

Amplified Sound and Healthcare Facilities

Noise Ordinance Considerations
Community Engagement Report



Background

Prior to 2023 most complaints related to Fulton Street - The Heritage Clinic for Women. Complaints from nearby residents related to sound. The Heritage Clinic for Women closed in the fall of 2023.

Since spring of 2024 complaints have been received from Heritage Hill neighborhood residents related to 445 Cherry Street – Planned Parenthood. Complaints from nearby residents related to sound.

Challenges with enforcement due to complexities measuring sound.

Longstanding issue related to use of loudspeakers in public places. In general 1st Amendment Considerations are applicable.



Phil Strom
Interim City
Attorney



Andrea Riley-
Mukavetz
Community
Engagement
Manager

Ongoing Conversations

- Community concerns elevated by community in January 2025 to City Attorney, Mayor, and Commissioners.
- Several elected officials expressed an interest in reviewing our existing noise ordinance.
- Committee of the Whole Discussion – August 12, 2025 – Mixed feelings about changing the noise ordinance.
 - Request for additional community engagement.
- October 15, 2025 – Virtual Community Engagement and Survey
 - Participating medical facilities had little experience with amplified sound at their facilities
 - They all value the health, safety, and well-being of their staff and clients
- Does the Public Safety Committee think this is a topic that should be prioritized and codified?

Current City Ordinance Title IX, Chapter 151, Article 5

Sec. 9.63. - Prohibited Noise.

No person shall:

(4) Operate any device creating amplified sound on any public property or public right-of-way that is louder than average conversational level at a distance of one hundred (100) feet or more, measured vertically or horizontally, from the source.





Special Events and Protest/Picketing Events

- Most special events allow limited amplified sound since they are ordinarily relieved from the general provisions of our city noise ordinance.
- Protest/Picketing Events that are not permitted must generally comply with the noise ordinance. Amplified may be used but must not be louder than average conversational level at one hundred (100) feet or more.



Time, Place, and Manner Considerations

Protesting and picketing are generally protected speech under the First Amendment. Cities may need to regulate these activities to protect the public interest, including by applying ordinances that address noise, traffic safety, trespassing, disorderly conduct, resisting and obstructing, and destruction of property.

But these ordinances should be applied reasonably and judiciously. Laws and ordinances that are prior restraints on speech deserve particularly close scrutiny.

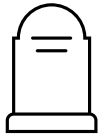
Permissible Content Neutral Regulations



Protesting and picketing that occur too close to polling locations



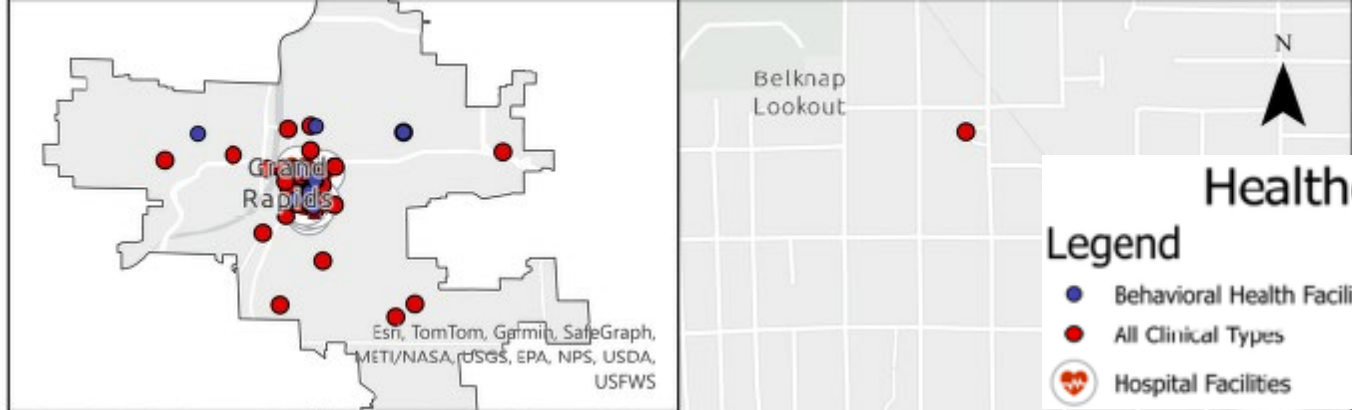
Protesting and picketing that impacts medical facilities



