

Are the Stars Out Tonight? They All Disappear from View If It's Too Bright

by **Druyan Byrne**

Mission Canyon, with its natural environment, historical context, and mix of neighborhood identities, offers a unique living experience in a setting that is not patterned after a typical urban or suburban residential subdivision...

—Mission Canyon Residential Design Guidelines, 2014

We all know, as residents of Mission Canyon, that this is a special place. We live close to the city, and close to the backcountry. We are nestled between the mountains and the ocean, with easy access to both. Most of us probably choose to live here because it feels like we are a bit apart—not quite in the city, but not yet in the wilderness. We enjoy seclusion, privacy, trees, wildlife, and hopefully a sense of community that is also a bit apart—a bit more eclectic—than many other communities.

For many years, Mission Canyon residents expressed a desire to protect the quality of life and historical feel of a community set into the nooks and valleys of the oaks and creeks, the small, winding roads leading to our homes and neighborhoods.

Over time, as population increased, properties subdivided, homes sold and enlarged, and new roads and buildings added, it became more difficult for the residents to protect the historical character and special environment that we enjoy. As residents became more concerned that this unique habitat was on the verge of disappearing altogether, they decided to create a plan to protect it.

In 2014, after many years of development, the Mission Canyon Community Plan was implemented to do just that—attempt to protect the character of the community that we love, while being mindful that progress and change is inevitable. The goal was to allow progress while simultaneously protecting the existing qualities and ambiance that is a main feature of our unique area. The full text of the plan may be accessed here: tinyurl.com/MCCP2014.



Appropriate modest lighting for safety using downward-directed, shielded light fixtures



Unshielded light fixtures resulting in light escaping onto neighboring property and into the night sky

SOURCE: Mission Canyon Residential Design Guidelines, County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development, Long Range Planning Division, Adopted April 1, 2014

Many residents are unaware of the existence or purpose of this plan, so here we wish to give a brief introduction of the overall plan and discuss one element of the plan in detail: Outdoor Lighting Regulations for Mission Canyon.

The Mission Canyon Community Plan is the result of extensive study and research that culminated in a 163-page document that identifies the need for specific regulations necessary, among other things, to protect the residents, properties, watersheds, parking, wildlife, character, and quality of life in Mission Canyon; and states the county's intention to protect those needs.

To accomplish this, a new set of laws were adopted in the County Code that implement elements of the Plan. Chapter

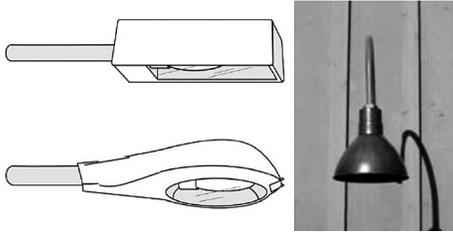
35 of the County Code (Santa Barbara County Land Use & Development Code) is the applicable zoning ordinance in Mission Canyon, which may be accessed here: tinyurl.com/SBCoChapter35.

One element of the code amendments for Mission Canyon was a set of laws regulating the outdoor lighting that that may be installed after May 2, 2014.

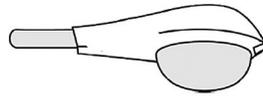
Chapter 35.20.120, Subsection C of the Land Use Development Code states that the purpose of the law is to:

...create standards for outdoor lighting that minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass caused by inappropriate or misaligned light fixtures. These standards conserve energy and preserve the nighttime sky

Lighting (cont. p.2)



1) Appropriate modest lighting for safety using downward-directed, shielded light fixture



2) Unshielded light fixtures resulting in light escaping onto neighboring property and into the night sky

SOURCE: Santa Barbara County Code – CH 35 – County Land Use & Development Code

Lighting (cont. from p.1)

while maintaining night-time safety, utility, security and productivity ... Additionally, resources in the plan areas warrant the protection of nighttime viewsheds and wildlife corridors from light trespass. The County, through the provisions contained herein, intends to preserve and protect the nighttime environment of ... Mission Canyon ... by regulating unnecessary and excessive outdoor lighting.

The general legal requirements for all new lighting fixtures are that they must be fully shielded so that light is directed downward, and not spill over onto any other residential lot. A fully shielded light is one where the bulb is covered so that no horizontal beam will trespass onto a neighbor's residential property.

Light pollution and light trespass from one residence onto another can obviously be a source of annoyance and frustration, but it is also against the law in Mission Canyon. Even though homeowners are protected from intrusive lights being installed by neighbors, it happens quite frequently. Usually, this happens because the residents are simply unaware that their lights may be intruding onto a neighbor's property, and they are almost certainly unaware of the laws prohibiting such lights.

It is our hope that by educating others about this issue, we can raise the awareness so that residents will be more mindful of the lighting they choose to install and help preserve the night sky for all of us to enjoy. Further, we hope that anyone who is directly affected by intrusive lighting will be given the knowledge and tools to try and help re-

solve this issue between neighbors, without the need to involve the County Enforcement Program.

