

# Exterior Soffit Lighting Guidance

In accordance with the Declaration (Codes, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&R's)), the Association intends and desires that all Structures within the Subdivision be architecturally harmonious and architecturally pleasing and the Lots maintain the tranquility, appearance, and desirability of Stonewater.

The ACC developed and maintained guidelines based on the developer's community standards, which have been maintained by past and present committee members, to ensure consistent interpretations that further the purposes and intent of the Declaration. Some of these guidelines have been incorporated into Rules and Regulations and in checklists to better inform the homeowners of what is, and what is not, acceptable.

These supplemental guidelines are to provide more objective guidance for those seeking to add soffit lighting to their exterior lighting design.

## Background

The visual appeal of Stonewater's traditional neo-classical luxury home community is maintained by requiring professionally designed homes and landscaping. Minimal traditional street lighting was installed to preserve the tranquility. As such, the exterior lighting design is an integral part of architectural design review.

The lighting standards include:

- Large traditional light fixtures at the front entrance (2 to 3) and near the garage and side entrance (2 to 3) for primary lighting. Many used decorative candle shaped bulbs (coach lighting).
- All other doorways not in street view, should have a standard light fixture (less expensive).
- As an upgrade, some builder's offered an architectural accent lighting package. This consisted of 6 to 7 soffit lights strategically placed on the front elevation and up to 4 on the garage side. These lights blended into the horizontal soffits with the light directed downward, casting light onto the structure. Each fixture used 40-watt incandescent warm light bulb.
- All other structurally attached lighting was reviewed on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the new construction, and other applicable project plans.
- Additional traditional light fixtures would be considered for masonry pillars submitted in the professional landscaping design (usually 2, but up to 4 for circular drives or more elaborate designs).
- Low voltage landscape lighting is approved with the landscaping plans.
- The Declaration specifically stated basketball hoop task lighting must be shielded to direct light away from other lots.
- Permanent holiday lighting has been consistently denied and prohibited by our exterior lighting rules.

In 2007, the developer turned over the HOA to the homeowners and the ACC became staffed by three to five homeowner volunteers. The ACC adopted the developer's community standards, which are now referred to as ACC guidelines, to ensure continuity. While there is variability due to the home's architectural style, these specifications have been consistently enforced for both new construction and renovation projects.

## What You Need to Know

The evaluation of a lighting design is directly correlated to the home's architecture and landscape design. In cases where there are already existing light fixtures, those must also be included in the overall lighting design evaluation.

Stonewater allows recessed lighting to be installed under horizontal roof overhangs to increase curb appeal, highlight architectural features, and enhance home security. Soffit lighting provides downward, low-glare illumination for entryways and garage doors, while creating a warm inviting atmosphere.

These are the guidelines for Soffit illumination:

**Color of Light.** CCT of 2,700k or warm light incandescent bulbs.

**Brightness Settings.** Architectural accent lighting should be the equivalent brightness to a 40-watt incandescent light bulb. Task lighting under a porch should be no greater than a 100-watt incandescent light bulb. Dimmer controls are highly recommended.

**Low-Glare Illumination.** Soffit fixtures must be installed on only a horizontal soffit with the light directed downward. In some cases, light bulbs must be shielded away from public view (usually when installed above the second floor).

**Curb Appeal.** Lighting is directed only where needed and when needed. The lighting design must be harmonious with Stonewater's traditional home design.

**Enhance Security.** Soffit lighting can be used to enhance your security with better illumination of dark corners, entrances, and to improve surveillance camera visibility. It is not approved as your primary source of security lighting.

### **Prohibited Soffit Lighting Choices:**

- LED strip lighting is not permitted.
- Cold white or colored light.
- Moving, strobing or flickering lights.
- Local ordinances restrict light casting at property boundaries (check with Northville Township for more information).
- Bright flood lighting (review security lighting requirements).
- Light pollution. Improperly aimed or too-bright fixtures create excessive light pollution and can annoy neighbors. Therefore, fixtures cannot be located on any gabled (angles) roof lines or surfaces and light cannot be directed outward.
- Excessive lighting. Using more light fixtures or lumens (brightness) than necessary for architectural accent lighting.
- Commercial, industrial, or modern style designs.
- Permanent holiday lights are prohibited. Any designs resembling string lights will not be approved.

