

Carmel-by-the-Sea Municipal Code

Chapter 17.39 EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Sections:

- [17.39.010](#) Purpose.
- [17.39.020](#) Scope and Applicability.
- [17.39.030](#) Application and Review Procedure.
- [17.39.040](#) Conditions and Standards
- [17.39.050](#) Specialized Outdoor Lighting.
- [17.39.060](#) Exemptions.
- [17.39.070](#) Prohibited Lighting.
- [17.39.080](#) Violations.

17.39.010 Purpose.

Carmel-by-the-Sea has special environmental and historic factors that have led to its unique use of exterior lighting. A coastal city that also maintains a substantial urban forest, the City is privileged to have access to a pristine nighttime environment. Historically, public street lighting was avoided on residential streets. Within an individual property, lighting was typically limited to a light at a building entrance and, sometimes, at a yard gate or patio.

The purposes of this chapter are to:

- A. Encourage exterior lighting practices that will minimize light pollution, glare and light trespass.
- B. Promote energy conservation.
- C. Maintain nighttime safety, utility and security.
- D. Prevent lighting nuisances and unnecessary or inappropriate exterior lighting.
- E. Allow citizens and tourists to view and enjoy the night environment.
- F. Maintain the coastal forest atmosphere and village character of the city.

17.39.020 Scope and Applicability.

A. Compliance: All exterior lighting installed after the effective date hereof in all zones in the City shall conform to the requirements established by this chapter. This chapter does not apply to indoor lighting.

B. Nonconforming Uses: All existing outdoor lighting that does not meet the requirements of this chapter and is not exempted by this chapter shall be considered a nonconforming use. The City will encourage property owners to voluntarily bring nonconforming exterior light fixtures into compliance with this chapter. Existing light bulbs and other light sources, which are deemed a nuisance or hazard by the Director, shall be brought into compliance with this chapter. Otherwise, existing light sources shall be considered a nonconforming use and may be maintained and replaced in kind.

C. Modifications; Compliance Through Building Permit Process: The City will require exterior lighting fixtures to be brought into compliance, through the building permit process, if light fixtures are being replaced, substantial modifications are made to the exterior of the building or if the floor area of a single-family home is increased by more than 10%.

17.39.030 Application and Permit Process.

A. Lighting Plans Required: All sign permit, building permit and planning permit applications shall include a lighting plan that shows evidence that new or modified lighting fixtures and light sources will comply with this chapter. The lighting plan shall include plans or drawings indicating the proposed location and height of lighting fixtures, illustrations of all proposed light fixtures and supports and information on the lamps, shielding, reflectors and light output to be used.

B. Approval Procedure:

1. Administrative Approval. The lighting plan for all new or modified lights shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Building for approval concurrent with the associated application process. Approval is contingent on compliance with the purpose, objectives, and standards described in this chapter.

2. Planning Commission Approval. Exterior lights which, in the opinion of the Director, require an exception from the standards described in this chapter, shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall also review all applications for floodlights and spotlights.

17.39.040 Conditions and Standards.

A. Residential Zone Standards.

1. Minimum Necessary: Exterior lighting should be the minimum necessary to provide for safety and functionality. The light source with the lowest lumens necessary for a lighting application should be used.

2. Maximum Color Temperature of All Lighting Fixtures: The correlated color temperature of any exterior lighting fixture shall not exceed three thousand degrees kelvin (3000°K).

3. Maximum Light Output and Location: All exterior lighting attached to the main building or any accessory building shall be no higher than 10 feet above the ground, a deck or balcony, and shall not exceed four hundred (400) lumens per fixture.

4. Light Trespass and Over-lighting: All existing and new exterior lighting shall not cause direct illumination on adjacent properties and shall protect adjacent properties from glare and excessive lighting. Lighting shall not be directed toward the public right-of-way, roadways or other City property.

5. Lighting for pathways and walkways shall have:

a. Fixtures less than eighteen inches (18") in height and more than ten (10) feet apart.

b. Less than one hundred (100) lumens total light output from each fixture.

c. Opaque caps over each fixture that directs the light downward.

6. All outdoor lighting in the residential districts shall use fully shielded fixtures, unless specifically exempted by this chapter. The lighting fixture must be placed at a location, angle or height to prevent direct illumination outside the property boundaries where the light fixtures are located.

a. Characteristics: In order to qualify as a fully shielded fixture, a light fixture must have the top and sides made of completely opaque material such that light only escapes through the bottom of the fixture. Fixtures with translucent or transparent sides, or sides with perforations or slits, do not qualify as fully shielded. Any glass or diffuser on the bottom of the fixture must be flush with the fixture (no drop lenses). Merely placing a light fixture under an eave, canopy, patio cover or other similar cover does not qualify as fully shielded.

b. Examples: The following figure shall be incorporated into this chapter as a guideline for the public and the City for use in meeting the intent of this chapter. The figure only serves as an example. The City does not endorse or discriminate against any manufacturer or company that may be shown, portrayed or mentioned by the examples.

