



Date: November 12, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Title: **Dark Skies Awareness Campaign and Lighting Rebate/Grant Program**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action: Authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract extension with Sierra Business Council to extend and administer the Dark Sky Lighting Rebate Program through June 30, 2025, with authorization to adjust contract allocation amounts to support purchase of the application portal software Resolve subscription and continued management of the program with SBC staff.

Discussion:

In Fall 2023 the Town partnered with East River PR, Court Leve Productions and Tahoe Adventure Company to launch a fall Night Sky Awareness Campaign entitled "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark." 16 people participated in our sponsored full moon hikes and over 150 magnets and 200 stickers (both in English and Spanish) were distributed to community partners to help raise awareness of the benefits of the night sky. This is in alignment with the Truckee 2040 General Plan Community Character Element Goal CC-2: Night Sky

A second phase of the "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark" program was approved in Spring 2024, which aligned with International Dark Sky week. Coupled with the Spring 2024 Phase II launch, the Town partnered with Sierra Business Council, through the Climate Transformation Alliance, to launch the Dark Sky Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program: [Town of Truckee Dark Sky Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program \(climatetransformationalliance.org\)](https://www.truckeeclimatealliance.org/).

The purpose of the lighting rebate program is twofold; 1. To reduce light pollution; and 2. Conserve energy for the Truckee community. This specific component of the "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark" awareness and education campaign is also consistent with 2040 General Plan Community Character action item CC-2.A Lighting Inventory and Compliance Program. The Town and SBC entered into an agreement not to exceed \$91,720 for development and administration of the lighting rebate program, including:

- Determined fixture eligibility based on dark sky criteria and energy efficiency thresholds.
- Researched the Town's baseline need for community level lighting retrofits.
- Researched other dark sky rebate programs.
- Developed program guidelines and payment approach.

CC-2.1

Night Sky Preservation

Preserve views of the night sky as an important natural and scenic resource in Truckee.



Views of the night sky at Donner Lake.

Source: Grant Kaey

CC-2.A

Lighting Inventory and Compliance Program

Conduct an inventory to identify the most serious instances of light pollution in Truckee. Implement a program to work with relevant public and private property owners to retrofit, remove, or replace polluting fixtures. Coordinate with electricity providers to provide rebates and incentives for lighting retrofits.

Responsibility: Community Development Department

Time Frame: Long term

- Participation in awareness/educational programs, such as the Dark Sky Photo Competition and KTKE community spotlights
- Review and processing of applications/rebate program administration

There continues to be positive community interest and energy around this program, and as part of the Town's existing contract with the Truckee Cultural District and Nevada Arts Council, there is growing media advertisement about Dark Skies and the lighting rebate program being distributed within the community. For example, the latest November edition of the Truckee Turntable, distributed by the Nevada County Arts Council, included a segment announcing the Dark Skies campaign extension and Dark Skies outdoor lighting rebate program. A snippet of the November edition is below and a link to the full edition provided here:

[The+November+2024+Truckee+Turntable.pdf](#)

TRUCKEE'S DARK SKIES Announcing the Campaign Extension for 2025

A Glimpse into the Dark Skies Initiative

In August 2024, the Town of Truckee approved an extension of the Dark Skies Awareness Campaign for 2025, continuing the mission to protect and celebrate the stunning natural beauty of Truckee's night skies. As part of the Truckee Cultural District's ongoing efforts, this initiative focuses on minimizing light pollution, promoting stargazing, and encouraging art inspired by the night. Over the next year, we'll be working alongside local creatives, photographers, and stargazing enthusiasts and local businesses to deepen our community's connection to the night sky. Let's keep looking up and preserving our skies!



Dark Skies Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program

Did you know Truckee has a **Dark Skies Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program**, encouraging residents and businesses to adopt night-friendly outdoor lighting? Qualifying purchases of dark sky-compliant lighting fixtures are eligible for rebates, helping reduce light pollution and preserving our night views. The program aims to educate the public on the benefits of proper lighting, including how it helps wildlife, improves human sleep patterns, and enhances the visibility of our starry nights. For more information visit:

Since program launch in April 2024, SBC notes the following program accomplishments and data points:

- 128 fixtures have been replaced.

- 28 applications have been accepted.
- All applicants have been residential customers.
- The program page and flyer have been translated to Spanish to increase participation by the Spanish speaking community.
- Past applicants have stated that the application was easy and that the rebate amount was generous.
- Past applicants have mentioned that they were impressed with the program and happy with the goals of the program.



Additionally, application testimonials received by SBC team include:

- "I am excited about the program and hope more people take advantage of it. It was easy!"
- "I'm showing off my new lights and telling my neighbors to get on board."
- "I have been trying to get my neighbors excited about the program too! It makes me happy to gaze up at our beautiful night skies..sans glaring lights! Thank you and the Town of Truckee for encouraging this!"

Per the original contract with SBC and Council authorization, the lighting rebate program was intended to run through December 31, 2024. Nearing the end of the contract, SBC and Town staff began reviewing the remaining budget within the existing contract and program impacts. Currently there is approximately \$60,000 in budget remaining for this program, about \$42,000 being allocated specifically for the lighting rebates themselves. Staff recommends that Council provide authorization to amend the contract between the Town and SBC to continue the lighting rebate program through June 30, 2025. In addition, staff recommends Council authorize staff to adjust funding allocations within the remaining budget, to support the annual subscription of the application portal software, Resolv Rebates, and continued administration of the program with SBC staff. Contract and program extension would also align with many of the planned activities and events that the Truckee Cultural District plans to program as part of their contract and ongoing effort to raise awareness, education and excitement around dark skies.

Priority:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure Investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Core Service

Fiscal Impact: No fiscal impact for the contract extension recommendation.

Public Communication: Publication of this staff report.

Attachments: