



TOWN OF RUSTON

PLANNING SERVICES

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Planning Commission Public Hearing and Work Study Session Outdoor Lighting Text Amendment TEXT 10-01

I. Project Description

As infill and redevelopment activities have continued to progress within Ruston it has become apparent that there exists a need to further clarify regulations regarding outdoor lighting, particularly in regards to light trespass, light pollution to the night sky, and general inefficient light fixture design and placement. Through this amendment to the Town's zoning and street design codes the Town hopes to address these issues.

II. Applicable Codes and Policies

A) SEPA Analysis

Zoning text amendments are subject to SEPA review. The Town's SEPA Responsible Official issued a Determination of Non-Significance for the proposed zoning text amendment on March 3, 2010.

B) Ruston Comprehensive Plan

Section 3.3 Overall Concept

Goal 1: "Develop a balance of residential, commercial, industrial and open space uses that create a fiscally sound community while maintaining the character of the town."

Section 3.4 Residential Development Concepts and Goals

Goal 1: "Protect and enhance the character and vitality of established residential neighborhoods."

Goal 2: “Promote residential design that is environmentally sensitive, energy efficient, and aesthetically pleasing. Implement state regulations related to energy conservation and environmental preservation in addition to Town regulations. View protection is addressed in the height limit aspects of the zoning code. Encourage building types and designs that respect the natural landscape and are compatible in scale and character with any significant historic properties and nearby residential development.”

Section 3.5 Commercial Development Concepts and Goals

Goal 5: “Promote site-sensitive and efficient commercial design.”

Goal 6: “Provide convenient and safe pedestrian and vehicular access to and within commercial areas.”

Goal 7: “Design commercial development so that it is aesthetically compatible with surrounding buildings, significant historic properties, and natural features.”

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD)

Goal 4: “Promote safety and minimize nuisances associated with new development operations within the MPD by ensuring that mixed-use development complies with applicable local, state and federal regulations.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space

Goal 3: “Maintain the visual quality of the Town as seen from Puget Sound and public roads and provide scenic viewpoints within the town to Puget Sound.”

Section 5.4 Overall Concept

Goal 4: “Utilize sound and environmentally responsible design principles in road construction.”

III. Staff Analysis, Findings, and Conclusions

When considering changes to the zoning code the Planning Commission must first begin by looking to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, the document which represents the Town’s official vision for what it is to become. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that changes to the zoning code are to be consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. It is the Planning Commission’s responsibility to determine if proposed changes to the zoning code are indeed consistent prior to forwarding an ordinance on to Town Council with a recommendation for approval.

After reviewing the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the staff found several goals and policies, (as listed in section II.B of this report), that supported the desire to further clarify the Town's regulations for outdoor lighting. Lighting which is not shielded and produces glare to neighboring properties and the night sky is a nuisance to the public, diminishes the viewing quality of the night sky, and wastes electricity. These negative attributes of poor lighting design are in direct conflict with many of the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan because they do not protect the Town's character, are not environmentally sensitive, are not efficient, are not aesthetically compatible with neighboring properties, and diminish the visual quality of Ruston as seen from Puget Sound.

As Ruston is not the first community to develop outdoor lighting regulations, staff looked to surrounding communities first for existing regulations that might serve as a template to achieve Ruston's goals. Several attributes of lighting were found as important contributors to aesthetically pleasing design, including general fixture design and color, light source placement and shielding within the fixture, bulb type, lumen output, fixture height, pole height, direction of illumination, and quantity of fixtures used to light any given area. Of these items, staff felt that light source placement and shielding within the fixture housing was the most important attribute, followed by direction of illumination and fixture height. A draft of standards which addresses these attributes has been prepared for Planning Commission review as detailed in section IV of this report.

Staff finds that this proposal to update the zoning code is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the existing Ruston Municipal Code.

