

**INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION**

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TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE NIGHTTIME ENVIRONMENT AND OUR HERITAGE OF DARK  
SKIES THROUGH QUALITY OUTDOOR LIGHTING



**International Dark-Sky Association  
Dark Sky Community Criteria**

May 2013

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## DEFINITION OF AN IDA DARK SKY COMMUNITY

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An IDA Dark Sky Community (DSC) is a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community (such as a urban neighborhoods and subdivisions) that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting codes, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies.

## GOALS FOR IDA DARK SKY COMMUNITY 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 ecotourism
- To promote 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 International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) by encouraging communities to identify dark skies as a valuable community asset and goal

## BENEFITS

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Achieving this designation brings recognition of the efforts made by the community council, the local government authorities (police department, planning and zoning, etc.), the citizens, and any other public and private organization to protect the night sky and the environment dependent on it. This designation will enhance awareness of dark sky matters to all residents and visitors of the community.

Designation as an IDA DSC entitles the community to display the IDA Dark Sky Community logo in official publications, promotions, signs at the entrance or within the community, and retain the use of this logo by other groups within the community when identifying the area itself (i.e. a community can say “Flagstaff, the world’s first IDA Dark Sky Community” or in other words to the same effect, for example, an organization within the community can say “located in Star City, an IDA Dark Sky Community”). IDA will maintain a web page identifying and describing all IDA DSCs available on [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org).

## ELIGIBILITY (ALL MUST BE MET)

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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).

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

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- A) A quality comprehensive lighting code like the IDA/IES Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) with the following minimum standards (more on developing a lighting code and guidelines may be found on our website [www.darksky.org/mlo](http://www.darksky.org/mlo))
  - i) Fully-shielded or full-cutoff standard for all lighting fixtures over 3000 lumens initial lamp output (or equivalent wattages), AND;
  - ii) Restrictions on total amount of unshielded lighting, such as a limit on lumens per acre or total site lumens in unshielded fixtures (or equivalent wattages), AND;
  - iii) A policy to address over-lighting, such as energy density caps, lumens/acre caps, or maximum illuminance specifications.
  
- B) Community commitment to dark skies and quality lighting as shown by:
  - i) City owned lighting conforming with, or committed to conforming with, the lighting code (if the latter, a published plan with a timeline for completion in no more than 5 years), AND;
  - ii) Municipal support of dark skies and good lighting as indicated through city publications, flyers, public service announcements, funding of lighting upgrades, etc.
  
- C) Broad Support for dark skies from a wide range of community organizations such as:
  - i) Chamber of Commerce
  - ii) Local electrical utility
  - iii) Local IDA Chapter
  - iv) Lighting retailers
  - v) Home Owners Association
  - vi) Business Improvement Associations
  - vii) Others
  
- D) Community commitment to dark skies and education as shown by at least one of the following:
  - i) Planning and execution of at least two community dark sky awareness events per year. This may be organized through a local astronomy club, municipality, school, etc. AND/OR;
  - ii) Inclusion of dark sky awareness documents (IDA brochures or community-created brochures) with other community informational documents for residents and visitors, AND/OR;
  - iii) Inclusion of dark sky education in community schools and curriculum.
  
- E) Success in light pollution control. At least one of the following conditions must be demonstrated:

- i) Examples of a minimum of ten projects built under the lighting code, demonstrating effective application of the local lighting code, AND/OR;
  - ii) Alternative demonstration of success in light pollution control, to be discussed with IDA for compliance.
- F) A sky brightness measurement program must be maintained either by the community or by another public or private organization (university, research center, IDA chapter, astronomy club, etc.) to follow the evolution of light pollution in the IDA DSC. Installation of at least one permanently mounted Night Sky Brightness Monitor and participation in the IDA Global Sky Monitor website is recommended, AND;
- G) Designation is permanent, but is subject to regular review by IDA and possible revocation if minimum requirements are not maintained. More details may be found in the “Reassessment of IDA DSC designation” section.
- H) Periodic checks, through the submission of the annual report due October 1<sup>st</sup>, will be preformed to ensure that minimum standards and objectives of the program are being upheld and adequate progress is being made. This report is a short 1 to 2-page synopsis of the community’s activities and initiatives throughout the last year. The Borrego Springs, CA report is included on the website for reference <http://www.darksky.org/communities>

