



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/19/2025

File #: 25-887

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Amendment of the Zoning Code to establish Design Standards for Outdoor Lighting for Residential, Agricultural, Commercial, and Industrial Uses Within the Inland and Coastal Unincorporated Areas of Humboldt County by Adding Section 314-105.1 and Amending Sections 314-138, 314-141, 314-142, 314-147, and 314-154 of Chapter 4 of Division 1 of Title III of the County Code; and adding section 313-105.1 and amending sections 313-138, 313-141, 313-142, 313-147, and 313-154 in Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title III of the County Code

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Open the public hearing, receive and consider the staff report, the Planning Commission's recommendation and accept public comment; and
2. Close the public comment portion of the public hearing; and
3. Deliberate and comment on the draft ordinances presented; and
4. Adopt the attached resolutions (Attachments 1 and 2) for the Inland and Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinances to take the following actions:
 - a. Consider the project-specific addendum to the Humboldt County General Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) that was prepared for the proposed Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance per §15164 of the state CEQA Guidelines (Attachment 1A); and
 - b. Find that the proposed Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance is exempt from environmental review under Section 15251(f) Exemption for Certified State Regulatory Programs of CEQA Guidelines; and
 - c. Find the proposed Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance is consistent with the General Plan; and
 - d. Find the proposed Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance is consistent with the Local Coastal Plan and the Coastal Act; and
5. Adopt the Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance adding section 314-105.1 and amending sections 314-138, 314-141, 314-142, 314-147, and 314-154 of Chapter 4 of Division 1 of Title III of the County Code (Attachment 3), and
6. Adopt the Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance adding section 313-105.1 and amending sections 313-138, 313-141, 313-142, 313-147, and 313-154 of Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title III of the County Code (Attachment 4); and
7. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish the post-adoption summary of the Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (Attachment 5) within 15 days after adoption by the Board, and to post in the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors a certified copy of the full text of the adopted ordinances along with the names of those Supervisors voting for and against the

ordinance; and

8. Direct Planning and Building staff to transmit the Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance with relevant information to the Coastal Commission for Certification; and
9. Direct Public Works to allow Planning Commission review and recommendation on any ordinance prepared to implement General Plan Policies IS-M17, IS-P20, and IS-S9 prior to consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Safe & Healthy Communities

Strategic Plan Category: 1008 - Update General Plan ordinances for quality of environment

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: All unincorporated areas of Humboldt County.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: All land use designations.

Present Zoning: All zoning districts.

Environmental Review: Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance - A project-specific addendum to the Humboldt County General Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) has been prepared for consideration and adoption per §15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance - The proposed ordinance is exempt from environmental review under §15251(f) *Exemption for Certified State Regulatory Programs* of CEQA Guidelines.

State Appeal: Changes proposed to the Local Coastal Program (zoning ordinance provisions 313-105.1 and other sections of Chapter 3) must receive final certification from the California Coastal Commission before they become effective. The inland ordinance is not appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Executive Summary:

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to adopt a Coastal and Inland version of an ordinance to establish Outdoor Lighting criteria. These ordinances implement General Plan Policies and have been written to make implementation as easy as possible. The primary objectives are to maintain dark skies and limit light pollution and trespass. The department has received numerous complaints regarding light trespass. The Planning Commission considered the ordinances during a workshop and at one public meeting and with a 6-0 vote recommends the Board adopt these ordinances.

2017 General Plan

The Outdoor Lighting Ordinance implements the county's 2017 Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan, specifically Scenic Resources Standard 4 - Light and Glare and Implementation Measure 5 - Lighting Design Guidelines.

SR-S4: Light and Glare. *New outdoor lighting shall be compatible with the existing setting. Exterior lighting fixtures and street standards (both for residential and commercial areas) shall be fully shielded and designed and installed to minimize off-site lighting and direct light within the property boundaries.*

SR-IM5: Lighting Design Guidelines. *Amend the Zoning Regulations to include lighting design guidelines for discretionary projects. Require new development and projects that would make significant parking lot improvements or add new exterior lighting to submit a lighting plan consistent with these guidelines. Lighting design guidelines should address:*

A. Intensity - Acceptable standards shall be defined for various land uses and development types specifying the maximum

allowable total lumens per acre.

- B. Directional Control - Standards shall be developed to minimize the upward transmission and intensity of light at various distances from its source through the use of full-cutoff lighting, downward casting, shielding, visors etc.*
- C. Signage - Standards with respect to illuminated signs shall be developed that prohibit or limit the size, spacing, design, upward transmission of light, and hours of operation. In addition, signs should be white or light colored lettering on dark backgrounds.*
- D. Night Lighting - Hours of operation for various uses shall be specified in order to prohibit all night lighting except when warranted for public safety reasons. On demand lighting shall be encouraged.*
- E. Incentives - The County shall develop incentives for residents and businesses encouraging the conversion of existing lighting sources to compliant ones.*
- F. Enforcement - These standards shall be incorporated into the County Development Code and design review process for new development.*

Note: Section C of SR-IM5 has been addressed with adoption of the Sign Ordinance (Ordinance 2735). The Sign Ordinance was adopted on April 9, 2024, to address community concerns and complaints relating to signs and billboards and implementing SR-IM2 and SR-IM5 by amending zoning regulations to provide a uniform set of standards for the development, setting, size, and installation of signs within the unincorporated areas of Humboldt County.

