

Getting Started with an Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

by David Penasa

Create a Task Force or Outdoor Lighting Code Committee with the goal of preparing a report and either a recommended standalone outdoor lighting ordinance or recommended amendments to your communities existing administrative/zoning code.

Example - Albuquerque, NM

A Night Sky Protection Task Force was appointed by the Mayor of Albuquerque (see CITY COUNCIL BILL NO. R-73 “Establishing the Night Sky Protection Task Force; Requiring a Report” <http://www.cabq.gov/council/textfile/220.htm>). The Task Force submitted a report containing findings and recommendations to the Mayor and Council. All hearings were open to the public for comment.

See: <http://cabq.gov/planning/pages/neighborhood/newsletter/nightsky.html>

The Albuquerque Task Force consisted of nine members, including two members of City Zoning, one member from City Building Safety, one member from City Electrical Inspection/Plan Check, one member from the City Council’s staff, one member from the Mayor’s office, one member from industry (a sign company employee), and two members from the community-at-large (an independent photojournalist and a lighting/electrical engineer).

Important Note: Having a technical lighting person and an enforcement person on the Task Force is critical to creating good, technically correct, and enforceable language! (Read the last statement again!) Also, to act as a liaison and have a city council staff representative member too, to assure that the administration is well informed on the Task Force’s status.

Then, do the following:

1) Review the International Dark-Sky Association’s (IDA) web site: <http://www.darksky.org/> and information sheets: http://www.darksky.org/ida/ida_2/info15b.html

The IDA’s vision is to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting. Their goal is to educate everyone about the value of dark skies, and quality outdoor lighting, with all of its advantages.

2) Review IDA’s information about codes such as The Outdoor Lighting Code Handbook: <http://www.darksky.org/ida/ordsregs/lcintro.html>

This handbook discusses many issues related to outdoor lighting codes, plus information on their implementation and enforcement. A U.S.A. Pattern Lighting Code is included as a starting point for communities of all sizes, primarily throughout the U.S.A. but also in other areas, as they begin the process of drafting a lighting code suitable for their community. Appendices include sample administrative forms that can be used to administer a lighting code.

3) Review The Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities (call the PTI Publications Center at (800) 784-8976 or (301) 490-2188 or e-mail them at pubs@pti.org. ask for publication #95-308). This publication details the need and gives very good suggestions in layman’s terms explaining why and how to construct a comprehensive outdoor lighting ordinance. (Note that the lighting levels recommended have been superseded by IESNA documents RP-33-99 and RP-8-00. (See Item 6 below.)

continued

4) Review as many existing lighting ordinances as possible. First, check your City's existing administrative code (check in the zoning code area, among other locations) to see what outdoor lighting and sign regulations may already exist.

A large number of links to various ordinances can be found at <http://www.darksky.org/ida/ordsregs> and <http://members.aol.com/ctstarwchr/LiteLynx.htm#results>

Examples include large and small cities, with and without grandfathering. <http://www.skykeepers.org/ketcdrl.html> contains the ordinance for Ketchum, ID, pop 4500, June, 1999, an excellent ordinance for small towns. No grandfathering is permitted.

5) Obtain and review as many of the following lighting industry publications as possible:

* indicates key documents

- * IESNA RP-33-99 *Lighting for Exterior Environments*
- * IESNA RP-20-98 *Lighting for Parking Facilities*
- * IESNA RP-8-00 *Roadway Lighting*
- * IESNA TM-10-00 *Addressing Obtrusive Light (Urban Sky Glow and Light Trespass) in Conjunction with Roadway Lighting*
- IESNA RP-6-01 *Sports Lighting*
- IESNA CP-46 *A Statement on Astronomical Light Pollution and Light Trespass (1985)*
- IESNA TM-11-00 *Light Trespass: Research, Results and Recommendations*
- IESNA DG-9-97 *Lighting for Automated Teller Machines*

To obtain the above documents, contact the IESNA at <http://www.iesna.org> or (212) 248-5000. Ask for the publications department.

RP-8 and RP-33 are available to IDA member through the IDA at discounted rates.

Note that RPs are Recommended Practices, TMs are Technical Memorandums, LMs are Lighting Measurement Guides, and DGs are Design

Guides. The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) is the recognized authority on the art and science of illumination. Another useful document is:

FAA Advisory Circular AC 70-7460-1K Obstruction Marking and Lighting

6) Find out who your state and city street lighting engineers are and meet with them to determine what lighting design standards they follow, luminaire types and wattages used, their feelings about light pollution and glare, if they are already using full cutoff luminaires, what franchise agreements (between city and local power company) may exist, etc.

7) Conduct a tour of your city to see and get consensus on examples of good and bad lighting. Make light level measurements (illuminance and luminance) to get a feel for reasonable levels and typical levels used.

8) Talk to your neighbors, astronomers, local police, etc., to see what they think are the pros and cons of present outdoor lighting in your city.

9) Join IDA

A growing number of local, state, and federal officials with varying levels of responsibility have joined the membership. Many resources exist in the associated Links and Files sections that may serve your city's benefit.

