

TOWN OF VIENNA | EXTERIOR LIGHTING GUIDE

The following is a summary of the Town Code relating to exterior lighting for properties subject to Board of Architectural Review (BAR) purview. All regulations for lighting in the Town of Vienna are found within [Articles 4B, 5A, and 5B of Chapter 18](#) of the Town of Vienna Zoning Code. Property owners are encouraged to review the town code before submitting any applications for review, purchasing, or installing lighting. New permanent, exterior lighting installed without an approval by the Board of Architectural Review may result in fines.

WHAT IS EXTERIOR LIGHTING?

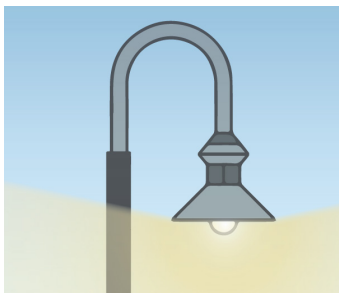
Exterior lighting includes privately or publicly owned lighting that is outside the public right-of-way (thus excluding street lighting). This includes lighting such as facade or building-mounted lighting, landscape or hardscape lighting, permanent decorative lighting, and security lights.

CHOOSING APPROPRIATE LUMINAIRES

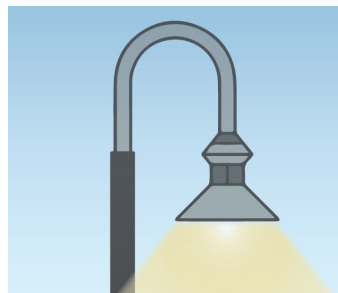
Exterior lighting in commercial and mixed-use spaces in the Town is expected to be fully-shielded. This means the light source is contained within the luminaire in such a way that it is not easily visible from most angles and light is being directed downwards towards hardscape or targeted to the object intended to be lit, such as a historic facade feature.

Managing light by using properly shielded luminaires reduces light pollution and light trespass into residential properties. Several common examples are shown to the right.

PARKING & HARDSCAPE LIGHTING

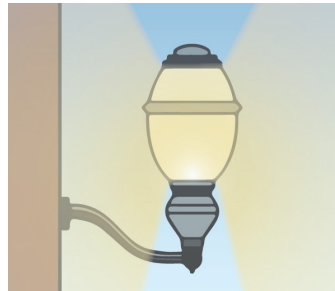


Exposed light source contributing to glare and light trespass.

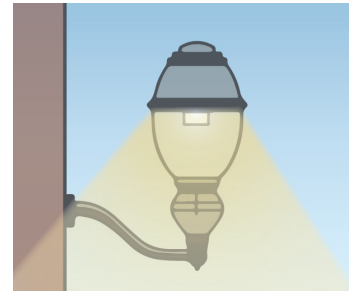


Shielded light source keeps light on the hardscape.

FACADE LIGHTING

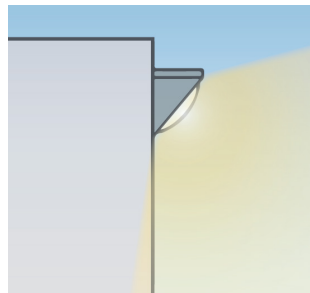


Uncontrolled light source contributing to glare and light trespass.

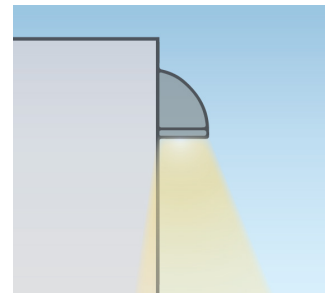


Downward-directed light source improves visibility and control of facade lighting.

AREA LIGHTING



Lack of front shielding leads to high glare and light trespass.



Shielded light source supports better visibility and safety.

OTHER LIGHTING EQUIPMENT

There are many lighting equipment strategies that can comply with the Town's regulations for dimming, Nighttime Curfew, and motion sensing. It is important applicants understand any motion sensors should not be tripped from beyond their property line and that lighting for ingress or egress is not exempt from Town regulations in most cases.



