

★ TEXAS HILL COUNTRY DARK SKY INITIATIVE ★

# Night Sky Friendly Business Toolkit

A complete guide for volunteers and businesses  
to protect our dark skies together

**Outreach Guide · Leave-Behind Materials · Audit Form · Recognition Program**

Based on programs by DarkSky International, DarkSky Texas, Hill Country Alliance  
and the Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky

## How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed for night sky volunteers and community organizations who want to engage local businesses in reducing light pollution. You do not need to be a lighting expert to use it — just enthusiasm for dark skies and a willingness to have a friendly conversation.

### What's Inside This Toolkit

**PART 1** — Volunteer Outreach Guide: How to identify and approach businesses, prioritize your outreach, and follow up effectively.

**PART 2** — Leave-Behind Materials: A one-page fact sheet and talking points to give to businesses when you visit.

**PART 3** — Business Lighting Audit Form: A simple checklist to assess a business's outdoor lighting.

**PART 4** — Recognition Program: A tiered recognition scheme to celebrate and reward businesses that achieve compliance.

Programs like this are already working across the Texas Hill Country. The Blanco Chamber of Commerce, the Hill Country Alliance, and DarkSky Texas have recognized dozens of businesses in communities including Blanco, Fredericksburg, Wimberley, Mason, and Kerrville. Your community can do the same.

## Section 1: Why This Matters

Light pollution is a growing problem across Texas. In the Hill Country — one of the last dark sky regions in the continental United States — poorly designed outdoor lighting is the leading threat to our night skies. The good news: most light pollution is easy and inexpensive to fix.

### The Business Case

Businesses that make the switch to night sky friendly lighting benefit in multiple ways:

Benefit	Details
<b>Energy Savings</b>	Properly aimed, right-sized lights use 50–95% less energy than typical commercial installations. Nationally, ~35% of outdoor light is wasted, costing \$3 billion per year.
<b>Lower Operating Costs</b>	LED warm-white fixtures (2700–3000K) with motion sensors or timers dramatically cut electricity bills and extend fixture lifespan.
<b>Night Sky Tourism</b>	The Texas Hill Country dark sky economy generates millions in tourism revenue. Star-gazing visitors choose businesses that share their values.
<b>Reduced Light Trespass</b>	Properly aimed lights eliminate spill onto neighboring properties, reducing complaints and potential liability.

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<b>Community Recognition</b>	Participation in a recognized program signals environmental leadership and community goodwill.	
<b>ESG &amp; Marketing Value</b>	Night sky compliance supports sustainability reporting and provides authentic marketing content for eco-conscious customers.	

## Local Leadership: Kerrville and Kerr County

The Kerrville area has built one of the most complete dark sky frameworks of any Texas Hill Country community — combining a county-level resolution and proclamation, a formal city intent resolution, a comprehensive enforceable city ordinance, and a major utility conversion. This gives volunteers a powerful platform when approaching local businesses.

<p><b>Kerr County Resolution (Jan 2017)</b></p> <p>Kerr County Commissioners Court adopted Court Order 35950 supporting practices that minimize light trespass and encouraging businesses, landowners, and public entities to reduce energy consumption, save money, and protect night sky and wildlife.</p>	<p><b>Kerr County Proclamation (Oct 2020)</b></p> <p>County Judge Rob Kelly signed Court Order #38338 proclaiming October as "Hill Country Night Sky Month," citing light pollution as wasted energy costing \$2 billion/year nationally and noting the growing list of IDA-certified places in the region including Enchanted Rock, South Llano, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg, and Wimberley Valley.</p>
<p><b>Kerrville Resolution No. 81-2022 (Dec 2022)</b></p> <p>Mayor Judy Eychner signed the city's formal SB 1090 intent resolution, establishing Kerrville's intent to become an IDA-certified Dark Sky Community and directing the City Manager to prepare an outdoor lighting ordinance. Cites Schreiner University's Loftis Observatory and the Kerrville 2050 Comprehensive Plan as evidence of the community's commitment.</p>	<p><b>Article X Outdoor Lighting, Ord. No. 2023-03 (Jan 2023)</b></p> <p>Within one month of Resolution 81-2022, Kerrville adopted a comprehensive enforceable outdoor lighting ordinance applying within city limits. Businesses in Kerrville are legally required to comply. Key requirements: full shielding, CCT ≤3,000K, light source not visible from neighboring properties, 11pm curfew, lumen caps, and violation fines up to \$2,000/day.</p>
<p><b>KPUB — Leading by Example</b></p> <p>The Kerrville Public Utility Board converted all 3,600 street and area lights in its 146-square-mile service area to dark sky friendly LEDs, saving 1.6 million kWh/year (nearly 60% less energy). KPUB was recognized as a Night Sky Friendly Business in 2021 by the Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky and the Kerrville Area Chamber of Commerce and offers dark sky compliant area lights to residential and commercial customers at 830.257.3050.</p>	

### Talking Point for Kerrville City Businesses

"Your business is already legally required to comply with Kerrville's Article X Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (Ord. No. 2023-03). The city has a comprehensive set of standards — full shielding, warm color temperature, curfew requirements — and violations can result in fines up to \$2,000 per day. We're here to help you achieve compliance and earn public recognition at the same time."