Planning Commission Workshop - 3.20.2025

A workshop was held at the Planning Commission on March 20, 2025, to discuss the draft Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. During that workshop, the Planning Commission discussed the following:

- Glare
 - Planning Commission discussed the definition of glare and requested that the definition be revised. Staff determined that glare is duplicative and less precise of a concept than light trespass or light pollution and removed the definition of glare and references to glare.
- Maximum Correlated Color Temperature (CCT) of 3000K
 - Staff changed maximum CCT from 3000K to 2700K at the request of the Commission based on public comment.
- CCT versus Intensity
 - Public comments called for establishing a maximum light intensity. The Planning Commission discussed options and decided to have a maximum CCT instead of a maximum intensity. This allows the public to have a bright light if they desire provided it is fully shielded. Any light that is not fully shielded shall adhere to the maximum CCT and not contribute to light pollution or cause light trespass.
- Hours of Operation
 - The commission found regulation of Hours of Operation is difficult particularly relative to the need to provide public safety and for security. The limitation of hours of operation were removed.
- Parking Lot Lighting
 - The Planning Commission removed "Motion sensor lighting is encouraged in parking lots to provide security and safety without a light constantly being lit."

Planning Commission Public Hearing - May 15, 2025

A public hearing was held at the Planning Commission on May 15, 2025, to consider the Inland and Coastal versions of the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance including modifications made in response to the workshop. During the hearing, the Planning Commission went line by line through the draft ordinances. The Planning Commission modified the maximum lumen limits (1000 lumens for residential uses and 3000 lumens for commercial, industrial agricultural uses) in response to multiple public comments. With these changes the Planning Commission voted 6-0 to recommend the Board of Supervisors adopt the ordinances addressing outdoor lighting.

Additional Consideration.

Staff is recommending alternatives to the Planning Commission recommendation. After the Planning Commission hearing staff received a call from a local hardware store who indicated that the lumen limitations would disqualify many of the lights that are currently available. Staff visited a couple of hardware stores and found that 1100 lumen and 3200 lumen lightbulbs and lighting fixtures were more available and common than 1000 lumen and 3000 lumen lightbulbs and lighting fixtures. Looking at lightbulbs

and light fixtures available in local hardware stores for every one lightbulb or light fixture that was 1000 lumens, there were three available at 1100 lumens. Staff is recommending changing the maximum lumen limit for residential uses from 1000 lumens to 1100 lumens to allow the public more options in lightbulbs and light fixtures that local stores supply. Staff found a similar trend with 3000 lumen and 3200 lumen lightbulbs and light fixtures and is recommending changing the maximum lumen limit for agricultural, commercial, and industrial uses from 3000 lumens to 3200 lumens. This limitation only applies to lights that remain on and does not apply to motion detection-triggered fixtures.

Streetlights

There were public comments requesting that streetlights be included in the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. One public comment requested that the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance needs to address the following from the Community Infrastructure and Services chapter of the 2017 Humboldt County General Plan:

- **IS-P20. Street Lighting.** *Street lighting shall be required when necessary to improve public safety in urban and suburban areas and Village Centers.*
- **IS-S9. Street Lighting.** *Where development is required to install streetlights, they shall be designed to block upward transmission of light, avoid light trespass, and achieve design illumination in prescribed areas with limited scatter.*
- **IS-IM17. Street Lighting.** *Prepare street lighting standards that allow for community-specific priorities and standards and that specify when streetlights are required based on intersection type and functional classification. Establish lighting design criteria, considering AASHTO and International Dark-Sky Association guidelines.*

Per the 2017 Humboldt County General Plan - Implementation Plan, it is the responsibility of Public Works Land Use to implement IS-IM17, IS-P20, and IS-S9. The Planning Commission has formally requested that any ordinance implementing IS-IM17, IS-P20, and IS-S9 be referred to the Planning Commission who would then provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General funds (1100)

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff costs and other expenses related to research of the ordinance, and preparation and review of this staff report total approximately \$58,000. The staff positions to complete this work are filled and allocated and are included in the General Fund contribution to the Long Range Planning unit 1100-282.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Staff time related to research and drafting the ordinance was accomplished with existing staff resources. There may be an increase in workload for the Code Enforcement Unit, which is funded by the General Fund (1100-269), who would have to review lighting nuisance complaints and may need to verify lighting nuisances after normal business hours.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Humboldt County Public Works Department & California Coastal Commission.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board's Discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Inland Resolution
 - A. CEQA Addendum
2. Coastal Resolution
3. Inland Lighting Ordinance
4. Coastal Lighting Ordinance
5. Inland Post Adoption Summary
6. PC Resolution 25-033 Inland
7. PC Resolution 25-034 Coastal
8. Public Comment

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

File #: 25-887

Meeting of: 3/20/2025 Planning Commission

File No.: 25-386

Meeting of: 5/15/2025 Planning Commission

File No.: 25-645