

City Talk for Feb. 9, 2022  
Community Development Department  
Brian Armstrong, senior code enforcement officer

### **Help keep our skies dark with compliant lighting**

Sedona is known for its red rocks and spectacular scenery, which are just as beautiful to view at night under a star filled sky. This is why the city is proud to have adopted a dark sky lighting ordinance in 2001 and have been designated as an International Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Sky Association in 2014.

To protect our night skies from light pollution that detracts from being able to star gaze and to minimize negative effects on wildlife habitat and human health, the city adopted an ordinance requiring outdoor light fixtures to be dark sky compliant. Light pollution is commonly defined as the adverse or excessive use of manmade light. To minimize light pollution, the International Dark Sky Association recommends lighting should, “only be on when needed, only light the area that needs it, be no brighter than necessary, minimize blue light emissions and be fully shielded (pointing downward).”

The Sedona Land Development Code (LDC) says new outdoor lighting must meet the requirements of the code to fully shield fixtures installed after 2001. (Unshielded light fixtures installed prior to 2001 are considered legal non-conforming fixtures and are acceptable until they are replaced, with some exceptions.) More specifically, light fixtures must be fully shielded and aimed so that the direct illumination is confined to the property boundaries of the source and not aimed onto adjacent properties. Lighting from fixtures should point downward rather than horizontally or upward. Motion sensing lights are a good way to provide safety and security around your home without having a constant source of light when not needed, to minimize light pollution. Motion sensors do however need to be adjusted so they are only triggered by activity within the property lines and not by activity outside the property. Motion sensing fixtures also need to be fully shielded and properly adjusted to turn off in a reasonable timeframe after the detected motion ceases. Timers are another option to limit light use as well as save money since they can be turned off automatically when not needed.

Although the dark sky lighting requirements are only required for fixtures installed after 2001, voluntary compliance by changing your outdoor fixtures to ones that conform is a great neighborly and civic minded step to take in order to reduce light pollution. The role of the city’s code enforcement staff in responding to dark sky lighting complaints is to seek voluntary compliance regardless of the age of the fixture(s) in question through education of the LDC and dark sky requirements with the goal of protecting Sedona’s natural environment.

We welcome anyone who is considering new light fixtures to come talk with the Community Development Department at City Hall to make sure you are looking at dark sky compliant options. Additionally, you can go to the International Dark Sky Association’s website at [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org) to learn about the organization and where to find dark sky friendly lighting.