

## Silent night

About 18 months ago, Mayor Bloomberg, having spotted that his plans for improving the quality of life for New Yorkers went hand in hand with a crackdown on noise makers, initiated “Operation Silent Night”. Noise complaints had risen to over 80% of calls to the New York Police Department’s Quality of Life Hotline (311), up from 43% when the hotline was first set up in 1996. Noise is a popular cause for the Mayor. So, the first phase of Silent Night targeted 24 locations identified by the NYPD as high noise zones, including The Bronx, Greenwich Village, Manhattan, Harlem and lesser known localities.

This was to be no quick fix for political gain, but a long-term effort, leading to identification of other zones for inclusion in later phases. Enforcement lies with the police, through an executive officer in each zone’s precinct, who oversees the initiative, whilst the police work with other agencies which, for example, have sound level meters. Enforcement has included noise measurements, vehicle checkpoints, seizure of audio equipment, issuing summonses and arrests. There are some parallels between Bloomberg going after noise nuisance and his predecessor, Giuliani, going for squeegee men and

similar public menaces.

In the first six months of “Silent Night” there were nearly 1500 noise summonses. A spin off has been that some stopped for noise were found to be wanted for other violations, or were carrying illegal items. In just one week in the Bronx, 12 felony and 24 misdemeanour arrests were made, whilst one noise arrest led to confiscation of a 357 Magnum revolver. To quote Mayor Bloomberg on the first year of operation “By targeting areas with a high concentration of noise complaints, we have been able to curb disorderly behaviour, and, in the process, we have also been able to help prevent the kind of serious crime that is on the rise in other cities.”

The Bronx Campaign for Peace and Quiet claims that noise pollution is often associated with impoverishment, whilst fostering peace and quiet leads to respect for other people and an improved community. Continuing noise chases away those who can afford to move – the middle classes – leading to spiralling breakdown of the community. They may be right, but there is no doubt that, if you draft sufficient number of police into an area at night, you will catch more than just the noisemakers.

Other cities, please note.

### *noise notes*

#### **RUBBERIZED ROADS**

Street and highway builders from Sacramento to San Diego are churning used tires into crumbs and mixing them with asphalt to lay what traffic engineers say is a new generation of quieter smoother and longer-lasting roads. The concept offers a big environmental benefit, state waste management officials say, by helping cut into the mountains of discarded tires piling up at a rate of 33 million a year in California. Sacramento County officials conducted noise tests beginning in 1993 at Alta Arden Expressway and say their studies show the rubberized asphalt reduced vehicle noise by 6 decibels immediately and maintained a 5-decibel difference six years later. Experts claim that rubberized roads emit less noise because their flexibility allows them to absorb and dissipate the shock wave from vehicle tires.