The most important thing to remember is that this is a *community* plan—we are all neighbors, and the decisions we make can affect others. We hope to create and maintain a friendly atmosphere where all residents voluntarily agree to help each other protect our living environments, as well as the natural environment that surrounds us. Everyone in the community wants the same thing: to create a special home to relax and enjoy the unique experience that is Mission Canyon.

For any residents who may have been trying to resolve this issue with neighbors, but have met with no success, the procedure to file an anonymous complaint form with the County Enforcement Program is available here: tinyurl.com/SBCoEnforcement.

For more information and resources for code-compliant lighting solutions, the International Dark-Sky Association maintains a searchable database of lighting products certified to minimize glare, reduce light trespass, and help protect night sky. They also have advice on how to talk to neighbors about nuisance lighting, a sample letter about lighting, educational resources, and brochures that you may wish to share with others in the community. This information is available at www.darksky.org.

Update on SoCal Edison Canyon Work

by Nancy Weiss

Trail Closure 2021

Southern California Edison has applied for a permit for the fall to do road maintenance on the upper dirt “Catway” above the intersection of the Tunnel and Jesusita trails and the Catway. This is Edison's third project in the Tunnel Trail area since the company's illegal grading incident in December 2019 which caused extensive damage to the trail and Mission Creek.

The Catway project involves roadway improvements on the remaining section Edison had hoped to repair before a stop work order was issued in 2019. The trail is expected to close to accommodate the work: Monday-Friday—maybe Saturday, too—for 10 weeks, at minimum.

Ongoing Cleanup and Restoration

Since early 2020, MCA has been working closely with Edison and regulatory agencies to ensure that Edison remediates Tunnel Trail and Mission Creek and enhances Mis-

sion Canyon as compensation to offset their impacts. To date, this multi-year process can be sorted roughly into five projects:

1. Emergency Repairs Winter 2020. Installation of erosion and sediment controls measures and temporary fencing to safeguard trail users. Completed spring 2020.
2. Road and Trail Repairs Fall 2020. Addressed imminent safety and environmental remediation issues: installation of rock drapery, berm construction, removal of rocks/debris from trees, and more. Completed October 2020.
3. Goleta-Santa Barbara Access Road Maintenance. Planned for summer/fall 2021, this access-road maintenance project is unrelated to damage caused in 2019. It awaits county permitting approval. In addition to road maintenance, the project will install about 20 new drains.
4. Stream and Upland Habitat Restoration. This project is meant to remediate the trail and access road, sidecast, and Mission Creek itself. The Creek Habitat Restoration Plan has been through several iterations and is still in development. MCA and numerous agencies are work-

ing together to ensure the best possible outcomes.

5. Ongoing Monitoring and Maintenance. These are important elements for years to come as Edison maintains the access road and ensures environmental restoration success. The rock drapery is now considered an “SCE Facility” which is their responsibility in perpetuity.

Mitigation and Compensation Projects in Mission Canyon

Edison has been clear about its commitment to “being an active and equitable community partner” with the Mission Canyon Association as a way to make things right in our watershed. MCA appreciates the utility company has taken responsibility. To date, SCE has fulfilled a prior commitment to voluntarily remove the defunct utility poles along Tunnel Trail, has committed funding for emergency evacuation and circulation improvements on upper Tunnel Road, will be replacing the Mission Creek Bridge deck on Tunnel Trail, and discussions are underway for trailhead improvements and other enhancement projects in the near future.

Penalties

Separately from the projects above, SCE paid a \$3.5 million civil penalty in December 2020, \$875,000 of which funded supplemental environmental projects (SEPs). These supplemental projects are in addition to SCE's remediation work. Some supplemental projects include maintaining the Jesusita and Tunnel trails, revegetating Mission Canyon and Mission Creek with native plants, researching and monitoring the health of Mission Creek, and funding efforts

to clean Santa Barbara's front-country trails and creeks. Funding was also provided to a Fish and Game Preservation Fund and to the County of Santa Barbara's Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund, as well as reimbursing agencies for their costs.

The Future

This process has been extensive and exhaustive, and it will continue for years into the future. MCA's working group—Selden Edner, Barbara Lindemann, Hugh Twibell, and

Marc Chytilo—have spent countless hours with me working with SCE, county staff, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. We will continue to be engaged in this process.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Tis the Season

Despite the dreary weather we have had the last few days, we are now entering the peak of traditional fire season when we anticipate hot, windy, terrifying weather. Everyone in Mission Canyon has welcomed the marine layer that has protected us all summer from the unbearable heat so much of California has endured.

In spite of our lovely summer, it only takes a look at the news and the total devastation too many communities in Northern California, Oregon, and Washington to remind us of what can happen and how fast it can happen. We need to be realistic, and we need to be prepared. Here's a quick guide:

First, be sure you have current, updated insurance. Second, any family heirlooms, valuables that you cannot bear to lose should be in a safety deposit box, not in your home, in case a fire begins when you're away. Third, be sure that your entire family knows what to do in the event of a fire and where to meet if you are separated.

