



KERRVILLE CITY CODE · CHAPTER 26, ARTICLE X

Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

A plain-language guide to what the ordinance requires, who it applies to,
and how to keep your property in compliance.

PURPOSE

Why the City Adopted This Ordinance



Safer, Better Lit Spaces

Reduce glare and improve nighttime visibility for drivers and pedestrians.



Efficient, Controlled Lighting

Encourage fixtures that conserve energy instead of wasting light.



Protect Properties

Prevent light trespass — unwanted light spilling onto a neighbor's property.



Preserve the Night Sky

Restore Kerrville's dark, star-filled sky and pursue International Dark Sky Community status.

Who Has to Follow This Ordinance



Inside City Limits

Applies to all private and public outdoor lighting — residential and nonresidential — within the City of Kerrville.

Everyone: homeowners, businesses, institutions, and the city itself.



Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

The city may also apply this article in surrounding ETJ areas through property owner agreements or where authorized by state law.

Four Terms You'll See Throughout



Fully Shielded

A fixture built so all light is projected below the horizontal plane — no light escapes upward or sideways from the lamp.



Light Trespass

Light that falls onto a neighboring property, into a driver's eyes, or up into the sky. If the light source looks “star-like” from next door, it's trespassing.



Lumen

The unit that measures how much light a fixture produces. Used to calculate total light output on a property.



CCT (Color Temperature)

Measured in Kelvin (K). Lower numbers = warmer, amber-toned light. Higher numbers = cooler, bluer light.

Every Fixture Must Be Fully Shielded



Light should go down, not out or up.

Unless specifically exempted, all outdoor light fixtures in Kerrville must be fully shielded so every bit of light is aimed below the horizontal plane of the fixture. New streetlights must use approved, fully shielded historical-style fixtures.



Small-fixture exception

Fixtures putting out 200 lumens or less may be left unshielded — as long as the light source itself isn't visible from another property, and it stays under 10% of the lumens-per-acre allowed for that property.

Mounting height, topography, or closeness to other properties can require extra shielding beyond the minimum.

Light Trespass Is Prohibited

The “star test”

If a light fixture looks star-like or bright when viewed from a neighboring property or the road, it is creating light trespass — even if the illuminated area itself is fine to see.

- No fixture may cause light trespass onto another property, into a driver's eyes, or up into the sky.
- All outdoor lighting — except government streetlights — must be shielded so the light source itself is never visible from another property.
- Government streetlights are the one exception, but may only spill light within 100 feet of where they're installed.

A violation causing light trespass is legally a public nuisance under this ordinance.

Light Must Be Warm-Toned (3,000K or Less)

Correlated Color Temperature (CCT), measured in Kelvin, describes how “warm” or “cool” a light looks. Kerrville caps outdoor lighting at 3,000K — and encourages fixtures below 2,500K for the best nighttime visibility.



Why it matters

Warm, amber-toned light scatters less into the atmosphere and is easier on the eyes at night — which is why the ordinance favors it over bright blue-white light.

Total Light Output Has a Ceiling

Every property has a maximum amount of total outdoor light it may produce, measured in lumens per net acre of illuminated area. These are ceilings, not targets — the goal is always the lowest light level that gets the job done.



Residential Property

25,000

lumens per net acre



Nonresidential Property

100,000

lumens per net acre

Government-owned streetlights and outdoor recreation-facility lighting are excluded from these caps.

Lights Off (or Dimmed) Late at Night



11:00 PM is the general cutoff

Nonresidential properties

Lights not on adaptive controls must be off by 11:00 p.m. or within 1 hour of closing, whichever is later. 24-hour businesses are exempt.

Adaptive-controlled lighting

May dim to 25% of allowed output instead of switching off, and can brighten temporarily when motion is detected on-property.

Public lighting

Non-adaptive public lighting must be fully off by 11:00 p.m. or within 1 hour of the area closing, whichever is later.

All outdoor lighting is encouraged to be turned off whenever no one is present to use it.

Outdoor Sports Facilities



Fields, tracks, arenas, and pools follow extra rules

- Shielded to the greatest practical extent to cut glare and light trespass.
- Illuminance must be adjustable — full brightness for play, lower for maintenance — capped at recognized IESNA standards.
- Lights may only illuminate the field of play and viewing stands, never a parking lot.
- Must go off by 11:00 p.m. or within 1 hour of the end of play, using automatic timers.
- A PE-certified design meeting Dark Sky's Community-Friendly Sports Lighting criteria can be exempted from other article rules.

