

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
Phone: (650) 941-7222
Fax: (650) 941-3160
www.losaltoshills.ca.gov



Outdoor Lighting Policy

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Code Sections and Fast Track Guide for New Residences:

Article 10 of Title 10 Chapter 2 of the Site Development Ordinance outlines criteria for outdoor lighting. In particular, Section 10-2.1005 indicates that outdoor lighting should use “the minimum wattage lights which will safely illuminate the area” and that outdoor light sources “shall be shielded so as not to be directly visible from off-site.” Goal IV (C3) of the Fast-Track Guide for New Residences suggests that exterior lights be carefully placed to prevent light shining onto neighboring houses. The Zoning and Site Development Ordinances limit lighting within the property line setbacks to “driveway light fixtures, limited to one fixture on each side of a driveway, for a maximum of two (2) fixtures per lot,” but additional fixtures may be approved if necessary for safety.

Intent:

The purpose of Zoning and Site Development Ordinances and the Fast-Track Guide regarding outdoor lighting is to assure that the open and peaceful character of the Town is maintained, that adequate lighting is provided for the enjoyment of outdoor use areas, lighting does not intrude on the privacy of neighbors, light pollution is reduced, blue light emissions are minimized, and that glare is minimized onto adjacent properties. The intent of this policy is to clarify: (1) the types and numbers of lighting fixtures; and (2) the light emission and color temperatures of bulbs that are generally consistent with the ordinances and the Fast-Track Guide yet allow flexibility for additional lighting when it is necessary for safety purposes or where it is not visible from off the site.

Policy:

Definitions

Fully Shielded Fixture – No portion of the light bulb or light emanating diode is visible when viewed directly.

Glare - Lighting entering the eye directly from luminaries or indirectly from reflective surfaces that causes visual discomfort or reduced visibility.

Light Pollution - Any adverse effect of artificial light including, but not limited to, glare, light trespass, sky glow, energy waste, compromised safety and security, and impacts on the nocturnal environment.

Blue Light – Higher temperature light spectrum that is prevalent in lighting with color temperature higher than 3000 Kelvins. Lighting with lower color temperatures has less blue in its spectrum and is referred to as being “warm”

Transparent – The physical property of allowing light to pass through the material without appreciable scattering of light. When light passes through a transparent material, almost all of its light emission will pass through to the other side.

Translucent – A translucent material allows some but not all light to pass through. This partial transmittance of light makes translucent materials distinct from transparent materials. Examples of translucent materials include tinted glass, frosted glass, “half transparent” glass office walls, and several forms of painted glass.

Opaque – An opaque material transmits no light. All light is reflected, scattered, or absorbed by the material. No light passes through to the other side.

Opacity – The degree to which something blocks light. 100% Opacity material is opaque. 0% Opacity material is transparent. Partial opacity material is translucent.

General Outdoor Lighting

1. The light emission and color temperatures of light bulbs shall be limited as follows:

	Maximum Light Emission (Lumens, Φ_v)	Maximum Color Temperature (Kelvin, K)
Path Lights	200	2700
Step Lights	110	2700
Exterior Wall Sconces	600	3000
Recessed Ceiling Lights	600	3000
Pendant Lights	600	3000
Gate Lights	600	3000
Tree Lights	300 (600 for two fixtures)	2700
Temporary Construction Lighting	500	3000