Note: The 10-year amortization period means existing nonconforming fixtures can be phased in gradually to become compliant in 2033— but any new construction, building permit, or sign permit triggers immediate compliance for affected lighting.

### Note for Businesses Outside Kerrville City Limits

Article X applies only within Kerrville city limits. Businesses in unincorporated Kerr County are not legally required to comply under the city ordinance. However, the Kerr County resolution and proclamation, the HCA Night Sky Friendly Business program, and the voluntary spirit of Hill Country Night Sky Month (October) all provide strong community-based motivation to participate.

If the business is in a subdivision that has adopted the HCA County Subdivision policy, a stricter 2,700K CCT standard applies.

## Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting

These principles — developed jointly by DarkSky International and the Illuminating Engineering Society — provide a simple framework for evaluating any outdoor light.

**1**

### **USEFUL** | Only light what needs light

Every light should serve a clear purpose. If you can't articulate why a light is on, it probably doesn't need to be.

**2**

### **TARGETED** | Aim light where it's needed

Fixtures should direct light downward onto the task area. Light that spills sideways or upward is wasted and harmful.

**3**

### **LOW LEVEL** | Use only as much light as needed

More light is not better light. Over-lit areas create glare and reduce visibility. Start with minimum effective levels.

**4**

### **CONTROLLED** | Use timers, sensors, and dimmers

Lights that can be dimmed or turned off when not needed save energy and reduce impact on wildlife and the night sky.

**5**

### **WARM-COLORED** | Choose amber or warm white light

Cool blue-white LEDs (above 3000K) scatter more in the atmosphere and harm wildlife. Use 3000K or lower — preferably 2700K in the Hill Country.

## Section 2: Volunteer Outreach Guide

This section walks you through the process of identifying, prioritizing, and approaching businesses in your community. Follow these steps and you'll have a productive, positive experience — even if you've never done outreach before.

### Step 1: Build Your Business Inventory

Start by creating a simple spreadsheet of businesses in your target area. Focus on businesses with significant outdoor lighting — parking lots, signage, exterior walls, canopies, and outdoor seating areas.

#### Good Sources for Your Business List

- Local Chamber of Commerce member directory
- Google Maps satellite view — look for bright spots at night
- Drive or walk through commercial areas after dark
- Light pollution maps (e.g., Light Pollution Map at [lightpollutionmap.info](http://lightpollutionmap.info))
- Referrals from businesses that have already joined the program

For each business, capture: Business name, address, type of business, estimated number of outdoor fixtures, and notes on obvious lighting problems (e.g., bare bulbs, upward-facing lights, very bright signage).

### Step 2: Prioritize Your Outreach

Not every business is equal in terms of impact or ease of engagement. Use the following priority scoring to decide where to focus first.

Priority	Category	Criteria	Suggested Action
1	<b>High Impact</b>	Businesses with large parking lots, extensive signage lighting, or bright canopy lights visible from a distance. Gas stations, car dealers, big-box retailers.	Start here — compliance makes a visible difference to the night sky.
2	<b>Visible / Symbolic</b>	Businesses on main streets, historic squares, or in high-traffic areas. Their compliance sets an example for neighbors.	High visibility means high influence. Early wins here build momentum.
3	<b>Tourism &amp; Hospitality</b>	Hotels, B&Bs, wineries, breweries, restaurants with outdoor seating, event venues. Customers care about stars.	Frame as a marketing asset. Eco-conscious guests notice.
4	<b>Easy Wins</b>	Businesses with only 1–3 fixtures that are easy to replace or re-aim. Small shops, professional offices.	Quick conversations, quick compliance. Builds your confidence and program numbers.

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Priority	Category	Criteria	Suggested Action
5	Civic & Government	City facilities, county buildings, schools, churches. Public sector leadership sets standards.	Connect to sustainability goals or community pride. These approvals often trigger neighbors to follow.

