



CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS

REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY ASSOCIATION

October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021

The City of Dripping Springs continues to experience rapid growth and welcomes its new businesses and residents in the city limits and surrounding area to be a part of the efforts to protect and preserve the night sky.

ANNEXATIONS

From October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021, the city annexed four properties totaling 403.008 acres into the City Limits.

| Annexation Ordinance | Property Description | Annexation Date | Acreage |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|---------|
| 2020-59 | 102 Rose Drive - Benjamin F. Hanna Survey No. 428 | 12/08/20 | 0.748 |
| 2021-10 | Florio Tract - Benjamin F. Hanna Survey No. 28, Abstract No. 222 | 03/09/21 | 18.25 |
| 2021-23 | Cannon Tract - Philip A. Smith Survey No. 26, Abstract No. 415; and C.H. Malott Survey, Abstract No. 693 | 07/06/21 | 100.58 |
| 2021-30 | Cynosure Tract - I.V. Davis, Jr. Preemption Survey, Abstract No. 673; and Edward W. Brown Survey No. 136, Abstract No. 44 | 08/17/21 | 283.43 |

TERRITORY

The current population of the City of Dripping Springs city limits is estimated to be approximately 5,000. In the past year, the city annexed 403.008 acres into the City Limits (1.6309 km²) and the total size of the city limits is now approximately 24.08 km².

The city continues to be successful in obtaining voluntary compliance in its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, where state law does not allow the Lighting Ordinance to be applied unilaterally. Many developers want their projects to be good neighbors and part of a dark sky community.

The Anarene/Double L Development Agreement was approved on September 21, 2021, and requires the 1,677 acre development in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to comply with the city's Lighting Ordinance. The development will include 2,231 residential units and 200 acres of commercial development.

LIGHTING PROJECTS

The Dripping Springs Sports & Recreation Park Lighting Plan was drafted by EMA Engineering. They consulted with Musco Lighting on the plan. The Lighting Plan was sent to the International Dark Sky Association and was approved for compliance with the Community-Friendly Outdoor Sports Lighting Certification Program Criteria. Fiscal Year 2022 funds for the first phase of the project have been recommended by the city's Parks & Recreation Commission.



The city's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction is much larger than the city limits, so compliance with the Lighting Ordinance in this area is very impactful. The City's Planning Department is creating a database of the properties outside the city limits that are required to comply with the Lighting Ordinance and those that voluntarily comply with the ordinance.

LIGHTING ORDINANCE

No amendments were made to the city's Lighting Ordinance during this reporting period.

SKY QUALITY METER READINGS

Sky Quality readings in various locations throughout the City of Dripping Springs were taken by city staff on August 9, 2020, with clear skies and waxing crescent moon (first day, 1.5%) using a Unihedron SQM-L Sky Quality Meter. The sky quality has not significantly changed. The following chart shows the locations, times, and readings for 2020 and 2021.

| LOCATION | 8/17/2020 TIME | 8/17/2020 READING | 8/9/2021 TIME | 8/9/2021 READING |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Dripping Springs Ranch Park -East of Outdoor Arena | 9:41 pm | 20.33 | 9:36 pm | 20.40 |
| Hidden Springs Ranch HOA Park -Parking Lot | 9:49 pm | 20.20 | 9:50 pm | 20.20 |
| Lake Lucy -West End of Loop | 9:54 pm | 20.05 | 9:54 pm | 20.19 |
| City Hall -Parking Lot | 9:58 pm | 19.63 | 9:44 pm | 19.30 |
| Charro Ranch Park -Parking Lot | 10:05 pm | 20.4 | 10:03 pm | 20.46 |
| Sports & Recreation Park -Parking Lot by Adult Softball Fields | 10:12 pm | 20.07 | 10:17 pm | 20.18 |
| Founders Memorial Park-Parking Lot by Trail Head Sign | 10:17 pm | 20.01 | 10.12 pm | 20.19 |

WORKING WITH THE CITY'S ELECTRICITY PROVIDER

The city continues to work with its electricity provider, the Pedernales Electric Cooperative, to bring noncompliant street and area lighting into compliance with the city's Lighting Ordinance. The Pedernales Electric Cooperative has reported to the city that it has installed twenty-three

street and area lights that comply with the city's Lighting Ordinance in the past year. Some of these replaced nonconforming lights.

