

# New Lighting Ordinance Aims to Reduce Light Pollution

**\*UPDATED**

**11/08/2021**

Archived News Release: October 19, 2021 - The Ann Arbor City Council has adopted a new outdoor lighting ordinance that promotes good lighting practices and reduces human-sourced light pollution. The new ordinance is intended to benefit the nocturnal ecosystem and reduce unnecessary energy use.

"The new outdoor lighting regulations intend to enhance the quality of life in the City of Ann Arbor. This will occur through reduction in light trespass, glare and energy consumption, with benefits to a multitude of living things (us included)," said Brett Lenart, planning manager.

Some ordinance highlights:

- \*The regulations apply to any outdoor lighting on private property in the city
- Temporary light installations on private property are allowed for 90 days in the exemptions. This could include holiday lights, art installations, special event lighting, etc. (Note: When such temporary displays occur on non-residentially zoned property, then they must comply with other provisions of the proposed

**OUTDOOR LIGHTING ORDINANCE**  
City of Ann Arbor

**WHY A LIGHTING ORDINANCE?**  
While outdoor lighting serves a purpose, it also has negative impacts: light trespass onto neighboring properties; health and safety problems due to glare and skyglow; serious environmental impacts; and wasted energy.

**THESE REGULATIONS APPLY TO ALL PRIVATE PROPERTIES**  
See page two for exceptions and additional regulations for commercial properties.

**LIGHT TRESPASS**  
Outdoor lighting can only spread minimally beyond the target sign or building, or onto a neighbor's property.

**FULLY/PARTIALLY SHIELDED**  
All new luminaires must be fully or partially shielded, per the new ordinance. Full shielding does not emit light above a horizontal plane across through their lowest light-emitting part. Partial shielding allows some light above the horizontal plane, in order to illuminate a specific uplight target (like a statue or wall sign).

**LIGHTS OFF FROM MIDNIGHT TO 6AM**  
Decorative lighting of building facades and landscape must be turned off between midnight and 6:00am (except during business hours in non-residential districts).

code that prohibit movement, flashing and other such characteristics).

- Light trespass is limited to certain levels at the property line. Properties abutting residential zones have the strictest limits; D1 and D2 districts allow higher levels of light.
- New light fixtures are to be fully or partially shielded, depending on the type of installation.
- Decorative building and landscaping illumination are largely prohibited between midnight and 6 a.m., except for businesses open during those hours.
- Parking lot lighting is limited to 6-foot candles and must be extinguished beyond business hours for non-residential uses. Formerly, the Unified Development Code requires less than one-foot candle of lighting minimum, but it must remain on all night. No maximum is specified.

Nonconforming lighting may be maintained; however, any replacement of outdoor luminaires must be compliant (i.e. use of compliant fixtures) and site plan would require full compliance.

The complete outdoor lighting ordinance can be found in Chapter 55 Unified Development Code, Section 5.25 Outdoor Lighting at <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/planning/Pages/Unified%20Development%20Code.aspx>. For more information, contact the City of Ann Arbor Planning Unit at [planning@a2gov.org](mailto:planning@a2gov.org) or 734.794.6265. To view the project guide, visit <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/planning/PublishingImages/Pages/City-Planning-Initiatives/Outdoor%20Lighting%20Handout.pdf> (PDF).

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