



City of Arts & Innovation

Land Use Committee

TO: LAND USE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DATE: APRIL 14, 2025

**FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

WARDS: ALL

**SUBJECT: WORKSHOP – EXISTING OUTDOOR LIGHTING STANDARDS (RIVERSIDE
MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTERS 19.556 AND 19.590)**

ISSUE:

Review and provide feedback on the existing outdoor lighting regulations within Chapters 19.556 (Outdoor Lighting) and 19.590 (Performance Standards) of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Land Use Committee:

1. Conduct a workshop on the existing outdoor lighting regulations within Chapters 19.556 and 19.590 of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC); and
2. Provide staff direction to maintain current code or explore any potential changes to policies or regulations.

BACKGROUND:

Title 19 (Zoning) of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC), adopted in 2007, includes Chapter 19.590 (Performance Standards) to establish minimum and maximum requirements for aspects of the design and operation of development projects that have the potential to create negative impacts on their surroundings. The standards in Chapter 19.590 are designed to mitigate potential nuisances related to hazardous and toxic materials; radioactivity; electric and electromagnetic disturbances; light and glare; odor; noise; and heat. These standards supplement and work in concert with more specific regulations of potential nuisances, along with permitting and enforcement provisions, contained in other portions of the RMC including but not limited to Title 5 (Business Taxes, Licenses and Regulations), Title 6 (Health and Sanitation), Title 9 (Peace, Safety and Morals), and Title 16 (Buildings and Construction).

In 2017, California Title 24 Part 6 – Building Energy Efficiency Standards was updated by the California Energy Commission to include outdoor power allowances and development standards for five different Lighting Zones (ranging from 0 through 4). To maintain compliance with State Legislation, The City Council adopted a comprehensive update to the RMC Outdoor Lighting Standards. RMC Chapter 19.556 was amended to:

1. Reorganize and expand the regulations of the previous outdoor lighting standards;

2. Update definitions to reflect changes in technology such as light emitting diode (LED) lighting;
3. Require lighting plan review and certification as part of the building plan check process;
4. Prohibit lighting that is a public danger or nuisance, such as dynamic or aerial laser lighting and lighting in excess of 50,000 lumens;
5. Establish development standards tailored to individual lighting zones (i.e. max. lumens, mounting heights, allowable light trespass) compliance with California Title 24 Part 6 – Building Energy Efficiency Standards; and
6. Restrict light spectrum to 3000 Kelvin (3000 K) or less, eliminating much of the "blue" spectrum of lighting, which has negative health and environmental effects, and contributes to night-sky light pollution.

These amendments resulted in the current Outdoor Lighting standards in effect today.

DISCUSSION:

Chapter 19.556 of the RMC provides objective development standards to ensure that outdoor lighting is adequate for safety, security and commerce while preserving the naturally dark night sky. These standards apply to all outdoor lighting installed or modified after the adoption of the ordinance in 2018, and all land use entitlement applications are reviewed for compliance with this chapter. Lighting within the public right of way, lighting solely for signs, temporary lighting, and emergency lighting are exempt from the sections of this chapter (light for signs must comply with the requirements of Chapter 19.620).

Prohibited Outdoor Lighting under RMC 19.556

The RMC prohibits the following lighting types except when in conjunction with the exemption listed above:

1. Dynamic lighting, such as moving lights, color changing lighting, or digital LED panels that flash, chase, change color, or change intensity for any purpose other than serving as a traffic signal, safety light, or aviation or marine marker;
2. Luminaires exceeding 500,000 peak candelas or 50,000 lumens;
3. Aerial laser lighting;
4. Lighting within Lighting Zone 0 except as permitted by Title 24, Part 6, Section 140.7; and
5. Sport facility lighting.

Lighting Zones

The RMC establishes Lighting Zones in compliance with California Title 24 Part 6 – Building Energy and Efficiency Standards. Table 1 summarizes the lighting zones, areas of applicability, and appropriate exterior light levels.

