

AN ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH MINIMUM SETBACK AND NOISE STANDARDS FOR CAR WASH FACILITIES IN UNINCORPORATED GREENVILLE COUNTY TO PROTECT RESIDENTIAL AREAS FROM EXCESSIVE NOISE.

BE IT ORDAINED by the County Council of Greenville County, South Carolina:

Section 1. Purpose and Findings. Greenville County Council finds that excessive noise from car wash facilities pose significant risks to the health, welfare, and peaceful enjoyment of residents of Greenville County, especially children, whose recommended noise exposure levels are lower than what is currently produced by some car wash operations. Car wash facilities often include mechanical equipment (blowers, vacuums, conveyors) capable of producing sustained noise levels exceeding residential compatibility thresholds, and existing County ordinances do not adequately protect nearby residential properties from noise pollution associated with car wash developments. Greenville County Council, therefore, finds that there is a need to establish a reasonable minimum separation distance between car wash facilities and residential properties; to set maximum allowable noise levels at residential property boundaries consistent with EPA, South Carolina Department of Public Health, and South Carolina Department of Environmental Services recommendations; and to ensure new car wash facilities or substantial modifications to existing ones do not create noise conditions detrimental to neighboring residents.

Section 2. Applicability. This ordinance shall apply to:

- A. All newly constructed car wash facilities, including automated, tunnel, self-service, and full-service facilities, located within unincorporated Greenville County; and
- B. Existing car washes only when such noise-making equipment is replaced, modifications are made to any equipment, or any mechanical equipment that produces such noise levels above prescribed limits in this ordinance is changed, expanded, reconstructed, or replaced.

Section 3. Definitions. For the purposes of this ordinance, the terms below shall have the following meanings:

“Car Wash Facility” means any commercial site where vehicles are washed by automated, self-service, or manual means for compensation.

“Daytime Hours” means 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. local time.

“Decibel (dB(A)) Level” means a unit measuring sound intensity on an A-weighted scale, adjusted for the sensitivity of human hearing.

“Nighttime Hours” means 10:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. local time.

“Residential Property” means any parcel improved with a dwelling unit or zoned for residential use under Greenville County zoning maps.

Section 4. Minimum Setback Requirement.

- A. No new car wash facility, including all mechanical equipment and structures, shall be located closer than 100 feet from the nearest property line of any residential property. This separation is intended to provide an additional buffer zone reducing the impact of operational noise on residences.
- B. A noise suppression fence/structure and a vegetative buffer must be installed and maintained within the setback to further mitigate sound transmission.

Section 5. Noise Limitations.

- A. **Daytime Standard:** Noise generated by car wash operations shall not exceed 50 decibels (dB(A)), measured at the property line of any adjacent residential property.
- B. **Nighttime Standard:** Noise generated by car wash operations shall not exceed 50 decibels (dB(A)), measured at the property line of any adjacent residential property.
- C. Measurements shall be taken with a Type 2 sound level meter in accordance with standards recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).
- D. Noise levels shall be measured with car wash equipment operating at full cycle capacity, excluding brief, incidental sounds from passing vehicles.

Section 6. Operational Requirements.

- A. All mechanical equipment producing noise, including blowers and vacuums, shall be:
 - 1. Enclosed or shielded by structures designed for sound attenuation; and
 - 2. Regularly maintained to ensure equipment does not exceed manufacturer’s noise ratings.
- B. Car wash facilities operating beyond daytime hours must:
 - 1. Use reduced-noise settings or
 - 2. Cease use of high-decibel blowers and vacuums during Nighttime Hours.

Section 7. Permitting and Compliance.

- A. **Noise Impact Assessment:** Prior to issuance of a land development or building permit, applicants must submit a noise impact assessment prepared by a certified acoustical professional demonstrating projected compliance with this ordinance.
- B. **Post-Construction Testing:** Before any operational commencement, a certified test verifying compliance shall be required and must be submitted to Greenville County Code Enforcement. Recurring tests shall be conducted and submitted every 365 days or more frequently to address any complaints.
- C. **Violations:**
 - 1. **First violation:** Written notice and 30 days to correct.
 - 2. **Subsequent violations:** Civil penalties up to \$500 per day for continued non-compliance.
 - 3. **Business Registration Revocation:** Persistent, uncorrected violations may result in suspension or revocation of the business registration for the car wash facility.

Section 8. Variance Procedure.

- A. An applicant may petition the Greenville County Board of Zoning Appeals for a variance from the 100-foot setback requirement, with a 75-foot setback being the minimum setback allowed, provided that noise emissions will not exceed 50 dB(A) at the residential property line and enhanced noise barriers and operational restrictions are implemented as conditions of approval and tested before operations commence.
- B. No variance shall be granted that would conflict with state or federal environmental or health regulations.

Section 9. Severability.

If any provision of this ordinance is found invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such ruling shall not affect the remaining provisions.

Section 10. Effective Date.

This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption by Greenville County Council and shall apply to all qualifying development applications submitted thereafter.

DONE IN REGULAR MEETING THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2025.

Benton Blount, Chairman
Greenville County Council

ATTEST:

Regina McCaskill
Clerk to Council

Joseph M. Kernell
County Administrator