### Step 3: Prepare for Your Visit

A little preparation makes your visit much more effective. Before approaching a business:

1. Print or have ready on your phone: the Leave-Behind Fact Sheet (Section 3 of this toolkit).
2. Note the specific lighting issues you observed at this business so you can speak to them concretely.
3. Know the name of the program you're representing (e.g., [Your Community] Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program).
4. Bring a business card or contact info for your organization so the business can follow up.
5. Know the recognition benefits: certificate, window decal, logo use rights, website listing, and potential media coverage.

### Step 4: The Outreach Conversation

Ask to speak with the owner or manager. Introduce yourself clearly and briefly. Here is a suggested opening:

#### Suggested Opening Script

“Hi, my name is [Name] and I'm a volunteer with Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky. We're working with local businesses to help protect the dark skies of the [community name] area, which is one of the last dark sky regions in Texas.

We have a simple recognition program for businesses that meet our lighting guidelines — it's free to participate and usually requires only minor adjustments to existing lighting.

May I leave you some information and perhaps arrange a time to do a quick lighting walk-around with you?”

Keep it brief. Leave the fact sheet. Do NOT pressure them. If they're not interested, thank them and move on. Many businesses that initially decline will come around after seeing neighbors participate.

### Step 5: The Lighting Walk-Around

If the business is interested, schedule a brief walk-around of the property (15–30 minutes is usually enough). Use the Business Lighting Audit Form in Section 4 of this toolkit to guide your assessment.

- Walk the perimeter after dusk if possible or use photos to assess lighting conditions.
- Note every outdoor fixture: type, direction, color temperature (warm/cool), shielding, and whether it has controls.
- Be encouraging, not critical. Frame issues as “opportunities” rather than “problems.”

- Offer to help identify compliant replacement fixtures (DarkSky Approved Luminaire list at [darksky.org](https://darksky.org)).
- Discuss a realistic timeline — most businesses can make changes within 3–6 months.

## Step 6: Follow-Up and Certification

After the walk-around, send a brief summary of findings and next steps. Offer to answer questions and connect them with suppliers or resources.

1. Send a follow-up email within 48 hours summarizing findings and recommended actions.
2. Check in after 30 days to see if they've made progress.
3. When the business believes they're ready, schedule a compliance verification visit.
4. If they meet the criteria, submit their name to the recognition program coordinator.
5. Present their certificate and arrange publicity through local media and social channels.

### Volunteer Tracking Tip

Keep a simple log: business name, date of first contact, status (not contacted / contacted / walk-around done / in progress / compliant), and notes. A shared Google Sheet works well for a volunteer team.

Review your list quarterly and re-contact businesses that showed interest but haven't followed through.

## Section 3: Leave-Behind Materials

The following pages contain materials designed to be left with businesses after your visit. They can also be emailed as PDFs or shared digitally.

★ FACT SHEET ★

### Night Sky Friendly Business Program

Protect the night sky. Save energy. Earn recognition.

#### What Is a Night Sky Friendly Business?

A Night Sky Friendly Business has made a commitment to ensure that its outdoor lighting meets simple, science-based standards that protect the night sky, reduce light pollution, and improve the quality of the lighting itself. This program is free to join and open to any business in our community.

#### The Five Simple Standards

##### ✓ Shielded

All outdoor fixtures are fully shielded so light is directed downward only — no light spills into the sky or onto neighboring properties.

##### ✓ Targeted

Lights illuminate only the area that needs to be lit. Decorative flood lighting that serves no purpose is eliminated.

##### ✓ Right-Sized

Lighting levels are appropriate for the task — not unnecessarily bright. Glare is minimized.

##### ✓ Warm-Colored

All outdoor lighting uses warm white or amber LEDs at 3000K or lower (2700K preferred). No cool blue-white lights.

##### ✓ Controlled

Lights use timers, motion sensors, or dimmers where practical and are turned off or dimmed after business hours.

#### What Does Your Business Get?

##### ★ Certificate of Recognition

Suitable for display in your business

##### ★ Window Decal

Signal your commitment to customers

##### ★ Logo Use Rights

##### ★ Website Listing & Media

Use the Night Sky Friendly logo on your website and marketing

Listed on program website with link to your site; potential news coverage

**Ready to join?**

Contact: [Program Coordinator Name] · Email: [email address] · Phone: [phone number]

Or visit: [kernightsky.com](http://kernightsky.com)

A volunteer will schedule a free, no-obligation lighting walk-around at a time convenient for you.

**Grant Funding Available for Lighting Upgrades**

The Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund offers reimbursement grants of up to \$5,000 for businesses that retrofit outdoor lighting to meet dark sky standards.

Eligible counties include Kerr and 21 other Hill Country counties.

