



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Military Lighting Overlay Districts Updates

What is the Military Lighting Overlay District?

The Military Lighting Overlay District, or MLOD, is special zoning overlay district which is designed to reduce light intensity levels, glare, and light pollution in areas surrounding the Military Bases in San Antonio in order to preserve night time training exercises occurring on the Military Bases. The MLOD helps to protect the Military Mission in San Antonio and protect San Antonio's Military Bases from future rounds of base closure. The MLOD only regulates lighting levels, intensity, and direction; the MLOD does not regulate use of property.

What is the proposed change and why is a change proposed?

The changes are proposed in order to add better criteria for measuring light intensity, using industry standards. The standard that is proposed to be used is called "BUG", which stands for Backlight, Uplight, and Glare. These standards represent best practices and were adapted from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) recommended best practices. Additionally, the standards are proposed to be modified to require greater restrictions within three miles of military installations and lesser restrictions between three miles and five miles from military installations.

Where is the MLOD right now?

Right now, the only area of San Antonio that carries the MLOD zoning is in within five miles of Camp Bullis. This was created and approved by City Council in December, 2008. The MLOD area around Camp Bullis is proposed to be rezoned in order to impose the new regulations within the three mile area, and new, lesser restrictions within the three to five mile area. Again, the MLOD does not regulate use of the property.

Will the MLOD be expanded?

Yes, in accordance with the SA Tomorrow Sustainability Plan, Joint Base San Antonio Joint Land Use Study, and a the 2015 Ambient lighting study the MLOD is proposed to be expanded to all properties within five miles of Lackland Air Force Base, including the Lackland Medina Annex. Within three miles of the base, greater restrictions will apply; from three to five miles, lesser restrictions will apply. This will require a rezoning case to add the MLOD to all properties. Again, the MLOD does not regulate use of the property.

What will I have to do to comply with the new regulations?

All existing lighting will become legally non-conforming, also called “grandfathered.” Minor repairs and maintenance are allowed on existing lighting without bringing the lighting into compliance. These regulations are not retro-active unless you alter existing lighting over 50 % of the replacement cost; altering existing lighting over this threshold will require compliance with the requirements of the MLOD. If you plan to make changes to your existing lighting that will exceed 50 % of the replacement costs, a city staff member can assist you with choosing the types of fixture that will comply with the ordinance.

Does the MLOD apply to both residential and commercial properties?

Yes, the MLOD standards apply to residential, multi-family, commercial, and industrial properties.

What are the MLOD requirements in residential areas?

Generally, residential lighting be no greater than 1 ½ foot-candles (a unit of light measurement) at the property line, and lighting fixtures must be directed downward with full cut-offs above 90 degrees. Intermittent Lighting (such as security flood lights) must be motion-sensor lights which stay on no longer than five minutes.

What are the MLOD requirements in commercial areas?

Commercial lighting requirements in the MLOD are much more complex than residential lighting requirements due to the nature of commercial lighting. Generally, though, the MLOD requires the same standards to be met as in residential zones, however, there are differences mainly related to the intensity of outdoor light and the hours that outdoor lighting can be turned on. The regulations for commercial areas not only protect the Military’s Mission in San Antonio, but they also protect nearby residential areas from intrusive light pollution from commercial areas.

Who do I contact if I have any questions?

For questions, please contact:

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Or you can call the Development Services Department at 210-207-1111 or visit our webpage: <http://www.sanantonio.gov/sustainability/DarkSkyPolicyEvaluation>