Captain Jason Sweet is Santa Barbara County Fire's vegetation manager and takes frequent drives around the canyon to assess our brush. We asked him about Mission Canyon's current vulnerability since we have had fires within the last 15 years and how best to prepare.

Captain Sweet noted the Thomas Fire in 2017 had burned into the previous Tea Fire (2008) and Jesusita Fire (2009) scars, which helped slow Thomas's progression. However, "there is no magic number that we go off of to determine how long a fire scar will remain effective as a fire break," he said. "A general idea is anything over 10 years probably won't be effective."

As an example, Sweet said the Cave Fire that burned in 2019 was able to burn through the Jesusita Fire scar from 10 years previous. "I don't have any data, but I would assume that the fire behavior was probably moder-

Trails in Los Padres are closed until Sept. 17.

ated as a result," he said. Nonetheless, more than 1,000 acres were burned during the Cave Fire inside the Jesusita Fire area.

Mission Canyon had some buffer to the southeast as a result of the Thomas Fire, Sweet said, "but I would expect a fire would currently burn through the Tea and Jesusita Fire areas above Mission Canyon."

That being said, Sweet provided a few essential things that residents of Mission Canyon can do to be prepared:

- Ensure that the minimum (more is better) defensible space requirements are met. There is detailed information at <https://www.sbcfire.com/defensible-space-program>.
- Harden your home against wildfire by some simple construction tips/procedures found at website above
- Have a plan for fire by following the Ready! Set! Go! program at this website: <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-set/>
- It's also important to pay attention to the weather and be prepared to leave on red flag days. If a fire starts in the area, don't wait for evacuation orders, just leave.

Chipping Program: The Mission Canyon chipping program was a success again this



year. Captain Sweet and a 20-person crew spent two days driving through Mission Canyon chipping vegetation that had been brought out to the road. From County Fire's perspective, "Anything we can do to reduce the fuel load is a benefit for everyone," he said.

"It's sad to say but the Santa Barbara front country has a long history of burning, and the area above Mission Canyon has burned three or even four times in some places since 1912, so, unfortunately, the likelihood of it burning again is good." A map that illustrates this point can be found at tinyurl.com/SB-CoBurnMap.

Captain Sweet concluded: "Since it's likely that at some point a fire will impact Mission Canyon, it's absolutely critical that residents not only do their defensible space but that they're also prepared to leave." — Laurie Guitteau

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The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of Lee Anne Dollison, graphics, production, and photography.

MCA's Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., via Zoom.us. All residents are welcome to attend and can contact webmaster@missioncanyon.org for information.



MISSION CANYON ASSOCIATION

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Your MCA Newsletter Fall 2021

Keep the Canyon's Dark Sky!

New, Clean Energy

by Kadie McShirley

Cities and counties along the Central Coast have joined Central Coast Community Energy (CCCE) to gain more control over their electricity needs and embrace the benefits of clean and renewable energy. Currently, the energy group serves 31 communities in Monterey, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and San Luis Obispo counties. This October, CCCE service will begin for all eligible electricity customers in Carpinteria, Goleta, and unincorporated southern Santa Barbara County.

Prior to Central Coast Community Energy, county businesses and households could only receive electricity service from PG&E or SCE, both of which have a financial obligation to investors and shareholders—and no obligation to involve customers in business decisions. As a public agency, Central Coast Community Energy follows a very different set of obligations, providing a greater degree of economic and environmental benefits to the communities and customers it serves.

All electricity customers will receive mailed notifications ahead of October 2021 enrollment, to let customers know of CCCE service and what it means for households and businesses.

Participating communities now have a choice and a voice when it comes to electricity service. CCCE is governed by Policy and Operations Boards comprised of elected officials and city and county administrators representing CCCE's entire service area. Supervisor Das Williams is the representative for Santa Barbara County to the Policy Board. Customers can participate in CCCE's public process by attending board meetings and by engaging with the Community Advisory Council, who are volunteers representing our community and business sectors.

Meeting customer demand with 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, as well as focusing on electrification and fuel switching for vehicles, buildings, and agriculture, CCCE will provide the greatest impact on greenhouse gases reduction.

Through financial resources, technical support, and education, CCCE Energy Programs assist the Central Coast com-

munity with the switch from fossil fuels to clean-energy solutions by focusing on these areas: transportation, building, agriculture, and energy resiliency.

Currently, CCCE customers can access rebates and incentives for the purchase or lease of new or used electric vehicles (EV), fleet EVs, EV charging stations for home or office, new all-electric housing projects for affordable and market-rate developments, electric agricultural equipment, backup power supply for critical infrastructure, and more. To date, in partnership with regional and statewide organizations CCCE has made more than \$43 million available to customers.

Join CCCE online to learn more about what service and enrollment mean for your household; all residential sessions run from 6 to 7 p.m. in English, November 16. In Spanish, November 18. Commercial and agricultural sessions also will take place on November 9, noon to 1:30 p.m. To register, visit 3cenergy.org/2021-enrollment/.

Kadie McShirley is on staff with Supervisor Das Williams.