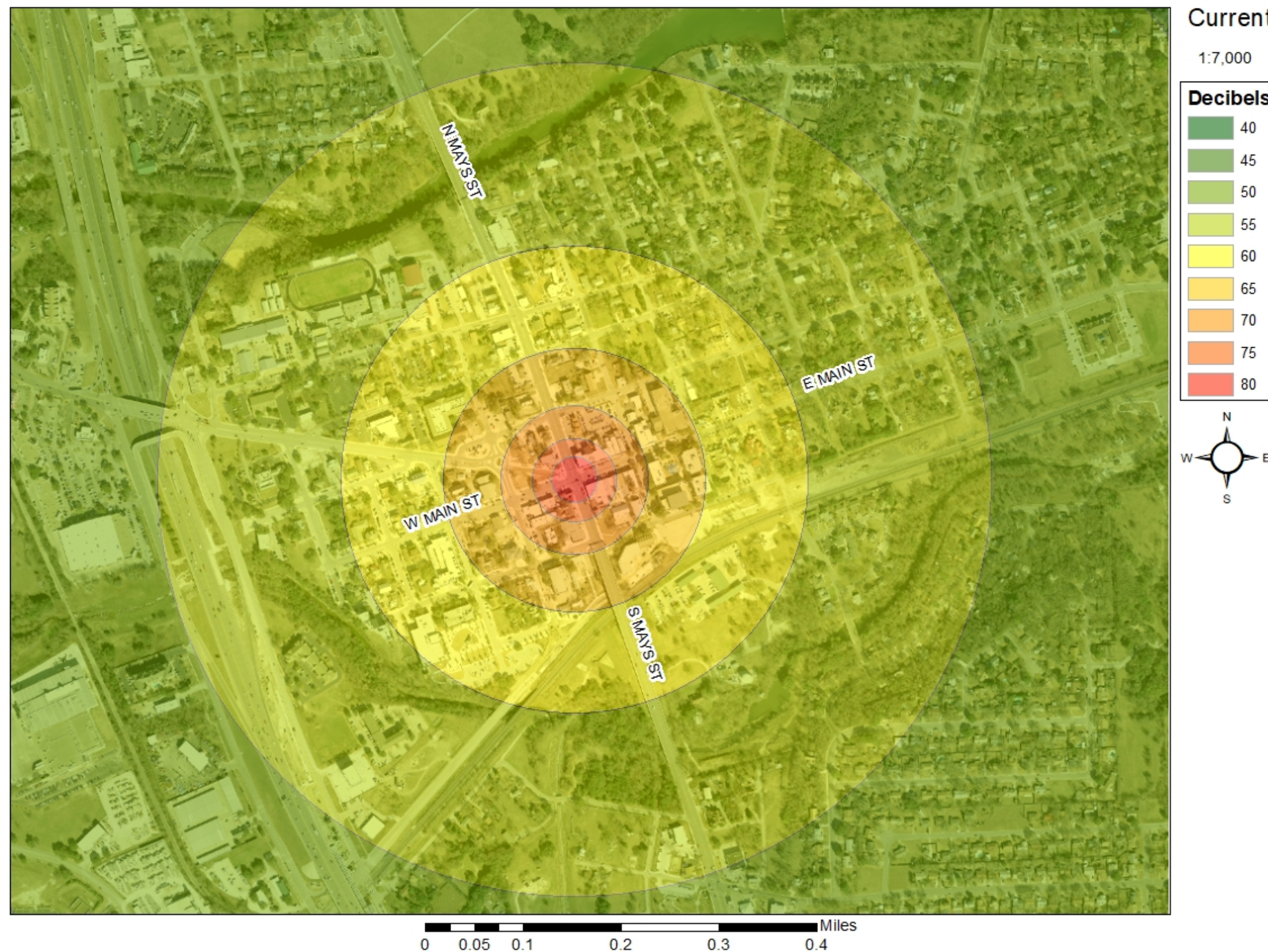
- **Noise that measures 75 dB 200 feet from a property line (current ordinance) would measure 89 dB at the property line**, assuming the source of the noise is 25 feet inside the property line.
- **Noise that measures 80 dB at the property line (proposed amendment) would measure 61 dB 200 feet away**, assuming the the source of the noise is 25 feet inside the property line.