Lighting Zone	Area of Applicability	Exterior Lighting Level
Lighting Zone 0	Undeveloped areas of parks, recreation areas, and wildlife preserves.	Little to no exterior lighting

Lighting Zone 1	Developed portions of parks, recreation areas, wildlife preserves, and the area within the Mt. Palomar Observatory boundary	Low levels of exterior light at night
Lighting Zone 2	Areas zoned RA-5, RC and RR	Modest levels of exterior lighting at night.
Lighting Zone 3	All other areas not included in lighting zones 0-2.	Medium to high levels of exterior lighting at night.

Table 1 – Lighting Zones (RMC Section 19.556.060)

Design and Development Standards

All outdoor lighting shall be designed and implemented to mitigate light trespass onto adjacent properties and comply with California Title 24 California Code of Regulations. The RMC prescribes specific lighting standards for each Lighting Zone in two land use categories: Limits for Residential Including Multifamily with Less than Eight Units, and Limits for Nonresidential and Multifamily Properties more than Eight Units.

The development standards generally preserve natural lighting conditions and minimize impacts of exterior light in Lighting Zones 0 – 2. The Development Standards for Lighting Zone 3, which comprises most of the City’s land uses, are summarized in the Table 2 below.

Restriction	Lighting Zone 3: Residential including multifamily with less than eight units.	Lighting Zone 3: Nonresidential and multifamily properties more than eight units
Maximum Allowed Lighting Watts	N/A	Per Title 24 Part 6 Section 140.7
Automatic Lighting Controls	Per Title 24 Part 6 Section 150.0(k.)3.(A).iii	Per Title 24 Part 6 Section 130.2 for nonresidential properties and for multifamily residential properties of 8 residences or more.
Backlight, uplight and glare limits	N/A	Per Title 24 Part 11 Section 5.106.8
Unshielded and decorative lighting	Three per residence, not to exceed 900 lumens per luminaire and 2000 lumens per residence	Maximum 900 lumens per luminaire, not to exceed 18000 lumens per acre
Maximum mounting height of luminaires (above adjacent grade)	25 feet	25 feet

Landscape lighting per luminaire	Downlight and/or shielded uplight, not to exceed 600 lumens	Downlight and/or shielded uplight not to exceed 900 lumens
Maximum landscape lighting lumens per acre	18000	18000
Architectural Flood Lighting	20000 lumens above horizontal plane of light source	20000 lumens above horizontal plane of light source
Maximum allowable light trespass	0.5 footcandle (5 lux)	0.5 footcandle (5 lux)

Performance Standards for Light and Glare in Chapter 19.590

Section 19.590.070 (Light and Glare) contains standards for all types of development related to outdoor lighting designed primarily to prevent disruption and annoyance related with excessive or improperly applied outdoor lighting (Attachment 2). This section also establishes minimum outdoor lighting requirements for pedestrian paths, parking lots and similar areas to ensure public safety.

In addition to Chapter 19.590, Chapter 19.620 (General Sign Provisions) contains specific requirements for the illumination of signage. 19.620 also establishes maximum brightness provisions by time of day for electronic message center signs with digital displays. It should be noted that both chapters prohibit flashing, strobing, chasing, blinking or color-changing exterior lighting.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to **Strategic Priority 5 – High Performing Government** and **Goal 5.3 - Enhance communication and collaboration with community members to improve transparency, build public trust, and encourage shared decision-making.**

This Project aligns with the following Cross-Cutting Threads:

1. **Community Trust** – The workshop is presented at an open public meeting and contains transparent information on City processes and regulations.
2. **Equity** – The workshop promotes discussion on lighting regulations and solutions to maintain a safe and natural lighting environment in a feasible and practical manner.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The workshop will not have any fiscal impact to the City.
4. **Innovation** – The outdoor lighting standards are amended to keep up with new exterior lighting technologies.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The workshop addresses existing sign regulations in place to reduce environmental, visual, and light impacts on surrounding communities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to receiving this report.

Prepared by: Matthew Taylor, Principal Planner
Approved by: Jennifer A. Lilley, Community & Economic Development Director
Certified as to
availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Chapter 19.556 Outdoor Lighting
2. Chapter 19.590 Performance Standards
3. Presentation