Applications accepted October 1–31 each year.

Learn more: [hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund](http://hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund) · [info@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:info@hillcountryalliance.org)

## Volunteer Talking Points Reference

Use these talking points during your visit. They are designed to address common questions and objections from business owners.

### "Is this just about astronomy?"

Not at all. Good dark sky lighting is simply good lighting. It reduces energy waste, eliminates glare, and prevents your light from shining onto neighbors' properties. Astronomers care, but so does anyone who pays an electric bill or lives near a business with a bright parking lot.

### "Our lights are required for safety."

Properly designed dark sky lighting is excellent for safety. In fact, glare from over-bright lights actually reduces visibility and can create dark spots where the human eye can't adjust. The goal is not less light — it's better light, aimed where it's needed.

### "We just had new lights installed."

That's great — new fixtures are often easier to comply. Many modern LED fixtures can be re-aimed or fitted with shields to meet the standards. Color temperature (warm vs. cool) is the most common issue with new installs and is often addressable by simply swapping the LED module or bulb.

### "This sounds expensive."

For most businesses, the changes are minimal and the cost is low. Some issues can be fixed just by turning off unnecessary lights or adding timers. Where fixtures need replacement, the energy savings from proper LEDs typically pay back the investment in 1–3 years. And there is direct grant funding available: the Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund offers up to \$5,000 in reimbursement grants for lighting retrofits. Businesses in 22 eligible Hill Country counties — including Kerr — can apply. Applications are accepted each October. DarkSky Texas can also assist with identifying cost-effective fixture options.

For Kerrville businesses subject to Article X: the ordinance includes a 10-year amortization period (compliance in 2033) for existing nonconforming fixtures. This means you are not required to replace everything immediately — you can phase in compliant fixtures over time as existing ones are replaced at end of life. However, any new construction, addition, or lighting work requiring a building or sign permit triggers immediate compliance for the affected lighting. Planning ahead now avoids last-minute expenses when you next pull a permit.

### HCA Night Sky Preservation Fund — Grant Funding for Lighting Retrofits

The Hill Country Alliance awards reimbursement grants of up to \$5,000 for projects that improve outdoor lighting practices and reduce light pollution.

Eligible applicants: nonprofits, sole proprietors, local governmental entities, and independently owned small businesses.

Eligible counties include: Bandera, Bexar, Blanco, Burnet, Comal, Edwards, Gillespie, Hays, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, Medina, Real, San Saba, Travis, Uvalde, Val Verde, and Williamson.

Application window: October 1 – October 31 annually.

Eligible projects include lighting retrofits, IDA designation pursuit, educational materials, and Night Sky Friendly program participation.

Apply or learn more: [hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund](https://hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund) · [info@hillcountryalliance.org](mailto:info@hillcountryalliance.org) (subject: Night Sky Fund)

Funded by the Coypu Foundation and individual night sky advocates.

### **"We're not a tourist business — why should we care?"**

The program benefits all community businesses. Recognition signals community investment. Other participating businesses report that customers notice and appreciate it. And energy savings are real regardless of business type.

### **"Who else is doing this?"**

Programs are active in Blanco, Fredericksburg, Wimberley, Mason, Kerrville, and other Hill Country communities. Participating businesses include restaurants, breweries, wineries, pharmacies, real estate offices, medical practices, utilities, and government facilities. The Kimble County Chamber of Commerce has passed a formal resolution supporting night sky friendly business recognition.

Closer to home, this community has some of the strongest formal commitments in the Texas Hill Country. Kerr County Commissioners Court adopted a dark sky resolution in 2017 and proclaimed October as "Hill Country Night Sky Month" in 2020. In December 2022, Mayor Judy Eychner signed Kerrville Resolution No. 81-2022 formally committing the city to pursue IDA Dark Sky Community certification and directing staff to draft a lighting ordinance — citing Schreiner University's Loftis Observatory and the city's own Comprehensive Plan. Within a month, Kerrville enacted Article X of its City Code (Ord. No. 2023-03) — a full outdoor lighting ordinance with enforceable standards. KPUB was recognized as a Night Sky Friendly Business in 2021 and has converted all 3,600 area lights to dark sky friendly LEDs. Your business would be joining something with deep, multi-year institutional support at the county, city, and utility level.

## Section 4: Business Lighting Audit Form

Use this form during your lighting walk-around with a business. It does not require special equipment — just your eyes and a willingness to walk the property. Complete one form per business visit.