Protesting and picketing that impacts a funeral




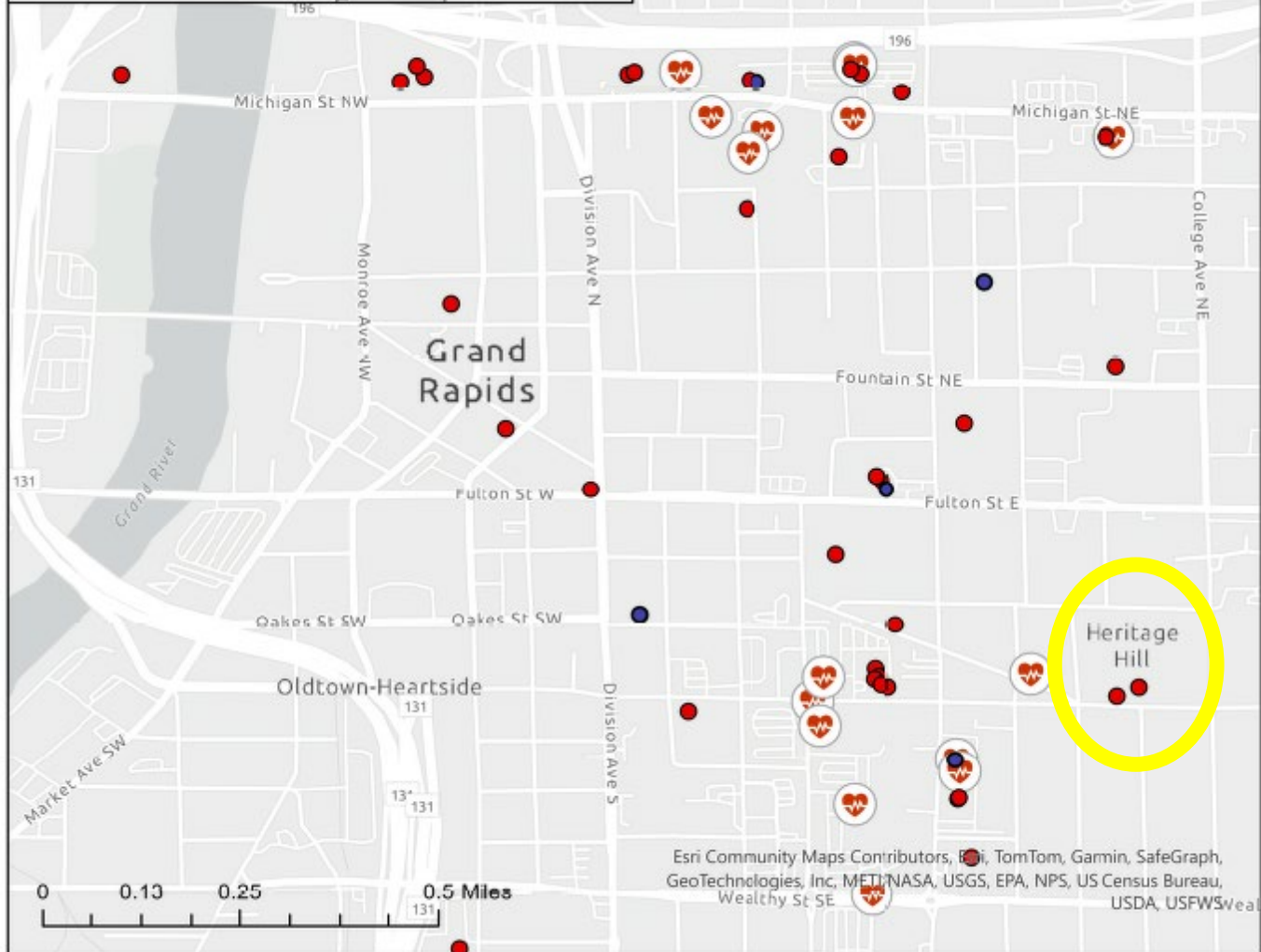
Other more complex regulations around schools and residences.



Healthcare Facilities, Grand Rapids Michigan

Legend

- Behavioral Health Facilities
- All Clinical Types
-  Hospital Facilities



Staff Concerns

- City staff, including but not limited to the City Manager, Police Chief, and Managing Director of Oversight and Public Accountability, are concerned and recommend caution when considering potential amendments to the noise ordinance.
- Staff is concerned about increased involvement by police officers when responding to complaints about non-violent activities and the potential for escalation.
- Staff believe these concerns are worth considering before making any changes to the noise ordinance.
- Staff has expressed concerns about the current broad definition of health care facility in our City Code and the application of the noise ordinance to such a wide range of facilities.

Next Steps – Public Safety Discussion

Does additional regulation of amplified sound at health care facilities align with the goals and priorities for public safety in the City of Grand Rapids?