

Acoustical Standards

Reducing setbacks to bring buildings closer to the street enables:

- more efficient use of urban land;
- active building frontages where doors and windows face the street; and
- more lively public streets.

These desirable goals can conflict with residential livability when traffic noise exceeds acceptable limits for uninterrupted sleep or undisturbed conversation within dwelling units.

The Town has sought mitigations (measures intended to offset the impact of traffic noise) on residential properties within 75 m of the Town's busiest streets and anywhere within the Comox Downtown Revitalization Area. Mitigation of traffic noise will be sought during major rezoning applications. This won't apply to minor rezoning applications such as rezoning a single-family parcel for coach house. Nor will this apply to subdivisions that do not require rezoning.

The Town has recently developed a standardized methodology to allow developers to determine if their proposed residential development would be affected by levels of traffic noise that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission considers important to mitigate.

A web-based Acoustical Standards tool will incorporate the Town's existing traffic data for arterial and major collector streets such as:

- traffic volumes;
- average speeds;
- type of traffic (cars vs. multi-axel heavy vehicles); and
- road grades (engine sound increases with steepness).

The developer will need to input the following factors in the calculator:

- proximity of intersections (the cause of stop and start noise);
- whether the landscape is a hard or soft surface between the road and the building(s);
- setbacks of building facades from roads;
- proposed number of stories in a building; and
- whether a building is orientated parallel or perpendicular to the road.

Since BC Building Code standards for wall construction give a high level of sound attenuation, mitigation actions, if applicable, primarily consist of increased sound attenuation specifications for windows.

Please contact Planning Department staff for more information.