### Business Information

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part A: Shielding and Aim

Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>Parking Lot Lights</b>	Are fixtures fully shielded (no bare bulb visible from the side)? Light directed downward only?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Signage / Facade Lighting</b>	Is signage lit from above (not below)? Are wall-wash lights aimed downward onto the sign face?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Entry / Canopy Lights</b>	Do canopy fixtures (gas station, drive-through) have full cutoff shields? No light escaping upward?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Decorative / Accent Lights</b>	Any uplighting on trees, walls, or architecture? Are these lights necessary? Can they be redirected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Light Trespass</b>	Does light cross the property boundary onto neighboring properties, sidewalks, or roadways beyond what's needed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Sky Glow</b>	Is there visible light escaping upward into the sky from this property (glow visible above roofline)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

### Part B: Color Temperature

Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>Dominant Light Color</b>	Are most fixtures warm white or amber? Cool blue-white light fails this standard.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Parking / Area Lights</b>	Check color temperature (often on the fixture label or existing spec sheet). Is it 3000K or lower?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

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Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>Signage Lighting</b>	Is illuminated signage using warm LEDs? LED modules in signs can often be replaced with warmer alternatives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Interior Light Spill</b>	Do interior lights (visible through large windows) contribute significantly to exterior light levels at night?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

## Part C: Light Levels and Glare

Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>Overall Brightness</b>	Does the lighting seem excessive for the task? Are some areas dramatically over-lit compared to need?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Glare</b>	Do any fixtures cause uncomfortable glare when viewed directly? Can you see the bare light source clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Dark Spots / Contrast</b>	Are there harsh contrasts between very bright and very dark areas that reduce overall visibility and safety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Unnecessary Lights</b>	Are any lights on that serve no clear purpose — back walls, empty storage areas, unoccupied areas after hours?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

## Part D: Controls

Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>After-Hours Controls</b>	Are lights turned off or significantly dimmed after the business closes? Or do all lights run all night?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Timers</b>	Do any fixtures have timer controls? Are timers set appropriately for actual business hours?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Motion Sensors</b>	Are motion sensors used in areas like loading docks, side entrances, or storage areas that don't need constant light?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Dimmability</b>	Can any fixtures be dimmed after peak hours? Modern LED drivers often support this with a simple setting change.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Article X Curfew (Kerrville only)</b>	Nonresidential: all outdoor lighting off by 11pm or 1 hour after closing, whichever is later — OR reduced to 25% output via adaptive controls. 24-hour businesses are exempt from the curfew but must meet all other standards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt

## Part E: Article X Compliance Check (Kerrville City Limits Only)

Complete Part E only for businesses within Kerrville city limits. Article X (Ord. No. 2023-03) is a legally enforceable ordinance. Non-compliance may result in fines up to \$2,000/day after the 10-year amortization period (2033 cut-off) for existing fixtures.

Lighting Feature	What to Check	Assessment
<b>Light Source Visibility</b>	Can the actual light source (bulb/LED chip) be seen directly from any neighboring property or public road? Article X prohibits this.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Light Trespass</b>	Does any light cross onto an adjacent property? Article X prohibits light trespass.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Lumen Cap — Nonresidential</b>	Total lumens from all fixtures: is the property under 100,000 lumens per net acre? (Estimate: count fixtures × lumens per fixture ÷ acreage)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Lumen Cap — Residential</b>	If residential property: is total output under 25,000 lumens per net acre?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Prohibited Fixture Types</b>	Are any sag-lens or drop-lens fixtures present? Mercury vapor lamps? Searchlights? Strobe or flashing lights? All prohibited under Article X.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Service Station Canopies</b>	If fuel canopy present: does it use only flat-lens flush-mounted fixtures? No protruding or sag-lens fixtures permitted.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Fix <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Lighting Plan on File</b>	Has a compliant lighting plan been submitted to the city for any new or changed exterior lighting since Jan 2023?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

### Audit Summary

**Overall Assessment:**

- Ready for recognition now
- Minor changes needed (1–3 items) — target: \_\_\_\_\_
- Significant changes needed — develop improvement plan

**Priority Actions Needed:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## Section 5: Recognition Program

The Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program uses a three-tier model to recognize businesses at different stages of their dark sky journey. This approach — inspired by the Hill Country Alliance program and DarkSky Texas BOLD Initiative — meets businesses where they are and encourages progressive improvement.

### Program Philosophy

Recognition should be earned, not given. The program's credibility depends on meaningful standards. Progression matters. A business that is improving should be acknowledged, not discouraged. Simplicity wins. The criteria must be easy to understand and apply consistently. The goal is compliance, not perfection. We are looking for genuine commitment and measurable progress.

