



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: April 22, 2025

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Approved By: Gabe Engeland

Subject: Zone Text Amendments for Lighting Performance Standards

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- ☐ Public Safety
- ☐ Business Communities
- ☐ Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Sustainability
- ☐ Housing
- ☒ General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt an ordinance of the Los Altos City Council adding Chapter 14.91 for Lighting Performance Standards and find that this ordinance is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State Guidelines implementing the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970.

FISCAL IMPACT

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

April 8, 2025.

BACKGROUND

In late 2023, the Los Altos City Council directed staff to develop an ordinance in coordination with the Environmental Commission regarding Bird Safe Design and Dark Skies. The Los Altos Municipal Code does not presently regulate either of these two provisions.

In late spring the Environmental Commission voted on the general requirements of what should be included within a Bird Safe Design and Dark Skies ordinance. Following the discussion regarding the general requirements for the ordinance an Environmental Commission Subcommittee worked directly with the Development Services Department, Management Analyst II and Assistant City Manager on the draft ordinances under consideration. Additionally, the draft

ordinances were reviewed by the Environmental Commission on October 9, 2024; the Environmental Commission made a unanimous decision for the Draft Ordinance to advance to the following stages for adoption.

Since the draft regulations will largely affect housing developments within the City of Los Altos it is essential for these provisions to be included within the Zoning Code which will allow for universal application of standards. All Zoning Code amendments require review by the Los Altos Planning Commission. Following the decision of the Environmental Commission the draft ordinance was scheduled for consideration of the Planning Commission on November 21, 2024.

On November 21, 2024, the Planning Commission was presented the draft ordinances as approved by the Environmental Commission. The Planning Commission made the following recommendation to the Los Altos City Council:

Motion by Beninato and Second by Steinle to recommend the Los Altos City Council adopt Chapter 14.91 for Lighting Performance Standards with a modification to Section 14.91.070 changing provisions for existing nonconforming lighting to be modified upon a 50% threshold of a remodel instead of a five and ten year compliance period and look at providing an incentive program for existing structures; and not adopt Chapter 14.90 for Bird Safe Design Standards; and find the proposed amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

On April 8, 2025, the City Council considered both recommendations by the Environmental and Planning Commissions. The City Council Introduced the Lighting Standards Performance Ordinance with a minor modification to the Kelvin rating from 2,700 to 3,000. The Bird Safe Design Ordinance failed for a lack of motion by the City Council.

DISCUSSION

The proposed Lighting Performance Standards Ordinance is to protect and enhance the city's natural environment and public health by reducing light pollution at night through reasonable restrictions on outdoor lighting.

The Lighting Performance Standards as modified are largely consistent with the recommendation of the Environmental Commission except for Section 14.91.070 Application of Chapter to Existing Nonconforming Lighting as modified by the Planning Commission. The original recommendation of the Environmental Commission included enforcement of nonconforming lighting on a 5- or 10-year compliance schedule post adoption, which the Planning Commission was concerned about the impact on existing developments and the future financial costs associated with those upgrades. The Planning Commission recommended the compliance mechanism for existing nonconforming lighting to be modified upon a 50% threshold of a remodel. The City Council agreed with the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

The City Council Introduced the Lighting Standards Performance Ordinance with a minor modification to the Kelvin rating from 2,700 to 3,000. The modification in Kelvin rating is more consistent with industry standards, and available fixtures.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Draft Ordinance**
- 2. Appendix A – Chapter 14.91**