The Pedernales Electric Cooperative provides electricity to the Dripping Springs area and a large part of the Texas Hill Country. They own approximately 31,000 outdoor lighting assets, primarily street and area lights. The cooperative is in the process of contracting with a third-party entity to provide, install, and maintain their outdoor lighting assets. The third-party company will conduct an audit of the outdoor lighting assets and replace all lighting fixtures with LED ones that comply with the city of Dripping Springs Lighting Ordinance and the other lighting ordinances in the service area. The new lighting fixtures will have electronic monitoring devices that are programmable and offer a photocell for on and off functioning.

PROGRAMS, EDUCATION, AND OTHER OUTREACH

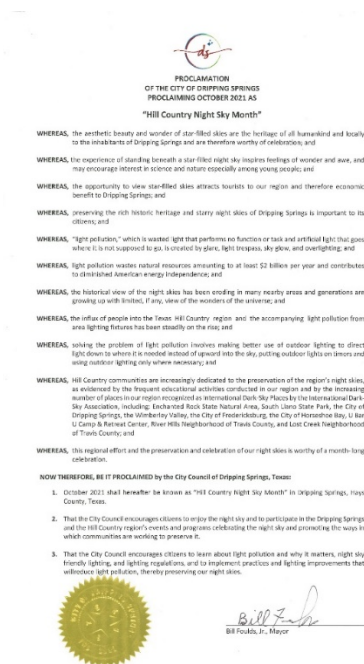
The City Council approved proclamations declaring August - October and March – May 2020 and 2021, as "Lights Out Migratory Months" in the City of Dripping Springs, Texas and the city promoted the Lights Out Pledge.



October 2020 was the first Hill Country Night Sky Month, which celebrated the region's night skies and the hard work that Hill Country communities do to preserve them. The city approved a proclamation, posted educational information on its Facebook pages, created a new Night Sky page on the city website, and publicized Hill Country Night Sky events happening throughout the region. This event caused cities, parks, and advocacy groups in the region to collaborate on night sky activities and outreach and help each other by promoting the night skies regionally.



The City Council approved a proclamation for the 2021 Hill Country Night Sky Month in September 2021.



The city was a sponsor of the Hill Country Living Festival + Rainwater Revival, a virtual event held October 24-25, 2020. Hope Boatright with the Dripping Springs Visitors Bureau presented the video “Dripping Springs A Night Sky Pioneer” and Hill Country Alliance Program Director Cliff Kaplan gave a presentation on Hill Country Night Sky Month. The city and Pedernales Electric Cooperative were the sponsors of the Night Sky session.

On October 28, 2020, Sarah Cole, Building Official, and City Administrator Michelle Fischer presented “City of Dripping Springs Lighting Ordinance for Residential Properties.” The presentation is on the city’s website.

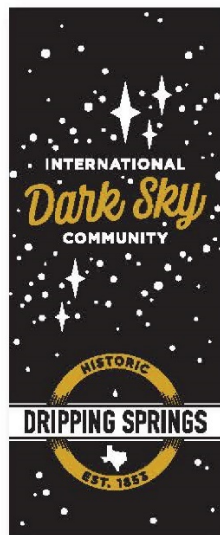
Mayor Bill Foulds and City Administrator Michelle Fischer participated in a TV segment on Night Skies from newswest9.com in November 2020.