## The Three-Tier Recognition Model

### ★ TIER 1: COMMITTED Taking the first step

- ✓ Business has agreed to participate in the program and signed the Night Sky Friendly Business Pledge.
- ✓ A lighting walk-around has been completed with a volunteer.
- ✓ An improvement plan has been created with a target completion date.
- ✓ The business does not have any new non-compliant lighting installed after the pledge date.
- ✓ RECOGNITION: Listed on program website as "Committed" with their pledge date. Window sticker indicating participation.

### ★ TIER 2: COMPLIANT Meeting the standard

- ✓ All outdoor lighting meets the five standards: shielded, targeted, right-sized, warm-colored ( $\leq 3000\text{K}$ ), and controlled.
- ✓ Business has passed a volunteer compliance verification visit.
- ✓ The business has committed to maintaining compliance and ensuring future lighting changes meet the standard.
- ✓ RECOGNITION: Certificate of Recognition for display, Night Sky Friendly Business window decal, full logo use rights, website listing with link, eligible for local media feature, annual recognition at community event.

### ✦ TIER 3: CHAMPION Leading the way

- ✓ All Tier 2 criteria met, plus:

- ✓ Business has maintained compliance for a minimum of 12 months (verified at annual re-check).
- ✓ Business actively promotes the program — e.g., displays educational material, mentions program on website, or has referred at least one other business.
- ✓ Business demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement (e.g., has added motion sensors, upgraded to 2700K, or reduced overall lighting levels beyond minimum requirements).
- ✓ RECOGNITION: All Tier 2 recognition, plus “Night Sky Champion” designation, elevated website feature with business spotlight story, invitation to speak at program events, Be A Star Award eligibility (DarkSky Texas BOLD Initiative), and preferred listing on any dark sky tourism guides for the area.

## The Business Pledge

Every participating business signs a simple pledge before being listed at any tier. The pledge is not a legal contract but a public commitment.

### Night Sky Friendly Business Pledge

[Business Name] pledges to protect the dark skies of our community by ensuring that all outdoor lighting on our premises is:

- Shielded to prevent upward light and light trespass
- Aimed downward to illuminate only the areas that need light
- No brighter than necessary for safety and function
- Warm-colored (3000K or lower)
- Controlled with timers, sensors, or dimmers where practical

We commit to maintaining this standard as we replace, upgrade, or add outdoor lighting in the future.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annual Review Process

Compliance is verified at enrollment and re-checked annually. The re-check is brief — a 15-minute walk-around or photo documentation submitted by the business.

- Businesses are notified by email 60 days before their annual review is due.
- If a business has changed ownership, the new owner must sign a fresh pledge.
- If a business has installed non-compliant new lighting, they are given 90 days to bring it into compliance before their recognition status is paused.
- Champion status requires 12 consecutive months of compliance since first achieving Tier 2.

## Program Administration

The program can be administered by a local organization such as a Friends of the Night Sky group, Chamber of Commerce, or city sustainability office. Recommended minimum structure:

1. Program Coordinator (volunteer or staff): Maintains the business list, issues certificates and decals, handles media outreach.
2. Volunteer Team: Conducts outreach, walk-arounds, and annual reviews.
3. Partner Organizations: Chamber of Commerce co-sponsors listings; local newspaper/media partner provides coverage.
4. Advisory Link: Connect to DarkSky Texas for technical support and access to the BOLD Initiative and Be A Star Award.

### **Connect to DarkSky Texas BOLD Initiative**

The BOLD Initiative (Better Outdoor Lighting Decisions) is DarkSky Texas's program for conservation-minded businesses and organizations across Texas.

BOLD participants receive assistance with lighting inventory and audit, customized educational materials, a 5-year improvement timeline, and eligibility for the Be A Star Award upon achieving full compliance.

Your local program can connect participating businesses to BOLD for additional technical support and statewide recognition.

Contact DarkSky Texas at: [darkskytexas.org](http://darkskytexas.org)

## Section 6: Resources and References

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### Lighting Standards and Technical Resources

- DarkSky International — Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting: [darksky.org/resources/guides-and-how-tos/lighting-principles/](https://darksky.org/resources/guides-and-how-tos/lighting-principles/)
- DarkSky Approved Luminaires — Searchable database of certified compliant fixtures: [darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/](https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/)
- Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) — Lighting Zone definitions and standards: [ies.org](https://www.ies.org)
- Light Pollution Map — Identify the worst light pollution areas near you: [lightpollutionmap.info](https://lightpollutionmap.info)

