



CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY ASSOCIATION October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018

Lighting Projects

The City of Dripping Springs hired EMA Engineering & Consulting to develop construction plans for bringing the athletic field lighting at the Dripping Springs Sports and Recreation Park into compliance with the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. The plans are nearing completion.

The city continues to work with the Pedernales Electric Cooperative to ensure the installation of compliant street and area lighting fixtures in the city. There are now compliant lighting fixtures available to all their customers, including those outside the district which Dripping Springs is located in.

Expansion of Territory Subject to Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

The City of Dripping Springs city limits continues to expand as new developments are approved. In the past year, 209 acres was annexed into the city limits. This land is now subject to the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and includes the Heritage Tract Planned Development District #5, which includes up to 700 units.

The City entered into a development agreement for 196 acres located in its extraterritorial jurisdiction (not in the city limits). This agreement requires the 235 single-family homes to be built to compliance with the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.

Lighting Regulations

There were no changes made to the City of Dripping Springs Outdoor Lighting Ordinance in the past year. However, the city revised the Residential Lighting Plan Application form to make it easier for applicants to understand (attached).

New Construction

The City of Dripping Springs continues to experience tremendous growth. Fifty-five commercial building permits were issued by the city in the past year. The largest approved commercial lighting plan by the city to date was for Belterra Village. Belterra Village is a 93-acre mixed use commercial development in the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction that will include over 200,000 square feet of retail space. Phase I was completed and features Sky Cinema, Golds Gym, and numerous restaurants, services, and shops. The development was required to comply with the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance through a development agreement.

The city issued three hundred and seventy-two residential building permits in the past year. Some of these were for homes outside the city limits in developments that were required to comply with the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance through development agreements.

All permitted commercial and residential buildings were required to obtain approved lighting plans and were inspected after construction for compliance. Photographs of some of the buildings completed this past year are below.



Dripping Springs Medical Village



Caliterra Welcome Center



Belterra Village Phase I

Enforcement

The City of Dripping Spring hired a full-time Code Enforcement Inspector who has dedicated a significant amount of time to enforcing the city's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. He uses a friendly approach and helps educate property owners and contractors needing to bring lighting into compliance. The city has seen a sharp decrease in violations of the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance due to the Code Enforcement Inspector's efforts.

Events

The City of Dripping Springs co-hosted, through the Texas Night Sky Festival® Team and with the Austin Astronomical Society, a public star party at Pedernales Falls State Park on April 7, 2018. The event was free with the cost of park entry and offered solar viewing, dark sky activities, and night sky observing.

Outreach

The City of Dripping Springs is often asked to participate in educational events to educate the public and representatives from other cities about dark sky friendly lighting regulations. Over the past year, City Staff gave the following presentations:

Implementing Outdoor Lighting Ordinances, Sarah Holden, Building Official; and

International Dark Sky Community, Michelle Fischer, City Administrator at the

Hill Country Dark Sky Conference on April 6, 2018, in Fredericksburg, Texas;
and

Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, Michelle Fischer, City Administrator, at the Scenic City Seminar on July 12, 2018, in Fredericksburg, Texas.

City Staff regularly meets with residents and business owners who want to learn about the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. Just this month city staff met with several local Boy Scouts who wanted to learn about the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and International Dark Sky Community Designation.

Media Relations

The City of Dripping Springs receives many media inquiries about the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and the city's International Dark Sky Community Designation. As other cities adopt dark sky friendly regulations and become International Dark Sky

Communities, Dripping Springs is often referred to in articles about them since it was the first city in Texas to become an International Dark Sky Community. A recent article titled “Texas Hill Country sets example for saving dark skies,” was written by Nicholas Cicale and Yue Yu and published in Community Impact Newspaper on August 15, 2018 (attached).

We are proud of the nearby cities of Wimberley and Woodcreek for joining Dripping Springs as International Dark Sky Communities (Wimberley Valley). We hope to collaborate with them in the future on events and outreach.

Embracement of Designation by Community

Residents and businesses in Dripping Springs are very proud of the city’s designation as an International Dark Sky Community. Developers see the benefits of being part of a dark sky community and use it in marketing.

The Homebuilders Association of Greater Austin awarded the Headwaters community, located in Dripping Springs, the Sales and Marketing (MAX) Excellence Award for Unique Feature, its Stargazing Amphitheater and Park (press release attached). The 1,035-acre community with 1,000 residential lots under development promotes being in a dark sky community through its marketing materials, website, amenities, and activities for residents.

Other residential and commercial developments boast about being in a dark sky community and include information about it on their websites. Many of them host their own star parties. Attached are examples from the Caliterra and Arrowhead development websites.

The Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau helps to promote the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and the city’s designation as an international dark sky community. They often receive inquiries from visitors wanting to know good places to go to in Dripping Springs to enjoy the night sky. This year the Chamber of Commerce changed the name of its annual awards from “Suits and Boots” to the “Stars Awards.” They acknowledge that the new name is a nice fit with the city’s dark-sky friendly reputation.



Coming Up

The City of Dripping Springs is financially committed to promoting its Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and the city's designation as an International Dark Sky Community. The Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Budget was approved on September 24, 2018, and includes the following expenses for the coming year:

\$150,000 for bringing city owned athletic field lighting into compliance;

\$10,000 for installing signage in various locations publicizing Dripping Springs as an International Dark Sky Community;

\$10,000 to co-host the Texas Night Sky Festival® on March 30 and 31, 2019, with the TNSF Association and the Hays County Master Naturalists; and

\$1,000 to bring noncompliant street and area lights owned by the city into compliance with the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.



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