7. Residential outdoor lighting shall be controlled in accordance with California Energy Code Section 150(k)(3).

FIGURE I: Light Fixture Diagrams



B. Commercial Zone Standards. **(Commercial standards below still under review)**

1. Minimum Necessary: Exterior lighting should be the minimum necessary to provide for safety and functionality. The light source with the lowest lumens necessary for a lighting application should be used.
2. Maximum Color Temperature Of All Lighting Fixtures: The correlated color temperature of any exterior lighting fixture shall not exceed....
5. Light Trespass and Over-lighting: All existing and new exterior lighting shall not cause direct illumination on adjacent properties and shall protect adjacent properties from glare and excessive lighting. Lighting shall not be directed toward roadways.

3. Lighting intensity shall not exceed eight-candlefoot power at a point two feet beyond the storefront windows as measured in a vertical or horizontal plane three feet above the ground or public walking surface.
4. Lighting intensity within the interior of the store space shall not exceed 30-candlefoot power at any point visible from the public right-of-way as measured in a vertical or horizontal plane three feet above the floor or walking surface.
5. Outdoor lighting controls and equipment shall comply with California Energy Code Section 130.2.

C. Allowable Applications: Exterior lighting shall only be allowed in the following applications:

1. To illuminate the entrances to buildings (including garage entrances).
2. To illuminate pathways and walkways.
3. To illuminate parking areas and parking area access lanes.
4. To illuminate outdoor gathering areas, such as patios, pool and hot tub areas, outdoor dining areas and recreation areas, provided such lights are turned off by ten o'clock (10:00) P.M. in residential districts and one hour after the close of business in commercial districts.
5. For security purposes, provided all the following conditions are met:
 - a. The lighting is activated by motion sensors and shuts off five (5) minutes after each disturbance or when the activity involved ceases.
 - b. The lighting is placed and directed such that no direct illumination falls outside the property boundaries where the security lighting is placed.

17.39.050 Specialized Outdoor Lighting.

A. Gas Station Canopies: Gas station canopies may be illuminated, provided all light fixtures are mounted on the undersurface of the canopy, all light fixtures are fully shielded and diffusers are not visible from locations off the property. Except for directed beam lighting, merely placing the fixtures on the underside of the canopy does not qualify as fully shielding the light fixture. Directed beam lighting mounted under the canopy is allowed, provided the light source cannot be seen from outside the property boundaries.

B. Roadway/Streetlights: Streetlights are allowable as recommended by the city engineer or city council. All streetlights shall utilize lamp types that are energy efficient and minimize sky glow and other negative impacts of artificial lighting.

C. Parking Lots:

1. Spot or flood lighting of parking lots from a building or other structure is prohibited.
2. The overall height of any light post used to illuminate parking lots in commercial zones shall not exceed fourteen feet (14'). All post mounted parking lot lights shall be set back from property lines a distance that is determined appropriate by the planning commission.
3. The overall height of any light post used to illuminate parking lots in residential zones shall not exceed six feet (6').
4. All parking lot lighting shall use fully shielded fixtures.

D. Signs: Signs may be unlighted or externally lighted in accordance with CMC Section 17.40.030.D. Internally lighted or backlit signs are prohibited. All sign lighting must be designed, directed and shielded in such a manner that the light source is not visible beyond the property boundaries where the sign is located. Lighting for signs must be directed such that only the sign face is illuminated and does not trespass onto adjacent streets, roads or properties or into the night sky. All lighted signs must have stationary and constant lighting.

1. Sign lighting controls shall be provided in accordance with California Energy Code Section 130.3.

17.39.060 Exemptions.

The following shall be exempt from the requirements of this chapter:

- A. The City's Ocean Avenue median lights, which shall be illuminated year-round.
- B. Holiday lighting from the third Wednesday in November to the second Wednesday in January, provided such lights do not create a hazard or damage trees or other public property. Tracer or flashing lights are prohibited.
- C. Traffic control signals and devices.
- D. Temporary emergency lighting in use by law enforcement or government agencies, or at their direction.
- E. The lighting of federal or state flags, provided that the light is a narrow beam aimed and shielded to illuminate only the flag. Flag lighting should use appropriate illumination levels to light the flag, while at the same time fulfilling the purposes of this chapter.
- F. The planning commission, as part of its review as outlined in this chapter, may approve lighting that does not conform to these standards if need is established. An applicant requesting such lighting is required to provide proof of requirements by property insurance or findings of competent research demonstrating the need for the requested lighting. The planning commission may attach other conditions to the approval of such lighting that will make the lighting comply with the spirit of this chapter.

17.39.070 Prohibited Lighting.

The following are prohibited in all zoning districts:

- A. Uplighting to illuminate buildings and other structures, or trees and other vegetation, except as allowed by other provisions in this chapter.
- B. Flashing, blinking, intermittent or other lights that move or give the impression of movement.
- C. Floodlights or spotlights, unless such lights are for security or serve a commercial purpose. Such lights must be approved by the Planning Commission.
- D. Searchlights, laser source lights or any similar high intensity light.
- E. Neon or luminous tube lighting, either when outdoor mounted or indoor mounted if visible beyond the property boundaries.

17.39.080 Violations.

The following constitute violations of this chapter:

- A. The installation, maintenance or operation of any lighting fixture not in compliance with the provisions of this chapter if such fixture is installed subsequent to the date when this chapter is formally adopted.
- B. The alteration of outdoor lighting fixtures without the review of the Department of Community Planning and Building.
- C. Failure to shield, correct or remove lighting that is installed, operated, maintained or altered in violation of this chapter.