### Texas and Hill Country Programs

- DarkSky Texas — BOLD Initiative and Be A Star Award: [darkskytexas.org](https://darkskytexas.org)
- Hill Country Alliance — Night Sky Friendly Business program, how-to guide, Night Sky Preservation Fund grants: [hillcountryalliance.org](https://hillcountryalliance.org)
- HCA Night Sky Preservation Fund — Up to \$5,000 in reimbursement grants for lighting retrofits, open October 1–31 annually: [hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund](https://hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund)
- Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky — Model program, business list: [blancocountynightsky.org](https://blancocountynightsky.org)
- Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky — Local volunteers supporting dark sky in the Kerrville area: [kernightsky.com](https://kernightsky.com)
- KPUB (Kerrville Public Utility Board) — Dark sky friendly area and street lights for residential and commercial customers; 830.257.3050: [kpub.com/community/darksky](https://kpub.com/community/darksky)
- McDonald Observatory — Dark sky education and Texas lighting standards context: [mcdonaldobservatory.org](https://mcdonaldobservatory.org)

### Local Government Context: Kerr County and Kerrville

This area has developed one of the most complete stacks of dark sky policy and recognition in the Texas Hill Country:

- Kerr County Court Order 35950 (January 2017): Commissioners Court resolution supporting outdoor lighting practices that minimize light trespass, reduce energy consumption, and protect night sky and wildlife. Directed at landowners, businesses, and public entities throughout the county.
- Kerr County Court Order #38338 (October 2020): County Judge Rob Kelly proclaimed October as "Hill Country Night Sky Month," citing light pollution as "wasted energy performing no function" and noting national waste of \$2 billion annually. Named growing list of IDA Dark Sky Places in the region: Enchanted Rock, South Llano River State Park, Dripping Springs, Wimberley Valley, Fredericksburg, Horseshoe Bay, and others.
- Kerrville Resolution No. 81-2022 (December 13, 2022): Mayor Judy Eychner signed the city's formal SB 1090 intent resolution establishing Kerrville's pursuit of IDA Dark Sky Community certification. Directed City Manager to draft an outdoor lighting ordinance. Specifically cites Schreiner University's Loftis Observatory and the Kerrville 2050 Comprehensive Plan as evidence of community commitment.
- Kerrville Article X Outdoor Lighting, Ord. No. 2023-03 (January 24, 2023): Comprehensive enforceable city ordinance applying to all properties within Kerrville city limits. Requires: fully

shielded fixtures, CCT  $\leq 3,000\text{K}$ , light source not visible from neighboring properties, light trespass prohibited, nonresidential 11pm curfew or 25% dim, lumen caps (100,000 lumens/net acre nonresidential; 25,000 lumens/net acre residential), lighting plan submission for new/changed lighting. Violations up to \$2,000/day. 10-year amortization for existing nonconforming fixtures, but immediate compliance required for new construction or any building/sign permit activity.

- KPUB Night Sky Friendly Business (2021): Kerrville Public Utility Board converted all 3,600 street and area lights in its 146-square-mile service area to dark sky friendly LEDs, saving 1.6 million kWh/year. Formally recognized as Night Sky Friendly Business by Kerr County Friends of the Night Sky and the Kerrville Area Chamber of Commerce.

## Texas Law: Senate Bill 1090 (2021)

Texas Senate Bill 1090, passed in 2021, restricts municipal authority to regulate outdoor lighting — with one important exception: municipalities that have adopted an intent resolution toward IDA (International Dark Sky Association) community certification may still enact outdoor lighting ordinances. This makes voluntary business programs especially important in communities that have not yet adopted such a resolution, and gives an additional reason for businesses to support certification efforts.

## Fixture Selection Quick Reference

### What to Look for When Recommending Replacement Fixtures

Color Temperature (CCT): 2700K or 3000K maximum. Look for this on the fixture packaging or spec sheet.

Full Cutoff / Full Shielding: The fixture housing must block all light above 90 degrees from vertical. Listed as BUG rating U0 (zero uplight) in technical specs.

Lumens: For most commercial parking areas, 3000–5000 lumens per fixture is sufficient. Avoid over-specification.

Controls: Look for fixtures with 0–10V dimming capability, or specify a separate timer/sensor controller.

DarkSky Approved: Fixtures on the DarkSky Approved Luminaire list ([darksky.org](https://darksky.org)) meet all technical standards. Recommend these where budget allows.

CCT over 3000K is NOT acceptable for this program regardless of other specifications.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Color Temperature (CCT):** Measured in Kelvin (K). Lower numbers are warmer (amber/yellow). Higher numbers are cooler (blue/white). Dark sky standard is  $\leq 3000\text{K}$ . 2700K is preferred in the Hill Country.

