

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT, STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Certified copy of portion of proceedings, Meeting of ***August 19, 2025***

OUTDOOR LIGHTING ORDINANCE - INLAND

ORDINANCE NO. 2767

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt ordains as follows:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE OF AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING REGULATIONS

The purpose of the Inland Outdoor Lighting Ordinance is to implement the Humboldt County General Plan by setting outdoor lighting standards in the zoning ordinance to protect unincorporated Humboldt County from light pollution and light trespass.

SECTION 2. OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Add Section 314-105.1 setting standards for outdoor lighting in Title III, Division 1, Chapter 4 of the Humboldt County Code as follows (additions are shown in underline text):

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314-105.1 Outdoor Lighting

105.1.1 Purpose. These outdoor lighting regulations are intended to:

105.1.1.1 Establish reasonable design standards for outdoor lighting to minimize light pollution, while maintaining nighttime safety, utility, security, and the enjoyment of the night sky;

105.1.1.2 Minimize light trespass by limiting outdoor lighting that is misdirected;

105.1.1.3 Require lighting to be focused on the developed environment to protect the natural environment from the damaging effects of lighting trespass;

105.1.1.4 Provide a process to address degradation of the nighttime visual environment and the night sky; and

105.1.1.5 Provide a process to address light trespass.

105.1.2 General Regulations. The following regulations shall apply to all outdoor lighting, unless specified elsewhere:

105.1.2.1 To minimize the effects of light trespass and light pollution, outdoor lighting shall:

105.1.2.1.1 Be illuminated only when the area to be illuminated is actively being used or to address safety needs;

105.1.2.1.2 Limit the area to be illuminated to the area of the property engaged in a permitted activity; and

105.1.2.1.3 Be shielded and directed downward.

105.1.2.2 All outdoor lighting fixtures shall:

105.1.2.2.1 Be fully shielded to preclude light glow above the fixture and from going beyond the intended area of illumination. Light fixtures that use translucent material to cover the light source may be acceptable if the bulbs have a correlated color temperature (CCT) of 2700 Kelvin (K) or less in lieu of being fully shielded.

105.1.2.2.2 Be directed downward and not toward:

105.1.2.2.2.1 Neighboring properties, the public right-of-way, biological resources, or the sky.

105.1.2.2.3 Not create light trespass or spillover onto neighboring properties or

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biological resources.

105.1.2.3 Other County laws or ordinances may have different requirements for specific applications and may conflict with these regulations. In such cases, those laws or ordinances shall govern.

105.1.3 Prohibited Lighting.

105.1.3.1 The following lighting systems are prohibited:

105.1.3.1.1 Aerial lasers;

105.1.3.1.2 Search-light style lights;

105.1.3.1.3 Mercury vapor lights;

105.1.3.1.4 Flashing lights;

105.1.3.1.5 Low-pressure sodium fixtures; and

105.1.3.1.6 Any lighting that creates distraction to traveling public.

105.1.3.2 A Conditional Use Permit may allow for lighting systems that are prohibited above to be used for a Special Event if the following findings can be made:

105.1.3.2.1 The lighting system is necessary for the proposed use.

105.1.3.2.2 The lighting system will not spill onto neighboring properties.

105.1.4 Exempt Lighting. The following outdoor lighting fixtures are exempt provided there is no light trespass onto neighboring properties, the night sky, or biological resources:

105.1.4.1 Temporary holiday decorations;

105.1.4.2 Light fixtures used to illuminate flags, subject to Federal and State flag code, shall use a very narrow beam of light for the purpose of confining the light to the object of interest and minimizing light trespass;

105.1.4.3 String lights with a CCT of 2700K or less, provided they are turned off by 10:00 PM.

105.1.4.4 Emergency lighting; and

105.1.4.5 Motion detector lighting fixtures provided:

105.1.4.5.1 Maximum time the light is on after being triggered is five (5) minutes; and

105.1.4.5.2 Light cannot be triggered from outside of the subject property.

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105.1.5 Lighting for Residential Use. All outdoor lighting fixtures for residential use shall be subject to subsection 105.1.2.

105.1.5.1 Maximum Illumination. Outdoor lighting fixtures shall not exceed 1100 lumens.

105.1.6 Lighting for Agricultural/Commercial/Industrial Use. All outdoor lighting fixtures for agricultural, commercial, and/or industrial use shall be installed and operated in conformance with subsection 105.1.2 and the subsection below:

105.1.6.1 Maximum Illumination.

105.1.6.1.1 Outdoor lighting fixtures shall not exceed 3200 lumens.

105.1.6.1.2 When adjacent to a residential area, lighting at the property boundary line shall not exceed 0.3 foot-candles.

