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March 10, 2010

Madam Mayor and Commissioners:

Over a year ago I brought to the attention of the City Commission that improperly-shielded lighting fixtures are being installed at hundreds of locations throughout the city, producing direct glare onto adjacent properties and into roadways--in violation of City Code. The most egregious of these are outward facing floodlights being installed on commercial buildings and floodlights being installed on the top of poles at commercial locations. Most, if not all of the pole top fixtures are being installed by GRU.

The City Commission referral of this issue to the Community Development Committee appears to have become lost in a sea of 30 other pending referrals, resulting in hundreds of additional improperly-shielded lighting fixtures having been installed around town during the interim.

Improperly-shielded, glare-producing lighting is garish, makes the areas around them look slum-like and ugly, reduces property values of adjacent properties, and reduces the quality and enjoyment of life after dark.

The issue also includes pedestrian lighting fixtures—many of which are part of City projects. Some of the pedestrian lighting being installed as part of the city's own streetscape projects is hideous (e.g. Jefferson on 2nd Avenue).

Direct glare from improperly-shielded lighting produces a hazard to drivers when the light trespasses into roadways and creates especially dangerous driving conditions when it's raining.

The purpose of lighting is to illuminate the task at hand while avoiding creating a nuisance to adjacent properties, to pedestrians, or to drivers. Good lighting can be very attractive, and yet serve its purpose. It does not have to be a nuisance to be functional.

Sec. 30-345. General performance standards.

(a) All uses and activities permitted in any zoning district shall conform to the standards of performance described in this section.....

(8) Lighting.Directional luminaires such as floodlights, spotlights, sign lights and area lights shall be so installed and aimed that they illuminate only the task intended and that the light they produce does not shine directly onto neighboring properties or roadways. Building facade lighting, sports lighting and other applications using floodlights shall have glare shielding (external or internal shields) to prevent light trespass and light pollution. All lighting shall be designed, hooded or shielded to direct light so that no illumination source or glare creates a nuisance to any adjoining property or unreasonably interferes with the lawful use and enjoyment of any adjoining property.....

Sec. 30-345.1. Nonconforming luminaires.

... Additionally, nonconforming luminaires that direct light toward streets or parking areas that cause glare so as to cause a public nuisance should be either shielded or re-directed within 30 days of notification.

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I hereby ask the City to:

- 1) Cease to issue and approve electrical permits for improperly-shielded lighting,
- 2) Direct GRU to cease installing improperly-shielded lighting,
- 3) Direct GRU to replace or properly shield non-conforming fixtures that have been installed, and
- 4) Notify property owners in violation of the code to replace or properly shield non-conforming fixtures, per Sec. 30-345.1 Gainesville Code of Ordinances.

Sincerely,

Robert Pearce