

# INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION

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*TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE NIGHTTIME ENVIRONMENT AND OUR HERITAGE OF DARK SKIES THROUGH  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR LIGHTING*

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INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITIES

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## **International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines**

**June 2018**

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## DEFINITION OF AN INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITY

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An International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) is town, city, municipality or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal of dark skies.

## GOALS FOR IDSC CREATION

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- To identify communities with exceptional commitment to and success in pursuing dark sky preservation and restoration, and their promotion of quality outdoor lighting
- To promote improved outdoor nighttime quality of life for residents and visitors
- To support protection of human health, nocturnal habitats, public enjoyment of the night sky and its heritage, and/or areas ideal for professional and amateur astronomy
- To provide local, national, and international recognition for such communities
- To promote the ideals of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) by encouraging communities to identify dark skies as a valuable community asset and aspiration

## DESIGNATION BENEFITS

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Achieving this designation brings recognition of the efforts made by the Community government, residents, and public and private organizations to protect the night sky and the nocturnal environment dependent on it. The IDSC designation enhances awareness of dark-sky matters on the part of Community residents and visitors.

Designation as an IDSC entitles the Community to display the International Dark Sky Community logo in official publications, promotions, signs at entrances or within the Community, and retain the use of this logo by other groups within the Community when identifying the area itself<sup>1</sup>. IDA will promote and highlight ongoing Community ef-

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, a Community can identify itself as “*Flagstaff, the world’s first IDA Dark Sky Community*” or other words to the same effect, or an organization within the Community can state “*located in Flagstaff, an IDA Dark Sky Community*”.

forts to protect night skies, and will maintain pages identifying and describing all IDSCs on its website.

## ELIGIBILITY

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The Community must have some type of legal organization that is officially recognized by outside groups. This can be in the form of a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community (such as a urban neighborhoods and subdivisions), but need not be an incorporated entity. Unincorporated or otherwise informally organized communities are eligible for IDSC status if their governing jurisdictions enact public policy consistent with the requirements of “Minimum Requirements For All Communities” (below) that are legally binding in at least the territory of the Community.

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

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- 1) A quality comprehensive lighting policy like the IDA/IES Model Lighting Ordinance<sup>2</sup> (MLO) that includes all of the following minimum standards for permanent lighting installations<sup>3,4</sup>:
  - A) Full shielding<sup>5</sup> of all lighting fixtures over 1000 initial lamp lumens<sup>6</sup>
  - B) A limit on the emission of short-wavelength light through one of the following restrictions:
    - i) The correlated color temperature (CCT) of lamps must not exceed 3000 Kelvins; **OR**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.darksky.org/our-work/public-policy/mlo/>

<sup>3</sup> More information on developing a lighting policy may be found on the IDA website.

<sup>4</sup> Lighting required by law under the authority of any legal jurisdiction higher than that of the Community may be formally exempted from the requirements of this section.

<sup>5</sup> “Fully shielded” is defined as a light source screened and its light directed in such a way that none is emitted above the horizontal plane passing through its lowest light-emitting part.

<sup>6</sup> “Initial lamp lumens” is defined as the number of lumens of light emitted by a lamp when new and not counting any depreciation of output due to the age of the lamp. This information can be found in manufacturer data sheets.

- ii) Allowed lighting must not emit more than 25% of its total spectral power at wavelengths < 550 nanometers; **OR**
- iii) The scotopic-to-photopic (S/P) ratio of allowed lighting must not exceed 1.3
- C) A restriction on the total amount of unshielded lighting, such as a limit on lumens per net acre or a total site lumen allowance in unshielded fixtures (or equivalent wattages)
- D) A policy to address over-lighting, such as lumens per net acre caps (irrespective of shielding state) or maximum illuminance specifications
- E) Regulations of new installations of publicly-owned outdoor lighting:
  - i) A provision that clearly indicates where, when, and under what circumstances new publicly owned outdoor lighting, including street lighting, is warranted and will be permitted; **AND**
  - ii) A provision that requires that adaptive controls<sup>7</sup> and/or curfews<sup>8</sup> be employed in all future installations of public outdoor lighting
- F) Restrictions on the installation and operation of illuminated signs<sup>9</sup>:
  - i) Luminance levels for operation between sunset and sunrise shall not exceed 100 nits (100 candelas per square meter) as measured under conditions of a full white display; **AND**
  - ii) Sign illumination shall be extinguished completely one (1) hour after sunset, and remain off until one (1) hour before sunrise; **AND**

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<sup>7</sup> “Adaptive controls” is defined as devices such as timers, motion-sensors, and light-sensitive switches used to actively regulate the emission of light from light fixtures.