<https://www.newswest9.com/article/features/west-texas-dark-skies-photography/513-374e9553-29c8-4227-962f-97df063d1d2d?fbclid=IwAR31zEHAZk29mUbjf-SsinxMYJy6oDeC7zLgkNsvKRy0pp5hZKUxiuPZFNg>

On March 17, 2021, City Administrator Michelle Fischer testified before the Texas House of Representative's Urban Affairs Committee on House Bill 298 by Representative Erin Zwiener. The bill would allow cities designated as International Dark Sky Communities, such as Dripping Springs, to extend their Lighting Ordinance to their Extraterritorial Jurisdictions. The bill was approved by the committee but did not get voted out of the House.

The city participated in International Dark Sky Week April 5-12, 2021.

The city created thirteen pedestrian pole banners for downtown Dripping Springs to celebrate being an International Dark Sky Community.



July 2021 City of Dripping Springs Assistant City Attorney Ryan Turner was interviewed by KRTS News, Marfa, Texas reporter Travis Bubenik about enforcing lighting ordinances. He had read Ryan's legal paper (The Stars At Nights: Local Regulation and Enforcement of Outdoor Lighting Standards, Texas Tech Administrative Law Journal, Volume 16, Book 2, Summer 2015). The interview is not mentioned in the article, but provided the reporter with background information. "In West Texas, Astronomers Worry About Growing Oilfield Light Pollution," July 12, 2021. <https://marfapublicradio.org/blog/in-west-texas-astronomers-worry-about-growing-oilfield-light-pollution/>

The city provided items for the Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce Welcome Bags for new residents in July:

250 "I Love the Texas Night Sky" stickers with www.idatexas.org.



On July 28, 2021, City Administrator Michelle Fischer attended the Hays County Friends of the Night Sky meeting and gave a presentation on the city's support of the Be A Star Award Program. The Be A Star Award rewards landowners who contribute to conservation efforts by protecting the night sky. To earn it they use outdoor lighting that eliminates glare, light trespass, and other forms of light pollution, while at the same time helping them see better on their property. The Be A Star Award Program is run by the Texas Night Sky Festival[®] Association in support of the International Dark-Sky Association Texas Section.

On August 6, 2021, the city had an end of the pool season star party for its Founders Memorial Park Pool employees. A local astronomer provided a telescope and educational information to participants.

In September, the city nominated ten properties for the Be A Star Award. These properties were nominated because they are great examples of properties that comply with the city's Lighting Ordinance and also comply with the Be A Star Award requirements. The awards are expected to be announced in October which is Hill Country Night Sky Month.



Arrowhead Ranch Amenity Center



Austin Regional Clinic



St. Dymphna Center, St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church

On September 21, 2021, City Administrator Michelle Fischer met with the Briarcliff Dark Sky Group. They are interested in the Village of Briarcliff, Texas adopting a Lighting Ordinance. She discussed the City of Dripping Springs's experience in adopting and enforcing a Lighting Ordinance, and implementing a community outreach program. She also directed them to individuals and resources to assist them in their efforts.

The city created a section on the new City of Dripping Springs website dedicated to Night Sky initiatives and programs: <https://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/night-sky>

The city planned a star party to take place October 8, 2021, at Dripping Springs Ranch Park.



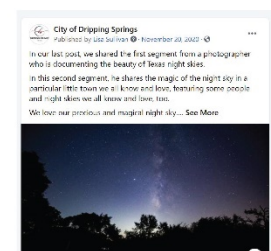
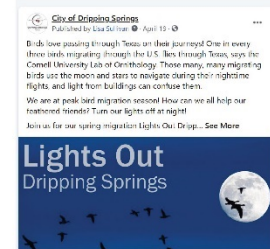
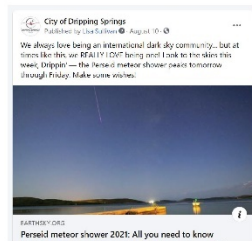
SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media

