

# INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITIES

## HOW TO GET STARTED

### SIX STEPS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

#### 1 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before beginning the process, it is important to consider that the entire International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) designation process takes on average one to two years from initial inquiry to formal designation and will involve a multitude of different stakeholders.

Begin by reviewing the application guidelines on the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) website at: <http://darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IDSC-Guidelines-Jun2018.pdf>. They detail the required elements for a successful application and are the complete set of rules for participation in the program.

#### 2 OBTAIN SUPPORT FROM LEADERSHIP

Contact everyone involved with your city or county government (council, mayor, etc.) and make sure they are aware of your interest in obtaining this designation for the city. Ask for their support and clearly illustrate how a Dark Sky Community Certification will support your community's vision and long-term goals. It is critical that leadership are engaged and supportive throughout this process.

#### 3 ASSESS YOUR CURRENT CITY OR COUNTY LIGHTING ORDINANCE

An important part of the process will involve assessing current city or county ordinances concerning outdoor lighting and making sure that they are in compliance with industry best practices and are "dark-sky friendly".

If your community does not have a lighting ordinance, it is time to get a lighting ordinance started and passed. There are two typical approaches to getting an ordinance started:

1. Action from within the municipality government
2. Outside urging by a citizen or organization

Both approaches work but generally action from within the municipality government will be most successful.

#### 4 NOMINATION LETTER

Your community will need a formal nomination from an IDA member in good standing. *Not sure who to ask? Contact the IDA for a list of members in your area.*

#### 5 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Reach out to local officials, businesses, non-profits, etc., who may write letters endorsing the idea of a Dark Sky Community. IDA is interested in whether prospective Dark Sky Communities have "broad community support" for the idea of controlling the growth of light pollution with a commitment to good outdoor lighting. Begin by making some contacts and forging goodwill that may eventually turn into endorsements.

#### 6 MEDIA COVERAGE

See if you can secure some initial interest/coverage from local media (newspapers, bloggers, television, radio, social media). The idea is to inform people living in the area about your activities. This can be the start of a public outreach/education campaign.

#### A FEW RESOURCES

The International Dark Sky Association, Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative, and other entities have created a variety of educational materials and resources to aid communities as they go through this process. Below are several resources to help get you started.

**IDA has a model lighting ordinance (MLO):** [http://darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/16\\_MLO\\_FINAL\\_JUNE2011.PDF](http://darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/16_MLO_FINAL_JUNE2011.PDF)

**How to start a local dark skies group:** a helpful "how-to" guide on how to start and sustain a dark sky community effort. You can find the guide at: <http://darksky.org/how-to-start-a-local-dark-skies-group/>

**Dark Sky Assessment Guide:** dark sky evaluation tools and ideas: <https://www.darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2019/06/Dark-Sky-Assessment-Guide-Update-6-11-19.pdf>

### FOR UNINCORPORATED PLACES

By definition, a dark sky designated community must in some way be self-governing so as to be able to set their own local lighting policy. For an unincorporated place in the U.S. the best recourse is to the level of government with jurisdiction, which is ordinarily the county.

If an unincorporated place is able to persuade their county to enact a lighting policy, then the unincorporated place will be able to apply to become an International Dark Sky Community. There are two unique ways to go about this:

1. Have the County create a **zone overlay** which applies to the "census designated place of \_\_\_\_\_" and then enact an outdoor lighting ordinance which meets International Dark Sky Association standards for said area.
2. Enact a County-wide ordinance which meets International Dark Sky Association standards.

#### A NOTE ON OPTION ONE

If it is legally allowed in your jurisdiction, option one is generally the most simple of the two options to pursue. Big Park, Arizona is an example of the option one approach.

*For reference visit:* <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/communities/bigpark/>

### PROVISIONAL STATUS

In some cases, a community interested in the program may lack all of the resources required to achieve a designation outright. If resource unavailability otherwise hinders the progress of a community's application, that community may apply for and be granted Provisional status at the discretion of the IDA Board of Directors. *Provisional status recognizes the community's ongoing work to become an International Dark Sky Community and is intended as a leverage point to successfully enable actions such as lighting upgrades and retrofits.*