<sup>8</sup> “Curfew” is defined as a period of time at night during which lighting must be significantly dimmed in output or extinguished in accordance with an expected decrease in human presence.

<sup>9</sup> “Illuminated sign” is defined as any informational or advertising sign that is illuminated by either internal or external means. Descriptive terms are adjusted here accordingly according to the type of illumination.

- iii) The luminous/illuminated surface area of an individual sign shall not exceed 200 square feet (18.6 square meters)
  - G) Outdoor recreational and/or athletic field lighting may be exempted from the strict shielding and short-wavelength emission requirements above provided that all of the following conditions are met:
    - i) Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) lighting guidelines (RP-6) are followed according to the appropriate class of play
    - ii) Field lighting is provided exclusively for illumination of the surface of play and viewing stands, and not for any other applications
    - iii) Illuminance levels must be adjustable based on the task (e.g., active play vs. field maintenance)
    - iv) Off-site impacts of the lighting will be limited to the greatest practical extent possible
    - v) A strict curfew requirement (e.g., lights must be extinguished by 10pm/2200h or one hour after the end of play, whichever is later) is observed
    - vi) Timers must be installed to prevent lights being left on accidentally overnight by automatically extinguishing them
  - H) Affects an amortization period, applicable to **ALL** publicly **AND** privately owned lighting, to end not more than ten (10) years from the effective date of the outdoor lighting policy, after which all non-conforming lighting extant at the time of enactment must be brought into compliance with the policy.
- 2) Community commitment to dark skies and quality lighting as shown by:
- A) City owned lighting conforming with, or committed to conforming with, the lighting policy (if the latter, a detailed plan with a timeline for completion in no more than five (5) years), **AND**

- B) Municipal support of dark skies and quality lighting as demonstrated by city publications, flyers, public service announcements, funding of lighting upgrades, etc.
- 3) Broad support for dark skies from a wide range of community organizations such as chambers of commerce, local electrical utilities, IDA chapters, lighting retailers, homeowners associations, and others.
  - 4) Community commitment to dark skies and education as shown by at least one of the following:
    - A) Planning and execution of at least two (2) community dark sky awareness events<sup>10</sup> per year. This may be organized through a local astronomy club, municipality, school, etc.
    - B) Inclusion of dark sky awareness documents (IDA brochures or Community-created brochures) with other Community informational documents for residents and visitors.
    - C) Inclusion of dark sky education in Community schools and curriculum.
  - 5) Success in light pollution control as demonstrated by at least one of the following:
    - A) Examples of a number of construction projects appropriate to the Community population and amount of new construction and renovation activity, built under the lighting policy and demonstrating its effective application
    - B) Alternative evidence of success in light pollution control, to be discussed with the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager for compliance.
  - 6) A sky brightness measurement program must be established and maintained either by the Community or by a public or private entity (e.g., university, research center, IDA chapter, astronomy club, etc.) to follow the evolution of light pollution in the IDSC. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit their measurements

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<sup>10</sup> Note that astronomy education events such as star parties do NOT qualify as “community dark sky awareness events” unless the presentation explicitly includes a message relating to dark skies and outdoor lighting.

to the citizen science projects such as My Sky At Night ([myskyatnight.com](http://myskyatnight.com)) and Globe At Night ([globeatnight.org](http://globeatnight.org)).

- 7) Once established, the Community must erect and maintain appropriate signage indicating the International Dark Sky Community designation along a roadway entrance, along a footpath entrance if no roadway exists, a public gathering place such as a square or common, or at a municipal government center such as a city or town hall. If approved by IDA, language as an alternative to “International Dark Sky Community” may appear on the signage and in Community communications regarding the IDSC status. Once the sign is erected, a photograph documenting it must be taken and sent to IDA along with a description of its location.

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## **PROVISIONAL STATUS**

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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/retrofits.

Provisional status expires after three (3) years. At any time before the end of this period, a Community may reapply for full status. Material submitted for the removal of Provisional status may be an addendum to the initial application as long as the material includes a current assessment of the goals, outreach efforts, and lighting policy listed in the original application and clearly demonstrates that any program requirements left unmet at receipt of the Provisional status have been satisfied.