COVID still kept us from many in-person events. So, we put our efforts into promoting what we could virtually via our social media platforms. We did the following social media promotions, reaching more than 22,203 people throughout the year. See example screen shots attached.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| • Lights Out Dripping Springs | March-April |
| • International Dark Sky Week | April |
| • IDA Capture the Dark Contest | July |
| • Perseid Contest | August |
| • Lights Out Dripping Springs | August-October |
| • Various Night Sky Posts | All year |

Social Media Night Sky Examples



NEW CONSTRUCTION

In the past year, the city's Building Department issued 1,213 New Residential Building Permits and twelve Commercial Building Permits for projects complying with the Lighting Ordinance. All permitted commercial and residential buildings were required to obtain approved lighting plans and were/will be inspected after construction for compliance before a certificate of appropriateness was/is issued.

In the city's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, there were several large developments under construction that were required to comply with the Lighting Ordinance through Development Agreements, including, retail buildings in Belterra Village, The Shops at Ledgestone, and the Driftwood Land and Golf Club.

The Dripping Springs Independent School District continues to bring nonconforming lighting on district properties into compliance with the Lighting Ordinance and continues to ensure that new schools and facilities being built will comply with the ordinance. Walnut Springs Elementary opened in August and complies with the city's Lighting Ordinance.



Walnut Springs Elementary School

ENFORCEMENT

The city's Code Enforcement Inspector continues to enforce the Lighting Ordinance and issues violation warnings as needed. No citations have been issued this past year due to compliance in response to the violation warnings.

COMMUNITY AND MEDIA RELATIONS

In June 2021 the city adopted a new logo that includes stars, which are a symbol of its night sky and the city's commitment to night sky preservation and outreach efforts. The logo is used on the city's website, letterhead, city official and employee business cards, forms, presentations, and other public relations and marketing materials.



The following are articles that mention Dripping Springs being an International Dark Sky Community, its Lighting Ordinance, or astrotourism in Dripping Springs:

"Dark Sky Video - Destination Dripping Springs," Destination Dripping Springs, Oct 14, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWOFa_3mAAG.

Guinn, Tatum. "Texas community a shining example of coexisting with dark skies," News West 9, November 17, 2020, <https://www.newswest9.com/article/features/dark-skies-over-dripping-springs/513-a1fff0ec-c012-4dab-a002-5da1933a5dfa>.

Roldan, Riane. "Want To See The Stars? This Texas Law Could Help Keep The Night Sky Dark," KUT 90.5, December 30, 2020. <https://www.kut.org/energy-environment/2020-12-30/want-to-see-the-stars-this-texas-law-could-help-keep-the-night-sky-dark>.

Figli, Laura. "The 'edge of night': Why you can't see the stars in Travis County," Austonia, February 5, 2021, <https://austonia.com/stars-in-travis-county>.

Wehring, Megan. "Buda needs support for Dark Sky designation," Hays Free Press, February 18, 2021, <https://haysfreepress.com/2021/02/18/buda-needs-support-for-dark-sky-designation/>.

Cramer, Kali. "These Texas Stargazing Parks Are Absolutely Breathtaking," Urban Matter, March 6, 2021. <https://urbanmatter.com/austin/these-texas-stargazing-parks-are-absolutely-breathtaking/>.

Falcon, Meagan. "Lyrid Meteor Shower Peak: When To See Fireballs In Austin Area," Patch Media, April 13, 2021, <https://patch.com/texas/downtownaustin/lyrid-meteor-shower-peak-when-see-fireballs-austin-area>.

Eddleman, Mike. "A Starring Role: Community Calls For Dark Skies," The Independent Liberty Hill, April 28, 2021, <https://lindependent.com/a-starring-role-community-calls-for-dark-skies/>.

McNeill, Claire. "In Central Florida, a vanishing swath of dark sky still shines," Tampa Bay Times, August 3, 2021, <https://www.tampabay.com/narratives/2021/08/03/in-central-florida-a-vanishing-swath-of-dark-sky-still-shines/>.