2. The number of lights on the exterior of a structure should be limited to providing for one light per doorway, with the exception of two lights at the main entrance, at double doors, at multi-door systems (e.g. bifold doors and stacking glass doors), a set of garage doors, etc. Additional lights should only be placed in locations where the Planning Director or Planning Commission determines that they are necessary for safety.
3. Light fixtures should be fully shielded and directed downward, so that the light source is not visible from off site.
4. Pathway and driveway lighting should be fully shielded fixtures, directed downward and no taller than 18 inches. They should be spaced at the maximum distance that still provides for safe use. In order to avoid a “runway” appearance, it is recommended that lighting be placed on only one side of the driveway or walkway, or alternate from one side to the other. Recessed louvered lights are suggested for walkways and steps.
5. Accumulation of many light sources in a small, concentrated areas (ex: BBQ pavilions, exterior dining areas, entry porches or rear patios) shall be avoided.
6. Recessed lights and downlights in second floor roof eaves are prohibited, except where located over a garage floor balcony or deck. Such lights in first floor eaves shall be located over entryways, garage doors, and patio doorways only. Recessed lights and downlights in first or second floor roof eaves shall be positioned so that the light cone does not shine down into a neighboring property. No lighting shall be placed at or near the peak of the roof line of a one- or two-story gabled roof.
7. Garage doors may emit light from a maximum of 30% of their surface area. The light transmitting windows, panels, or other material shall be translucent, allowing no more than 30% of the interior light emission to pass through to the outside.

8. Spotlights and floodlights should be installed only for security and safety purposes. They shall be limited in number, installed with a timer or motion sensor, and directed away from clear view of neighbors. Shielding with shrouds or louvers is recommended.
9. High intensity discharge lighting, such as mercury vapor, high and low pressure sodium, and metal halide lighting, is prohibited. The maximum color temperature of all lights must be 3000 Kelvins or below.
10. Any light beams shall not exit the property.
11. Up-lighting of any kind is prohibited.
12. Wall wash lighting of exterior walls is prohibited.
13. Visible LED lighting strips, tape lights, and bistro lights are prohibited.

Tree Lights

1. Downlighting from trees is allowed under the following conditions:
 - Lights are provided for safety.
 - Lights must be minimal in number, with a maximum of two per tree and two (2) trees per lot.
 - The light fixtures shall not be installed at height more than 15 feet.
 - The light emission and color temperatures of the light fixtures shall be maximum 300 Lumens (600 Lumens for two fixtures) and 2700 Kelvins.
 - Tree lights shall not be provided in close proximity to path lights.
 - The light sources must not be visible from off site.
 - The light fixtures are shielded and directed downward.
 - The tree must be evergreen.
2. Bistro lights, pendant lights, and any similar lighting fixtures hung down from or hung amongst trees are prohibited.

Lighting within Setbacks

1. Lighting within the property line setbacks is limited to two fixtures only, except where the Planning Director or Planning Commission determines that they are necessary for safety.
2. All lights within property line setbacks shall be fully shielded. This includes gate lights within the setbacks.

Lighting for Recreation Areas

1. Lighting is not permitted for tennis courts, basketball courts, bocce ball, or other recreation/sports courts.
2. Pool lighting is allowed under the following conditions:
 - Lights are placed beneath the surface of the water in the pool or spa to illuminate the water
 - Underwater lights are placed such that the light shines away from neighboring properties
 - A maximum of four lights are allowed for pools and spas combined
 - Other exterior lights used to illuminate the surrounding area use the minimum number and wattage of lighting which will safely illuminate the area
 - No direct light is cast beyond the immediate area of the pool

Special Event Lighting

1. Special event lighting, seasonal or otherwise (ex: Christmas lights), shall be limited to 60 days.
2. Light fixtures for single night parties and events shall adhere to all the conditions listed in this document. Search lights, Up-lights, LED Dance lights, and other lights that exceed light emission and color temperature limits or have light beams exiting the property are not permitted.

Lighting within Open Space Easements

1. Lighting is not permitted within Open Space Easements

Temporary Construction Lighting

1. Install one (1) light at the main entrance or access points to the site from the public right of way.
2. Installed lighting shall be fully shielded and directed away from the clear view of neighbors.
3. Lighting shall be motion-activated and with a timer.
4. The light emission of light bulbs shall not exceed 500 lumens.
5. Lighting fixtures shall be installed once the construction fence is up and discontinued immediately upon completion of construction work or if the construction activity has ceased for more than 180 days.

Exceptions

The Planning Director and/or Planning Commission may grant exceptions to allow lighting different from that outlined above when the proposed outdoor lighting is determined to be necessary to safely illuminate the area, or where the size of the property and/or extensive screening will assure that the light source is not visible from off site.