To be considered for a Provisional status, send a nomination package to IDA that includes all of the following information:

- 1) Documented intent to create and support an IDA Dark Sky Community
- 2) An enacted and legally effective outdoor lighting policy, and summary of outreach efforts to date
- 3) A description of the circumstances that currently prevent the Community from meeting the minimum Dark Sky Community requirements
- 4) An action plan describing steps the aspiring Community will take to meet all program requirements in the specified Provisional status period



## **IDSC APPLICATION PROCESS**

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### **NOMINATION**

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The nomination may be initiated by an IDA qualified nominator<sup>11</sup> who has personally reviewed a Community's outdoor lighting and commitment to night sky preservation. Nominators are encouraged to correspond with IDA staff and the Community throughout this process. In addition, the application must include evidence, such as in the form of a letter of support, from the Community government (mayor, council, etc.) consenting to the nomination for IDSC status.

### **STEPS FOR APPLICANT**

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1. Make initial contact with IDA by phone or email to discuss the process and receive recommendations, followed by continued communications to update IDA staff on progress and receive continued assistance.
2. Designate a formal point of contact (POC) person, such as a project manager, and provide their telephone number, address and email address to IDA staff. Before and after designation, any changes to this POC, or their information, must be communicated to IDA immediately in order to ensure accurate communication at all times.
3. Obtain a letter of nomination from a qualified IDA member nominator, as well as a supporting letter from elected representatives of the Community, such as the mayor and/or council of a municipality. Solicit additional letters of support from Community organizations, clubs, groups, universities, etc.
4. Upon completion, sends the application to IDA staff for review of the document at least one month before the chosen submission deadline date. IDA staff will confirm that the application is complete and ready for submission or return it with suggestions for improvements.
5. Submit the final application packet electronically in PDF and/or Microsoft Word (.doc) format to IDA staff for formal review. Submit in plenty of time for IDA staff

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<sup>11</sup> An "IDA qualified nominator" is defined here as an individual or organization holding an IDA membership in good standing at the time that the IDSC application is submitted. The Community itself may join IDA as an organizational member and self-nominate.

to review and prepare your application to make the bi-monthly deadline that you prefer, as found on the IDA website. Requests to rush applications will **NOT** be honored; planning ahead is essential if the Community wishes to meet a specific deadline.

### TO BE INCLUDED IN IDSC APPLICATION PACKAGE

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1. Map of the Community clearly indicating its legal boundaries, and basic factual information about the Community
2. Letter of nomination support by IDA qualified nominator and elected representatives of the Community such as the mayor and/or council
3. The Community's lighting policy, meeting the minimum requirements as stated in the "Minimum Requirements For All Communities" section
4. Documentation of examples of Community commitment and construction/renovation projects demonstrating effective application of the lighting policy
5. Proposed alternative wording for a IDSC (e.g. Dark Sky Village, Starry Sky City, etc.), if desired, with a justification for the request

### IDA REVIEW PROCESS

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Six (6) application submission deadlines occur in each calendar year, commencing in January and continuing every other month. Before the Community's final application is submitted, it is highly recommended that the Community be in regular communication with the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager to perfect the application by the next application deadline.

The International Dark Sky Places Manager will forward applications to the IDA Dark Sky Places Committee (DSPC) for review. DSPC review lags the submission dates by one two-month cycle. The total elapsed time between deadline and final IDSC designation approval is approximately ten (10) weeks.

Endorsement of applications by the DSPC is by a 2/3 supermajority vote; otherwise, the DSPC will return applications with reasons for denial of an endorsement and specific recommendations for improvement. If endorsed, the applicants will be notified and the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager will present the application to the IDA Board of Directors (BOD) for final review and approval. A ten (10)-calendar-day

waiting period then commences during which the Board of Directors has the right to deny IDSC status should it determine that any problems with the application exist.

If the BOD registers no objection within the ten-calendar-day waiting period, the IDSC designation is considered immediately awarded by IDA. The Community has the right to choose when the designation is made public, but it must organize the announcement to be made at the same time as the IDA public notice unless otherwise agreed by both parties. Along with the announcement notice, IDA will publish the Community's application on its website; by submitting the application, the Community acknowledges in advance that the application will be made publicly available. If an application is denied final approval by the IDA BOD, a letter will be sent to the applicant outlining elements of the application that need improvement along with specific recommendations for ways to remedy any problems the BOD identifies. Applications may be resubmitted for future consideration after remediation is complete. Resubmitted applications will be considered without prejudice.

IDA realizes that certain circumstances surrounding an IDSC application may cause some potential authors of letters of support (or opposition) to feel uneasy about publicly declaring their opinions about the IDA designation. In the interest of providing the DSPPC with as full a picture of Community sentiment about applications as possible, certain letters may be suppressed from online publication if it is felt that making the letters publicly available will subject their authors to retaliation or harassment. A prospective IDSC seeking this protection for letter-writers must make a formal written request. The International Dark Sky Places Program Manager must approve suppression of publication of any part of an application. Note that suppression of online publication does not prevent either the DSPPC or the IDA BOD from reading all submitted letters.