105.1.6.1.3 Lighting along the public right-of-way, shall not exceed 1.0 foot-candle.

105.1.6.2 Height Limit. Lights mounted on poles or structures intended primarily for mounting lights shall not exceed a mounting height of 20 feet high.

105.1.6.3 Parking Lots. Parking lot lighting shall utilize bulbs that have a CCT of 2700K or less between sunset and sunrise.

105.1.6.4 Modifications. The standards within subsection 105.1.6 may be modified with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

105.1.7 Athletic Field Lighting. Lighting used to illuminate field of play shall be subject to a Conditional Use Permit.

105.1.8 Conformance Review. Any new or modified development project shall submit a lighting plan as part of the building permit application. The applicant shall, as a part of the lighting plan, submit sufficient information to enable the County Planning and Building Department to determine whether the proposed lighting complies with the provisions of this section. The lighting plan shall include the following:

105.1.8.1 A site plan indicating the proposed location of all outdoor lighting fixtures that are included in the development; and

105.1.8.2 A cut sheet of the fixture(s) to be used, showing the shielding, and light dispersion, which will be shown in footcandles and CCT.

105.1.8.3 The project lighting plan shall be coordinated with any associated landscaping plan to prevent site planning conflicts.

105.1.9 Pre-existing Lighting. Any outdoor lighting fixture that was installed prior to the

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adoption of these regulations and was consistent with zoning regulations at the time of installation may remain in its installed form subject to the following:

105.1.9.1 Should the County receive a complaint for a lighting nuisance, the Planning Director may require that the light be shielded, filtered, redirected, replaced with a less intense light source, removed or a combination thereof, to eliminate light trespass or light pollution.

105.1.9.2 Substantial Change of Use and/or Alterations. If a property with non-compliant lighting substantially changes or expands uses after the effective date of these regulations, then any new outdoor lighting associated with the substantial change, expansion, and/or alteration must be compliant with this section.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

Sections 314-138, 314-141, 314-147 and 314-154 are hereby amended and added to as follows (additions are shown in underline text):

314-138 DEFINITIONS (C)

Correlated color temperature: Correlated color temperature (abbreviated 'CCT') in lighting refers to the warmth or coolness of a light source, measured in Kelvin (K), where lower numbers indicate warmer, yellowish light and higher numbers indicate cooler, bluer light.

314-141 DEFINITIONS (F)

Foot-candle: "Foot-candle" (abbreviated 'fc') means a unit of illuminance defined as one lumen per square foot.

314-147 DEFINITIONS (L)

Light fixture: Light fixture means a complete lighting unit consisting of a lamp or lamps, the lamp holder, reflector, lens, diffuser, ballast and/or other components and accessories, together with parts designed to distribute the light, to position and protect the lamps, and to connect the lamps to the power supply. Sometimes referred to as a luminaire or light source.

Lighting nuisance: Lighting nuisance refers to light pollution that significantly impacts or interferes with a person's enjoyment of their property or their health. It can be caused by misdirected or excessive lighting, or light trespass from neighboring properties. A lighting nuisance must be a continual event. A one-time offensive activity is not sufficient to be deemed a lighting nuisance.

Light pollution: Light pollution means any artificial light emitted into the atmosphere, either directly or indirectly, which may have a disruptive effect on natural cycles and inhibits the

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observation of stars and planets.

Light trespass: Light trespass means any artificial light emitted by a lighting installation which shines beyond the boundaries of the property on which the installation is sited. Included, but not limited to, any light from a light fixture onto neighboring property that interferes with viewing of the night sky or eliminates the ability to have darkness on the adjacent property, or shines into or onto neighboring windows, properties or structures.

Lumen: A standard unit that measures the amount of visible light emitted by a light source.

314-154 DEFINITIONS (S)

Shielded: Shielded refers to a light fixture having a housing or optics that prevents a direct view of the light source from normal viewing angles. Types of shielding include:

- a. "Fully shielded" A lighting design where the light source is completely covered by a barrier, preventing any light from escaping upwards or sideways, ensuring that all illumination is directed downwards, minimizing light pollution, and light trespass.
- b. "Unshielded" A lighting design where there is no barrier covering the light source, which causes the light to spread out in all directions.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance shall take effect and be in force thirty (30) days from the date of its adoption.

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PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of August on the following vote, to wit:

AYES: Supervisors: -- Arroyo, Wilson, and Madrone

NOES: Supervisors: -- Bohn and Bushnell

ABSENT: Supervisors: -- None



Michelle Bushnell, Chair

Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt,
State of California

(SEAL)

ATTEST:

Tracy Damico, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
of the County of Humboldt, State of California

By: 

Kaleigh Maffei, Deputy Clerk