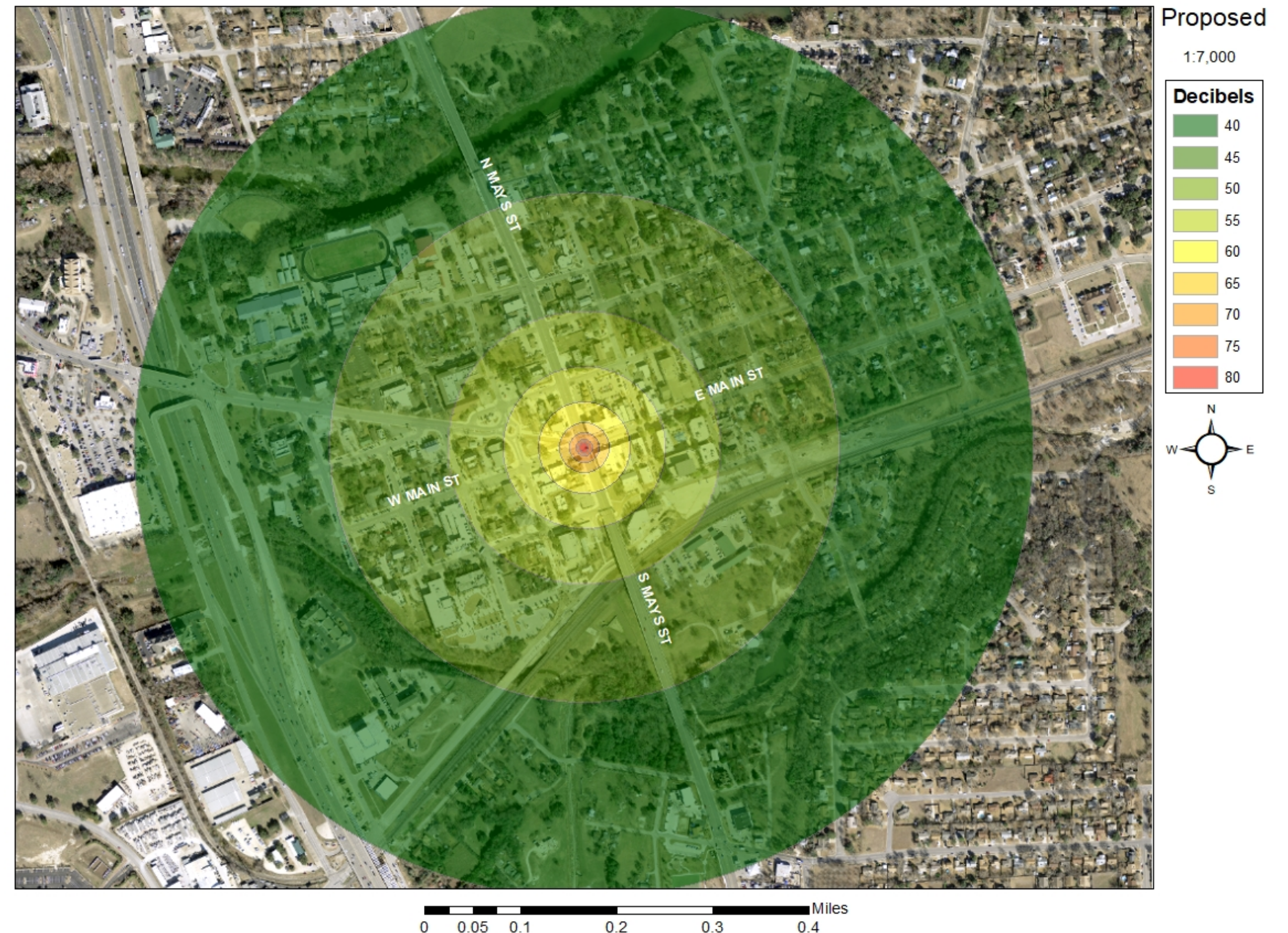
# Reducing sound levels

The maps below provide an example scenario depicting a noise source originating 25 feet from a property line measuring 80 decibel levels at the property line vs. a noise source originating from the same location that measures 75 decibels 200 feet from the property line. As you can see, the old ordinance restriction yields higher decibel levels over a much greater area.

## Current



## Proposed





# Noise Level Chart

*A noise level chart showing examples of sounds with dB levels ranging from 0 to 180 decibels.*

dBA	Example	Home & Yard Appliances	Workshop & Construction
0	healthy hearing threshold		
10	a pin dropping		
20	rustling leaves		
30	whisper		
40	babbling brook	computer	
50	light traffic	refrigerator	
60	conversational speech	air conditioner	
70	shower	dishwasher	
75	toilet flushing	vacuum cleaner	
80	alarm clock	garbage disposal	
85	passing diesel truck	snow blower	
90	squeeze toy	lawn mower	arc welder
95	inside subway car	food processor	belt sander
100	motorcycle (riding)		handheld drill
105	sporting event		table saw
110	rock band		jackhammer
115	emergency vehicle siren		riveter
120	thunderclap		oxygen torch



# Next steps

The proposed amendment, along with the public input received from this Open House meeting, via email from [noise@roundrocktexas.gov](mailto:noise@roundrocktexas.gov) and in-person meetings with residents and business owners, will be presented to the City Council on Feb. 14.

If you have additional input to provide on this issue, please use the notepad below.