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## **POST-DESIGNATION REVIEW AND MAINTENANCE**

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**The IDSC designation is not awarded in perpetuity.** Rather, it is subject to regular review by IDA and possible revocation if the minimum program requirements are not maintained. More details may be found in the "Reassessment of IDSC designation" section below.

To ensure that Communities remain exemplary in their protection and restoration of natural nighttime darkness, IDA will periodically reevaluate each site in the International Dark Sky Places Program. This is done to confirm that the Community continues to meet the minimum requirements and is making adequate progress toward LMP compliance goals outlined in this document.

Each designated IDSC must submit to IDA a written report of its activities related to the maintenance of its designation on or before 1 October of each calendar year. The report is a short (typically less than ten-page) synopsis of the Community's activities and initiatives during the intervening year<sup>12</sup>. The report should include dates and brief descriptions of any interpretive events, lighting retrofit projects, outreach efforts, etc. Samples of printed materials and press articles should also be included, if available.

Annual reports should not be burdensome to produce, as they are intended as a compilation of information accumulated throughout the year. Annual reports and supporting documentation must be submitted electronically to the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager in either PDF or Microsoft Word format. If the annual report is not received by IDA in a timely fashion, IDA may suspend the site's IDSC status until the annual reporting requirement has been met (see the following section). On or about 1 August and 1 September of each year, the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager will remind local contacts at each IDSC of the pending 1 October annual report submission deadline.

A designated IDSC is exempt from the annual reporting requirement in the calendar year in which the IDA designation was awarded. If the designation is received after 1 October of a given calendar year, the IDSC's first annual report to IDA will be due on 1 October of the following calendar year.

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## **REASSESSMENT OF IDSC DESIGNATIONS**

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From time to time, IDA receives comments from visitors to Communities that raise concerns about the veracity and timeliness of information provided to IDA by site administrators. IDA may, at its discretion, investigate claims in which it is alleged that IDSCs are not adhering to commitments made to IDA and to the public in their applications to the Program. This section details the IDA procedure for carrying out such investigations, and the rights of IDSCs in such matters.

An allegation of impropriety concerning any of the elements of participation in the Program outlined in this document is subject to IDA investigation and potential remedial action including temporary suspension and/or permanent revocation of the IDSC designation. IDA staff shall perform due diligence in gathering facts concerning such allegations it deems credible, and will prepare a report of its findings for consideration by the DSPC. The DSPC commits to weighing the evidence fairly and impartially, and to

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<sup>12</sup> Examples of acceptable annual reports are available on the individual IDSC pages on the IDA website.

seek to resolve disputes whenever possible through dialog. A Community subject to an investigation shall be notified in a timely manner and solicited for evidence contrary to the specifics of the allegation at hand. The Community will be given an opportunity to correct any deficiencies with regard to the Program guidelines established by the IDA investigation within a reasonable time period to be prescribed by the DSPC.

Failure to achieve consensus through these means risks a DSPC recommendation for suspension or revocation of the IDSC designation. If made, such a recommendation will be forwarded to the IDA Board of Directors for formal ratification before coming into force. The Board's decision on any disciplinary matters involving an IDSC shall be considered definitive and binding.

Any IDSC so investigated has the right to review the allegations against it and all factual information collected by IDA pertinent to the allegations.

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## REINSTATEMENT FOLLOWING SUSPENSION

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If the DSPC recommends a suspension of a Community's IDSC designation and the Board ratifies the suspension, the Community administration shall be immediately notified. The status of a suspended IDSC shall be changed to "Provisional" in all IDA communications until the designation is reinstated or revoked; however, the process of obtaining reinstatement of a designation is not the same as that outlined in the "Provisional Status" section of these guidelines.

To obtain reinstatement of a suspended designation, the IDSC must provide evidence to the DSPC's satisfaction that the specific issues identified by the DSPC as grounds for the suspension have been corrected and that all Program guidelines are once again met. The DSPC will consider the evidence presented by the IDSC and render a judgment to either:

- Accept the reinstatement petition, **OR**
- Reject the petition and recommend revocation, **OR**
- Return the petition with further instructions and a defined deadline for a IDSC response.

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## REVOCAATION

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A suspension left unresolved after one (1) year from the date of the Board's assent to the suspension automatically becomes a permanent revocation. Revocation entails removal of the IDSC from IDA's roll of approved International Dark Sky Places, and from mention on the IDA website and in member and external communications. IDA reserves the right to take legal action against any former IDSC whose designation is duly revoked but continues to use the IDA name/logo in advertising, communications,

and/or signage.