Dear Mayor Leffingwell, Mayor Pro-Tem Cole, and City Council Members,

We have reviewed the recommendations by Staff regarding sound mitigation for Downtown regarding music venues. The study is in the right direction, however, the single detail solution at the sound reception end only begins to touch upon the greater problem and solutions. There are two parts to the solution…the source and the reception. Both parts need be considered and recommendations to both need to be made. To begin, both sides need to agree upon an acceptable public noise level at the property lines. Performance detailing can then be created to achieve it.

Mitigation of the sound at the source would benefit the current and future residents of downtown.

We begin by limiting decibels and sound frequency ranges at the property line to bring it down to that of other similar cities. We understand that simply turning down the volume may not be acceptable to some as it may alter the ambiance of the venues. For those, they can try to maintain the original volume and frequencies but mitigate its release thru design. Because recommendations at the receiving end entails considering construction detailing, it would not be out of line to ask the same of those at the sound source. A wealth of information, products and details are available to begin mitigating this and need to be considered…some at a greater fiscal cost than others. An effort needs to be made to study this. A venue recently came before us which began to incorporate this, so the principles are not new.

Mitigation of sound at the reception for future construction can be addressed in a multitude of ways. The building skin’s articulation can begin to deflect and diffuse the sound and choice of materials can begin to absorb it. Because this is based upon configurations and choices, cost may not necessarily be more, especially if sound was further mitigated at the source. Besides the laminated glass recommended by Staff, a multitude of enhancements can be done in the wall assembly. Choice of studs, insulation type, additional caulking, stud configuration, and sound isolation glues are some of the typical standard details used to limit sound transfer. Final performance standards, however, should not alter the variety of character currently achievable by designers. By having sufficient available detailing options, this can be balanced.

For existing construction, besides mitigation at the source and retrofitting a laminated glass window, which is not fiscally realistic, there needs to be achievable retro-fit ideas available for those most sensitive to the noise. Most
likely there will be a cost attributed to this, however each situation is different and acceptable levels differ per individual. Some retro-fit details include glass films, drapes, and adding a layer of isolated sheetrock with isolation glue. Recommendations need to be studied for this instance since it affects the current population which sparked the study.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this study, however, there is not enough information to provided support for the current proposal. Staff has done a fine job in the study, in bringing stakeholders together, and in bringing attention to the large problem at hand. Our commission is composed of professionals who have designed to deal with issues such as this and can be available to assist in further recommendations.

Sincerely,

James Shieh
Chair, Design Commission