Department of Planning & Zoning

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BOLLARD & LANDSCAPE LIGHTING

Areas around businesses where pedestrians are active at night benefit from the use of lighting options such as bollards, lights mounted into planters, or illuminated furniture such as underlit



benches. This creates a more comfortable space to linger at night.

When this lighting strategy is being pursued, it is important that the Correlated Color Temperature (CCT) used is consistent across the property and does not create a cluttered appearance. Landscape lighting should avoid lighting tree canopies to prevent light pollution and support tree health. Bollards should shine their light mainly on walking surfaces.

FESTOON LIGHTING

Festoon or string lighting refers to bulbs along a string that are designed for permanent, decorative outdoor installation.



The bulbs should use a traditional, rounded bulb shape. They may be clear or frosted in appearance, but only one style should be used per property. The CCT used must comply with Town regulations and match the rest of the property.

They should be strung in an orderly way that minimizes random crossings and sagging. This includes when festoon lighting is across a patio, under an awning, or under an umbrella or other shade structure.

CHOOSING COLOR TEMPERATURES

CCT helps measure how warm or cool a white light source appears to most people. 3000K is considered a warm-white and is the maximum CCT for most of the Town, but sometimes a lower CCT may be a better choice.

2200K



This color temperature is considered very warm. Using this CCT can be beneficial around wildlife. It can also provide a more historic nighttime appearance for an area.

2700K



This CCT is considered warm. Using this color of light in residential zones or mixed-use areas can help create a cozy nighttime experience.

3000K



This CCT is considered warm-white. It is a standard choice for most outdoor lighting needs. Using this CCT in commercial areas helps us see the colors of materials in more detail at night.

CONSIDERING LIGHTING DESIGN

The Town's nighttime character is impacted by the consistency of exterior lighting used per land use and whether new lighting choices are truly the best fit for a location's surroundings.

For example, a business located across from residential homes will need to carefully consider the placement of their lights. Property owners should ensure if they have a sign with exterior illumination that the CCT of their facade lighting matches.

These aspects of a lighting design can be considered after zoning requirements are met.



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ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The zoning code states maximum light level, luminaire heights, CCT, targeting and shielding requirements, and acceptable light trespass levels.

It also defines the performance requirements for motion sensors, dimming schedules, and Nighttime Curfew requirements.

Town Staff reviews the lighting applications for zoning compliance before lighting designs are placed on the agenda of the Board of Architectural Review to confirm the aesthetic character of the Town's lighting is maintained.

LIGHTING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

Any new, privately-owned exterior lighting that is located on a commercial or mixed-use property and intended for permanent installation requires zoning approval from the Town of Vienna, review by the Board of Architectural Review, and potentially building permits from Fairfax County. Minor modifications such as changing a single light source wouldn't merit review, but changes to many light sources constitutes a redesign.

Temporary exterior lighting must comply with Town regulations, but does not require approval by the Board of Architectural Review.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING APPLICATIONS

When applying for new exterior lighting or renovations, applicants must provide some standard information to Town staff so they can verify the lighting plans meet the zoning requirements. These include:

1. Site plan with installation locations, their

targeted directions, and their mounting heights

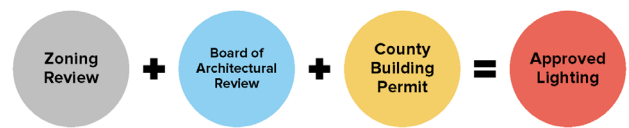
2. Luminaire identification (model numbers) with their lumen outputs and CCT
3. Description of any other physical conditions within the site that could impact the lighting outcomes

Applicants would also need to provide either a completed lighting compliance form, a photometric plan, or a certified statement of compliance from a qualified professional. This is to help verify the lighting design's performance.

Town staff will process complete applications after confirming all zoning regulations were met.

Applicants to the Board are required to provide all luminaire part numbers, site locations, and finish colors for the Board's review. The CCT of any white spectrum lighting and any planned single-color lighting should also be included.

The Board of Architectural Review meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30pm to review signs and other exterior modifications. The Board is comprised of community members appointed by Town Council.



The Board of Architectural Review criteria can be found in [Chapter 4, Section 4-15. - Design criteria.](#)

Questions? Contact Planning and Zoning at DPZ@viennava.gov
To start a lighting application, visit ([hold for link](#))



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