IV. Recommendation

The Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing to consider approving the proposed zoning text amendment as described below:

A) Add the following section to the Ruston Municipal Code:

25.01.103 Outdoor Lighting.

(a) Purpose. It is the purpose of this section to promote public health, safety and general welfare by more efficiently using energy in the form of light by intentionally directing light only upon surfaces intended to be lit, thus reducing unnecessary glare of light into the night sky and surrounding public rights-of-way and private properties.

(b) Lighting Standards.

(1) Keep light source hidden from public view. All light sources shall be hidden or conform to light standards specified herein. Light sources (e.g. light bulbs or lenses) shall not be visible. Sources of high-intensity light, whether behind a lens or not, shall not be visible to the public or to any other off-site areas.

(2) Use downward directional lighting. Except for intermittent security lighting on motion detectors, all lights more than seven feet above the ground shall be downward directional. The fixture's housing must be totally opaque. Clear or refractive lenses shall not extend below the housing.

(3) Lighting which is located lower than seven feet above the ground shall be limited to a maximum illumination equivalent of 75 watts from an incandescent bulb.

(4) Avoid lighting large areas with a single source. Large areas may be lit with a number of low-intensity sources close to the area requiring illumination. Illumination of a large area with a remote single source of light is prohibited. Intensity of exterior light sources shall not exceed ten foot candles per square foot. If the Mayor or his designee suspects that a lighting proposal does not comply with this requirement, a plan illustrating intensity of light measured in foot candles may be required.

(5) Avoid excessive light throw. Lighting shall not be cast beyond the premises and shall be limited to illumination of surfaces intended for pedestrians or vehicles. Illumination of landscaped areas shall be avoided unless lighting is part of the landscape area immediately around the building or the area is intended for recreational use.

(6) All light fixtures higher than seven feet above the ground which are intended to illuminate vehicle or pedestrian areas within the public right of way or upon non-residential or multifamily sites shall be selected from the Architectural Area Lighting Providence[®] Family of fixtures. Specifications for available fixtures may be obtained from the Town Clerk or by navigating your web browser to the Architectural Area Lighting website at <http://aal.net>. Recessed can fixtures located within roof overhangs, porches, awnings, or other architectural roof elements are exempt from this requirement.

(7) Avoid light fixture designs which have a utilitarian appearance. Designs that are strictly utilitarian in appearance shall be avoided on all fixtures visible to the public, e.g. mercury vapor lights, cobra lights, shoebox lights, etc.

(8) Limit height of pole fixtures. Pole lights shall be no taller than 20 feet above a 36-inch base in parking lots and traffic areas, and no taller than 12 feet in pedestrian areas.

(9) Indoor Business Lighting. If a business use includes indoor illuminate which illuminates areas outside the building in which it is located, the above standards shall apply.

(10) Back-lit awnings Prohibited. Awnings shall be constructed of materials which are completely opaque and shall not contain signs printed or mounted upon them.

B) Amend RMC 25.01.100 as follows:

25.01.100 Signings and Lighting

~~(d) Lighting.~~

~~(1) Outdoor. Private outdoor lights and lighted signs shall be located or shielded to minimize glare beyond the property served.~~

~~(2) Indoor Business Lighting. If a business use is located so that light from its windows would illuminate the interior of any residence, nursing or convalescent home, hospital or other use where persons are expected to sleep, the business windows must be curtained or the light emissions otherwise reduced from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. so that its light emissions do not unreasonably affect adjacent property.~~

~~(e)~~(d) Signs on Utility Poles. No private signs shall be permitted on utility poles.

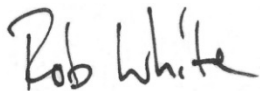
C) Add RMC 14.01.05 as follows:

14.01.05 Street Lighting.

(a) All light fixtures placed within the public right of way shall conform to the requirements set forth in RMC 25.01.103 Outdoor Lighting.

V. Public Notice

Public notice was provided 14 days prior to the public hearing date of March 10, 2010, as required by RMC Title 19.



Rob White,
Town Planner

March 4, 2010