**Full Cutoff Fixture:** A light fixture designed so that no light is emitted above 90 degrees (horizontal). All light goes downward. Essential for dark sky compliance.

**Light Trespass:** When light from a property crosses its boundary onto neighboring properties, roadways, or the night sky. A nuisance and often a code violation.

**Sky Glow:** The brightening of the night sky above populated areas caused by light scattered upward and sideways into the atmosphere. Visible as an orange/white glow on the horizon.

**BUG Rating:** Backlight, Uplight, Glare — a technical rating system for luminaires. U0 means zero uplight, which is required for dark sky compliance.

**Glare:** Uncomfortable brightness that reduces visibility. Caused by unshielded light sources visible directly in the field of view.

**LED:** Light Emitting Diode — the dominant lighting technology today. Comes in a wide range of color temperatures and can be very dark sky friendly when correctly specified.

**Lighting Zone (LZ):** A classification system (LZ0–LZ4) that specifies appropriate light levels for different environments. LZ0 is no ambient light (wilderness); LZ1 is low ambient (rural residential); LZ2 is moderate (suburban/small town). Most Hill Country communities should target LZ1–LZ2.

**BOLD Initiative:** Better Outdoor Lighting Decisions — DarkSky Texas's program for businesses and organizations committing to dark sky lighting improvements over a 5-year timeline.

**Be A Star Award:** DarkSky Texas's recognition for businesses that achieve full compliance with dark sky lighting standards through the BOLD Initiative.

**IDA:** International Dark-Sky Association — now known as DarkSky International. The global nonprofit that sets dark sky standards and administers the International Dark Sky Community and Business programs.

**HCA Night Sky Preservation Fund:** A grant program administered by the Hill Country Alliance offering reimbursement funding of up to \$5,000 for projects that improve outdoor lighting, reduce light pollution, and support dark sky education across 22 eligible Texas Hill Country counties. Applications accepted October 1–31 annually.

**KPUB:** Kerrville Public Utility Board — the electric utility serving Kerrville and surrounding areas. A Night Sky Friendly Business since 2021, KPUB converted all 3,600 of its street and area lights to dark sky friendly LEDs in its 146-square-mile service area, saving 1.6 million kWh/year (approximately 60% less energy).

**Kerr County Resolution (2017):** Court Order 35950 adopted by the Kerr County Commissioners Court in January 2017 supporting outdoor lighting practices that minimize light trespass, and encouraging businesses, landowners, and public entities to reduce energy consumption and protect the night sky and wildlife. Foundational document for the county's dark sky commitment.

**Kerr County Proclamation (2020):** Court Order #38338 signed by County Judge Rob Kelly in October 2020 proclaiming October as "Hill Country Night Sky Month." Cites light pollution as wasted energy costing the nation \$2 billion/year, and names IDA-certified Dark Sky Places in the region. References the 2017 resolution as precedent.

**Kerrville Resolution No. 81-2022:** Formal intent resolution signed by Mayor Judy Eychner on December 13, 2022, establishing the City of Kerrville's pursuit of IDA Dark Sky Community certification. Adopted under authority of Texas SB 1090 (2021), which permits municipalities with such a resolution to enact outdoor lighting ordinances. Led directly to adoption of Article X within one month.

**Article X Outdoor Lighting (Ord. No. 2023-03):** Kerrville's comprehensive outdoor lighting ordinance, adopted January 24, 2023. Applies to all properties within Kerrville city limits. Key requirements: fully shielded fixtures, CCT  $\leq 3,000\text{K}$ , light source not visible from neighboring properties, light trespass prohibited, nonresidential 11pm curfew or 25% dim with adaptive controls (24-hour businesses exempt from curfew), lumen caps (100,000 lumens/net acre nonresidential; 25,000 lumens/net acre residential), lighting plan submission required for new/changed lighting. Existing nonconforming fixtures: 10-year amortization period. Immediate compliance required for new construction or any building/sign permit activity. Violations up to \$2,000/day.

**Amortization Period (Article X):** The 10-year phase-in window Kerrville's Article X grants to businesses with existing nonconforming fixtures. Businesses do not need to immediately replace

compliant fixtures — but any new construction, addition, or work requiring a building or sign permit triggers immediate compliance for the affected lighting.

**Schreiner University Loftis Observatory:** An active astronomical observatory at Schreiner University in Kerrville. Cited in Kerrville Resolution No. 81-2022 as a community asset whose value depends on dark skies. A local reason why Kerrville has pursued IDA certification.

★ Thank You ★

Every business that joins this program makes the night sky a little darker,  
the Hill Country a little more beautiful, and our community a little stronger.

**The stars are counting on you.**