

What Should a Local Lighting Ordinance Include?

Clear Purpose & Definitions

Simple goal: reduce glare, light trespass, and skyglow while maintaining safety.

Definitions:

- *Light trespass* - light spilling onto neighboring property
- *Glare* - excessive brightness causing visual discomfort
- *Shielded fixture* - light directed downward

Shielding Requirements (Full Cutoff)

- Require **fully shielded fixtures** for most outdoor lighting
- Light should be directed **downward only**, not sideways or upward
- Prevents both glare and skyglow

Limits on Brightness (in lumens, not watts)

- Maximum levels for different uses (residential, commercial, signage, etc.)
- Encourage “right-sized” lighting rather than overly bright fixtures
- Optionally include lower limits for environmentally sensitive areas

Color Temperature Limits - 3000K or warmer (often called “warm white”)

Curfews / Time Controls

- Require non-essential lighting to be turned off or dimmed after a certain hour.
- Encourage or require motion sensors, timers, and adaptive controls.

Light Trespass Standards

- Set measurable limits on how much light can spill onto neighboring properties
- Especially important for security lighting and commercial sites near homes
- Can be expressed in foot-candles or similar units at the property line

Special Rules for Certain Lighting Types - targeted standards for:

- Security lighting (must be shielded and not overly bright)
- Sign lighting (limit brightness and require shutoff times)
- Decorative and landscape lighting (no uplighting or tightly controlled)
- Sports fields (stricter controls, especially on hours of use)

Limited Exemptions - avoid broad loopholes that weaken the ordinance.

Examples include emergency lighting, temporary holiday lighting, or navigation

Compliance & Enforcement - apply to new installations and major retrofits first

- Consider a grace period for existing lighting
- Include a complaint process for residents
- Provide simple enforcement mechanisms (warnings → fines if needed)

Education & Assistance - provide guidance, examples of fixtures, incentives