



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 11/25/2019

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: November 21, 2019
TO: Council Policy Committee
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Discuss and Provide Direction on Potential Outdoor Lighting Regulation Modifications.

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide direction on potential outdoor lighting regulation modifications.

BACKGROUND:

On October 22, 2019, the Town Council Policy Committee discussed Town Code Section 29.10.09015, below, which limits outdoor lighting and prohibits “shoestring lights.” The Policy Committee motion was to temporarily suspend the prohibition of shoestring lighting while the Town considered new lighting regulations for different zones throughout Town.

DISCUSSION:

A. **General Plan**

Los Gatos General Plan Community Design Element includes several policies and goals that apply to outdoor lighting:

Policy CD-3.2 Street and structural lighting shall be required to minimize its visual impacts by preventing glare, limiting the amount of light that falls on neighboring properties, and avoiding light pollution of the night sky.

Policy CD-11.1 Street, walkway, and building lighting should be designed to strengthen and reinforce Downtown’s character.

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Senior Planner

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Community Development Director, and Town Attorney

DISCUSSION (continued):

Goal CD-15 To preserve the natural topography and ecosystems within the hillside area by regulating grading, landscaping, and lighting.

Policy CD-15.7 Review all new development proposals to ensure that:

- a. Outdoor lighting shall be limited.
- b. Permitted lighting shall be of low intensity and for safety purposes.
- c. Lighted sports courts shall be prohibited.
- d. The effects of indoor lights should be studied and reduced if found to be excessive.

B. Zoning Code

Los Gatos Town Code currently includes two sections addressing outdoor lighting. The first, which prohibits outdoor lights from being directed on other property or the public right-of-way, is located in the Zoning Regulations, and applies to all zones, as follows:

Sec. 29.10.09015. - Control of outdoor lighting.

Outdoor lights must be shielded and directed to shine on improvements including plants on the zoning plot where the lights are located and not directly on other property or any public right-of-way. Shoestring lighting is not permitted.

The second, which provides limitations for court game area lighting, is located in the Zoning Regulations, and applies to residential zones only:

Sec. 29.40.025. - Court game areas.

Tennis, volleyball, basketball, badminton and similar court game areas may be located anywhere on the lot except in the required front yard or side yard abutting the street. Fences over six (6) feet high are allowed to enclose court game areas, when approved through the Administrative Procedure for Minor Residential Projects. Lighting for court game areas is prohibited unless approved through the Administrative Procedure for Minor Residential Projects and unless it is in compliance with the following standards to the satisfaction of the Planning Director:

- (1) Game court lighting shall incorporate cut-off fixtures and lighting shall be shielded and directed onto the court.
- (2) Lighting for game court areas shall not be used after 10:00 p.m.
- (3) Lighting in the hillside areas is prohibited. Hillside areas are defined by the hillside area map in the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

DISCUSSION (continued):

The residential zones of the Town are the RC, HR, R-1, RD, R-M, RMH, and R-1D zones, all contained within Article IV of the zoning regulations. Regulations intended to apply only to non-residential zones, including LM, CM, O, C-1, C-2, and CH zones, are contained within Article V of the zoning regulations.

Though the discussion in this report does not address illuminated signage, consistency with the Town's regulations for signs could also be considered, include of the following:

Sec. 29.10.115. - Prohibited signs.

Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the signs described in this section are prohibited.

...

(2) *Lighted signs.* Lighted signs that flash on and off, fluctuate or appear to move.

...

(4) *Excessively bright signs.* Lighted signs whose brightness is detrimental to the reasonable enjoyment of surrounding property or are a traffic hazard.

...

(14) *Projected light signs.* Signs which are flashed or projected onto walls or other structures by means of a projector or other device.

...

Sec. 29.10.125. - Standards.

The following standards prescribed in this section shall apply to all sign approvals.

...

(6) *Illumination generally.* No portion of the surface of any illuminated sign nor any visible lamp illuminating a sign shall have a brightness exceeding one hundred fifty foot-lamberts.

(7) *Illumination near residential districts.* Illuminated signs with a brightness more than thirty foot-lamberts shall not be erected nearer than fifty (50) feet from any point in a residential district unless the face of the sign is not visible from the residential district.

...

C. Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines

The Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines (HDS&G) currently contain references to outdoor lighting within the Site Elements Chapter VI (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION (continued):

D. Residential Design Guidelines

The Residential Design Guidelines currently contain references to outdoor lighting within Guideline 3.11.5 "Minimize exterior lighting impacts on neighbors:"

- All exterior light fixtures should utilize shields so that no bulb is visible and to ensure that light is directed to the ground surface and does not spill light onto neighboring parcels or produce glare when seen from nearby homes.
- Decorative residential light fixtures should be chosen rather than strictly utilitarian security lighting fixtures.

E. Commercial Design Guidelines

The Commercial Design Guidelines currently contain references to outdoor lighting within several sections (Attachment 2).

In addition to the information above, staff has also compiled examples of lighting regulations from nearby municipalities in Attachment 3.

Staff looks forward to the discussion with the Committee and will be available to discuss options and related issues.

COORDINATION:

This report was prepared in coordination with the Town Manager's Office.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is not a fiscal impact associated with this item.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

Attachments:

1. HDS&G References to Outdoor Lighting
2. Commercial Design Guidelines References to Outdoor Lighting
3. Outdoor Lighting Regulation Examples from Other Jurisdictions