

How You Can Help Horseshoe Bay Remain a Dark Sky Community

On November 1, 2015, the International Dark-Sky Association recognized the City of Horseshoe Bay as an International Dark Sky Community in recognition of its exemplary efforts to preserve the city's naturally dark night-time conditions.

While local residents have much to celebrate as International Dark Sky Week approaches April 21-28, many also know that the Texas Hill Country is one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Residents revel in the open spaces, clear streams, abundant wildlife and starry skies; but with continued development also comes increasing light pollution.

Preserving the pristine beauty of night skies for ourselves and future generations requires a concerted effort by all residents of a community, but reducing the harmful impacts of light pollution doesn't have to be complicated.

What exactly is light pollution?

Light pollution is wasted light in the natural environment. This manmade problem is caused by overly bright, outdoor lighting that shines when or where it is not needed. It is also a completely solvable problem! **Making informed choices when installing lighting** on your property can help you avoid negative effects, such as wasting money and energy.

According to the International Dark-Sky Association, at least 30 percent of all outdoor lighting in the U.S. is wasted by shining where it is not intended. This waste comes at a cost of about \$3 billion nationally per year! Waste comes mainly from lights that are not shielded or are aimed improperly.

Read on to learn simple ways you can contribute to protecting the brilliance of Horseshoe Bay's skies while improving safety, security, and the enjoyment of your property and saving money on your electric bills.

4 Things You Can Do to Protect Horseshoe Bay 's Dark Skies

1. Use fully shielded lighting

Fully shielded lighting has a barrier at both the top of the fixture and surrounding the light bulb or LED light source. It is angled so the light source cannot be seen by nearby people or wildlife and prevents light trespass onto your neighbors' property, glare and skyglow. To learn more about fully shielded options, visit www.skykeepers.org/handouts/blbn.pdf.

2. Use the correct color temperature

"Color temperature" describes the apparent color of light emitted from a light source. It is measured in degrees Kelvin (K) on a scale from 1,000 to 10,000. Lower color temperature light (2,000K to 3,000K) has less blue light in its spectrum and is referred to as "warm." Higher color temperature light (3,100K to 6,500K) is rich in blue light and appears harsher and brighter. Blue light can also harm our health and endanger wildlife.

It is critical to use light on the “warm” end of the spectrum. The International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) recommends using lighting that has a color temperature of no more than 3,000K-the lower the better. By city ordinance, yard address lights may not contain lamps exceeding 1,800 initial lumens and a correlated color temperature of 3200K.

3. Ensure lights are no brighter than necessary

Good outdoor lighting has a specific purpose, such as illuminating a path, doorway, or gate. It is important that the light is no brighter than necessary to serve that function. Over-lighting creates more skyglow and glare, while also diminishing our ability to see at night. In most cases, less is more!

4. Ensure lights are only on when needed

Using light when not needed is wasteful and could create intrusion into neighboring properties. There are also huge economic consequences! Regardless of whether you are actively using outdoor lights that remain on overnight - you are paying for it! Night-time lighting can be used only when needed and still allow you to stay safe in the dark.

We encourage our citizens to learn more about light pollution and simple solutions to mitigate it. Information and resources are available from the Hill Country Alliance (www.hillcountryalliance.org/NightSkyLighting) and the IDSA (www.darksky.org).

Stay tuned for more information in the Beacon as the Development Services Department plans its Stargazing Workshop at the Horseshoe Bay Nature Park. The event will occur in October during the sixth annual Hill Country Night Sky Month, a month-long celebration of the region’s most dazzling night-time feature!