SPECIAL CASE

Illuminating Flagpoles

Best practice: hoist at dawn, lower at dusk — so no nighttime lighting is needed at all. Up to two flagpoles per property may be lit if you follow these limits:



Taller than 20 feet

Must be lit from above only — a luminaire on top of the pole, or mounted above it within 15 feet.

800 lumens

max. total output



20 feet or shorter

May be lit from ground level with up to two shielded spotlights aimed directly at the flag(s).

75 lumens

max. per linear foot of pole

KNOW THE LIMITS

Lighting Types That Are Prohibited

PROHIBITED OUTRIGHT

-  Sag-lens or drop-lens fixtures
-  Mercury vapor lamps
-  Searchlights, sky beams & similar effects*
-  Flashing, blinking, rotating, or strobe lighting

**Except as used by emergency responders during active emergencies.*



Towers

Tower lighting is not allowed except by permit, or when required by the FAA or another federal/state agency. Applicants must show the maximum tower height that would avoid the lighting requirement.

If lighting is justified: slowly blinking red lights are required at night.

White strobe lights are prohibited at night.

What This Ordinance Does Not Cover

- Decorative holiday lighting
- String, festoon & bistro lights ≤ 50 lumens/lamp, rated ≤ 3,000K
- Underwater pool & water-feature lighting
- Lighting required by law on vehicles & aircraft
- Airport lighting required by law
- Lighting required by federal or state regulation
- Emergency lighting for police, fire & EMS; battery/generator egress lighting
- Temporary lighting for emergency road/utility repairs (aimed away from roads & residences)
- Temporary construction-site lighting (aimed away from roads & residences)
- Temporary lighting for theater, TV, performances & events (no light trespass)

EXISTING LIGHTING

You Have Time to Come Into Compliance



10-year compliance window

Legally-installed lighting that predates this ordinance is “nonconforming” and may stay in place — but must be brought into compliance within 10 years of adoption (by January 2033).

COMPLIANCE IS TRIGGERED SOONER IF:

Major addition or new permit (nonresidential)	Must conform before final inspection / certificate of occupancy. Illuminated sign permits: 90 days to comply.
Structure loses over 50% of appraised value	Nonconforming status ends; lighting must be replaced to code.
Property sits vacant 6+ months (not actively marketed)	Considered abandoned; nonconforming lighting must be removed.

Homeowners may also request up to a 10-year extension per fixture (from install date) if the fixture cost \$100+ and can't simply be re-shielded or re-bulbed.

How to Get a Lighting Plan Approved

1

File a lighting plan

Submit with your other permit paperwork: fixture locations, types, manufacturer specs, Kelvin rating, lumens, mounting height, and acreage to be illuminated.

2

City manager reviews

Reviewed for illuminance, glare, safety, light trespass, and pollution. You'll get an approval or written rejection within 30 days.

3

Wait for approval

No outdoor lighting may be installed until the plan is approved.

4

Stick to the plan

Swapping in a different fixture after approval requires re-submitting the plan for review.

Violations & Penalties



Up to

\$2,000

per day, per violation

- Violating any provision of this article is an offense.
- Each day (or part of a day) a violation continues counts as a separate offense.
- Trespass or unreasonable interference with a neighboring property is also a declared public nuisance.
- Penalties are cumulative — the city can pursue other legal remedies at the same time.

Quick Reference: The Numbers to Remember

Max color temperature	3,000 K (2,500 K or below encouraged)
Residential lumen cap	25,000 lumens per net acre
Nonresidential lumen cap	100,000 lumens per net acre
Unshielded fixture exception	200 lumens or less, source not visible off-property
Nonresidential / public curfew	Off by 11:00 p.m. or 1 hr after close, whichever is later
Sports lighting curfew	Off by 11:00 p.m. or 1 hr after play ends
Flagpole light (>20 ft pole)	800 lumens max, lit from above only
Flagpole light (≤20 ft pole)	75 lumens per linear foot, from ground level
Nonconforming compliance deadline	10 years from adoption (by Jan. 2033)
Lighting plan review time	30 days
Maximum penalty	\$2,000 per day, per violation



Shielded. Warm. Dark Above.

That's Article X in three words — keep light low, warm, and pointed down,
and your property is doing its part for a safer, darker Kerrville night sky.

Full ordinance text: [City of Kerrville Code of Ordinances, Chapter 26, Article X \(§§ 26-275 – 26-282\)](#)