## Preparing Your Soffit Lighting Plan and Modification Request

To maintain the tranquility, appearance, and desirability of the Subdivision, and avoid annoyance and nuisance complaints, the ACC will review the number of key lighting factors, including quantity of light fixtures, their location, brightness, and color.

The following steps will help walk you through the planning process.

- 1) **Confirm existing exterior lights are color complaint.** Set to 2,700 k CCT or are using warm light incandescent bulbs.
- 2) **Take full exterior elevation photos both day and night.** The ACC must consider the homeowner's right to turn on all their exterior lights. Night photos must include all the existing exterior lights turned on. These will be used for planning purposes and must be submitted with your application.
- 3) **Review current lighting design.** First consider the appearance of your home with all the lights on and if you will be making any other changes to the existing lighting design.
- 4) **Determine locations and quantities of soffit lights.**
  - a) Front elevation preferred locations are on the corners of articulated façade (changes in building depth). For example, a typical colonial home usually has seven (7) soffit lights: two (2) on each side of the central entrance and three (3) on the garage façade. Smaller split levels may have six (6): three (3) on one side of the entrance and three (3) on the garage façade. These examples are for illustrative purposes. The actual quantity of lights may vary based on each home's architectural features being highlighted.



- b) Garage side can have up to four (4) soffit lights directly over the garage area and side entrance, preferably on the first-floor level. Second story location selection must consider any possible negative impact on the adjacent property and may require the addition of shields to the fixture.
  - c) The other side of the house usually has less architectural features to highlight; therefore, architectural/security enhancement lighting generally will not be allowed. Case-by-case proposals will be considered for special circumstances.
  - d) Rear elevation preferred soffit locations are on the corners of articulated façade (changes in building depth) to highlight the stone, brick, or siding. Soffit lighting is not for illuminating the backyard; traditional light fixtures or ground level low-voltage landscape lighting should be installed for this purpose.
- 5) **Prepare design drawing.** Mark up a daytime photo with your proposed lighting changes as indicated on the Exterior Lighting Checklist. Have your contractor provide their drawing of where the light will be cast and its lumens (brightness) and color, along with a detailed list per the checklist and these guidelines.

- 6) **Verify compliance.** Review the Checklist's general and architectural lighting requirements and confirm the requirements will be met (check the boxes as you go). Sign and date the checklist.
- 7) **Assemble modification request package.** Read, complete, sign and date the modification request form. Attach the Exterior lighting checklist and the documentation listed on the first page. Also include your land survey, as it includes your property boundary measurements. If you did not receive one at closing, you can request one from Northville Township's Building Department.
- 8) **Scan Package.** Package should be submitted as a letter sized PDF in the order listed above. Photos must be scanned and compressed to meet the total file size limitation of less than 10MB split the file into multiple emails noting (# of total emails) to ensure proper delivery. Email to **MGMC** and **copy the ACC** ([accstonewatervolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:accstonewatervolunteer@gmail.com)) to expedite your review.

The ACC will first verify all the required documentation has been submitted and promptly contact you if anything is missing. The ACC will review the complete package and may follow up with additional questions.

### **Other considerations**

Please be aware of neighboring properties when locating lights. Do not propose light locations near your neighbor's bedroom windows. The Association has the responsibility to enforce the nuisance clause in the Declaration. If your installation violates the Declaration, the ACC's approval will be invalidated and you will be required to modify the design at your own expense.

It is highly recommended your design include light shields to ensure the installation will pass ACC final inspection and avoid neighborhood complaints.

The soffit lighting design should include a means to dim the brightness of fixture. Once the ACC approves the final installation, the brightness shall not be adjusted any brighter than the ACC approval.