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## **GUIDELINES ON THE IDA DSC PROCESS**

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### **NOMINATION**

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The nomination may be initiated by an IDA qualified nominator who has personally reviewed a community’s outdoor lighting and commitment to night sky preservation. To become an IDA qualified nominator you must be an IDA member and be approved by the IDA Dark Sky Places manager. The nomination may be a joint effort between community and the qualified nominator. Nominators are encouraged to correspond with IDA staff and the community throughout this process—from first consideration of an IDA DSC through the final submission package.

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### **IDA DSC APPLICATION PROCESS**

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#### **STEPS FOR APPLICANT**

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- A) Initial contact with IDA by phone or email to discuss the process and receive recommendations followed by continued contact to update IDA staff on progress and receive continued recommendations;
- B) A formal point of contact (POC) person is designated and their phone, address and email information is forwarded to IDA staff. Before and after designation, any changes to this POC, or their information, must be communicated to IDA in order to ensure accurate communication at all times;

- C) Official supporting letter for the nomination from elected representatives of the community, such as the mayor and/or council of a municipality. Any additional letters of support from organizations, clubs, groups, universities, etc.;
- D) Upon completion, the community sends the application to IDA staff for review of the document. IDA staff confirms that the application is complete and ready for submission;
- E) Completed application packet in .pdf and/or MS Word .doc format sent electronically to International Dark Sky Places committee (DSPC) by IDA staff for review.
- F) Submit in plenty of time for IDA staff to review and prepare your application to make the bi-monthly deadline that you prefer, find the deadlines at <http://www.darksky.org/idsp> Requests to rush applications will NOT be accepted; meaning that planning ahead is essential if the community is planning to meet a deadline.

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### **TO BE INCLUDED IN IDA DSC SUBMISSION**

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- A) Map of community and factual information, i.e. population, number of schools, etc.
- B) Letter of nomination support by IDA qualified nominator and elected representatives of the community such as the mayor and/or council.
- C) The community's lighting code and guidelines must meet the minimum requirements as stated in the minimum requirements section.
- D) Documentation of examples of community support and projects.
- E) Proposed alternative wording for an IDA DSC (e.g. Dark Sky Village, Starry Sky City, etc.), if desired.
- F) An outline of a completed application is available and may be used upon request.

### **IDA REVIEW PROCESS**

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- A) Applications are sent to the committee on a bi-monthly basis.
- B) Before the community's final application is submitted it is highly recommended that the community be in regular conversation with IDA staff to perfect the application before the next application deadline. Applications not ready for submission by the deadline for committee consideration will be considered at the next committee meeting.
- C) IDA staff forwards application to Dark Sky Places Committee for review at the deadline.
- D) Approval of application by DSPC is by a 2/3-majority vote, or denial with reasons and recommendations. The DSPC committee may consider the applications for up to two months before a decision is released to the applicant.
- E) If approved the location will be notified and the program manager will organize a press release with the location during a 10-day waiting period during which the Board of Directors will have the formal right to veto should they perceive a problem with the application. The Community has the right to choose when the press release is made public but must organize the announcement to be made at the same time as the IDA press release unless otherwise discussed and agreed upon by both parties.

- F) If approved the community is awarded the IDA DSC designation and listed along with their application on the IDA website. By submitting the application the community agrees to have the application posted to the website unless otherwise stated;
- G) If denied, a letter is sent to applicant outlining elements of the application that need improvement and specific recommendations for ways to remedy them. Applications can be resubmitted for future consideration after remediation is complete.

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### **REASSESSMENT OF IDA DSC DESIGNATIONS**

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To ensure that the communities continue to meet the guidelines and goals of the IDA DSC program, IDA will periodically reassess IDA DSCs. This is done to confirm that communities continue to meet the minimum requirements. Annual reports are due October 1<sup>st</sup>. See the website for examples of annual reports at <http://www.darksky.org/communities>