

Regulation of Moving & Blinking Lights – Staff Report

Summary & Background

During the previous meeting, the Planning Board raised concerns regarding an increasing prevalence of blinking, flashing, and intrusive light displays on commercial properties throughout town. In response, staff has conducted a regulatory review of existing town standards governing exterior lighting and illuminated signs.

Currently, this type of illumination is regulated under two sections of the town's Unified Development Ordinance. Section B of the Prohibited Signs regulations explicitly prohibits "signs with flashing or moving lights if the sign and/or flashing lights are visible from any residence, or any street or thoroughfare open to vehicular traffic." In addition, § 152.509 (Lighting of Buildings and Landscaping) establishes performance criteria for general site lighting, requiring that "lighting fixtures shall be selected, located, aimed, and shielded so that direct illumination is focused exclusively on the building facade, plantings, and other intended site feature and away from adjoining properties and the public street right-of-way."

Together, these sections establish clear intent: exterior lighting must remain static, direct glare must be fully shielded from public roads and adjacent parcels, and light trespass into right-of-ways or residential areas is prohibited.

Proposed Staff Action Plan

To align town standards with the Planning Board's goals, staff recommends a strategy combining regulatory updates with proactive outreach:

- **UDO Text Amendment:** Staff proposes drafting an amendment to clarify prohibited lighting types across all commercial districts. This will include explicit prohibitions on pulsing, chasing, animated, and strobe effects, as well as clear rules for LED accents.
- **Outreach & Voluntary Compliance Period:** Following board feedback and ordinance clarification, staff will issue a courtesy guidance memo to affected commercial properties summarizing town lighting and sign standards. To encourage cooperation, staff will establish a 30-day voluntary compliance window, allowing business owners ample time to come into compliance before formal Notices of Violation are issued.

Board Action Requested

Staff requests that the Planning Board review the provided ordinances, provide feedback on desired lighting standards, and direct staff to prepare a formal UDO text amendment for consideration at a future meeting.