Weinstein, Alyssa. "The Top 10 Places to Stargaze in Central Texas," Austin Monthly, August 16, 2021, <https://www.austinmonthly.com/10-best-places-to-stargaze-in-central-texas/>.

Girtman, Taylor, Dadamo, Amy Rae, Oldman, Iain. "Hill Country communities can pursue Dark Sky designation following new state law," Community Impact, September 9, 2021, <https://communityimpact.com/austin/lake-travis-westlake/development/2021/09/09/hill-country-communities-can-pursue-dark-sky-designation-following-new-state-law/>

Anderson, Brittany. "DS announces new proclamations," Hays Free Press, September 10, 2021, <https://haysfreepress.com/2021/09/10/ds-announces-new-proclamations/>.

Erickson, Alexa. "America's Top Stargazing Spots to See Beautiful Night Skies," Far & Wide, September 22, 2021, <https://www.farandwide.com/s/stargazing-spots-night-skies-3f874626256a46fe>.

D-B, Abby. "Dark Sky Parks: Texas Stargazing Places You Have To Visit," Houston On the Cheap, September 26, 2021. <https://www.houstononthecheap.com/dark-sky-parks-texas-stargazing-best-places-to-stargaze>.

Ross, Robyn. "The Edge of Night in Texas," Stranger's Guide, September 2021, <https://strangersguide.com/articles/the-edge-of-night/>.

"October is Hill Country Night Sky Month!," The Hill Country Alliance, September 2021, <https://www.hillcountryalliance.org/nightskymonth>.

Pace, Janie. "11 Incredible Day Trips From Austin," Travel Awaits, <https://www.travelawaits.com/2695655/best-day-trips-from-austin/>.

"Dark Skies," Hays County Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist, <https://beautifulhayscounty.org/conservation/dark-skies/>.

"Where to Stargaze in Texas," Let's Texas. <https://www.traveltexas.com/things-to-do/outdoor-adventure/where-to-stargaze-in-texas/>.

Jacobs, Fleetwood. "Keeping The Stars At Night Big and Bright," Hill Country Conservancy, <https://hillcountryconservancy.org/keeping-the-stars-at-night-big-and-bright/>.

"Protect Texas Dark Sky," Scenic Texas, <https://www.scenictexas.org/resources/dark-sky-protection>.

The following businesses feature Dripping Springs's status as an International Dark Sky Community on their website:

"Stargazing," Independence Title, <https://independencetitle.com/wp-content/uploads/Stargaze.pdf>.

"New Homes in Dripping Springs TX," Century Communities, <https://www.centurycommunities.com/find-your-home/texas/austin-metro/dripping-springs>.

"Serving Dripping Springs, Texas," Driftwood Builders Roofing, <https://driftwoodbuildersroofing.com/dripping-springs-texas/>.

"WELCOME TO THE DRIPPING SPRINGS DIY WOOD SIGN WORKSHOP!" Board & Brush Dripping Springs, <https://boardandbrush.com/drippingsprings/>.

Sullivan, Lisa. "Lights Out Dripping Springs is for the Birds," Dripping Springs Elite, August 24, 2021, <https://drippingspringselite.com/news-blog/lights-out-dripping-springs-is-for-the-birds>.

ENGAGEMENT WITH IDA

The city collaborates with the Texas IDA Chapter on a regular basis and city representatives often attend chapter meetings.

The city created a logo for its International Dark Sky Community Designation and submitted it to IDA for approval. It was approved on June 17, 2021, and is being used on the city's website, e-signatures of some staff members, and in night sky public outreach materials.



COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT

Due to COVID, the city couldn't have some in-person events. The city put its efforts into promoting what it could virtually. This brought about an increase in public engagement through the city's social media platforms.

The city has seen an increase in park use during the pandemic. Outdoor activities, such as stargazing has increased. The city continues to see an increase in astrotourism.

SITE IDA CONTACT

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