



Date: May 14, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Title: **Dark Skies Spring Awareness Campaign and Lighting Rebate Program**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Town Council:

- A. Approve adjustments to the Lighting Rebate Program guidelines.
- B. Authorize the Town Manager to Execute a contract amendment with Sierra Business Council for implementation of the Lighting Rebate Program in the amount of \$11,006.
- C. Authorize a budget adjustment of \$11,006 from the Sustainability Designation to CIP 2414.

Discussion:

On March 12, 2024, the Town Council approved the launch of the Dark Skies awareness campaign – “Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark (see Attachment 1). The spring awareness campaign includes a photo competition, currently in process and closing on June 17, 2024, as well as a lighting rebate program administered through Sierra Business Council. These initiatives are in alignment with the Truckee 2040 General Plan Community Character Element Goal CC-2: Night Sky.

Lighting Rebate Program

In December 2023 the Town Council authorized staff to establish a new Capital Improvement Project, CIP 2414, for Dark Skies to fund an agreement with Sierra Business Council (SBC) to provide a dark sky compliant and energy efficient exterior lighting pilot rebate/grant program. The purpose of this program is twofold; 1. to reduce light pollution; and 2. conserve energy for the Truckee community.

For Phase 1 of this project, SBC staff completed the following:

- 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.

With this data, SBC formulated a Phase II of the project, including launch of the rebate

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.

program, processing the rebate applications, working in partnership with East River PR on community outreach, and analysis of program results. This effort was added to the workplan during the November 28 Council discussion and is considered in alignment with two strategic focus areas, Community Cohesion as well as Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction. In addition, coupling a spring awareness campaign launch with the lighting rebate program, Truckee 2040 Community Character action item CC-2.A Lighting Inventory and Compliance Program action item is advanced in the sense that polluting light may be reduced.

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

On March 12, 2024 the lighting rebate program was approved by Council and the initiative launched community wide in early April. SBC launched a webpage through the Climate Transformation Alliance webpage for the rebates which can be found here: [Town of Truckee Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program - Climate Transformation Alliance](#).

There is positive community interest and energy around this program, based on the month of April's data points, which is the first 30 days of the program. For April, SBC staff administering the program shared the following data points:

- Number of applications approved: 6
- All applicants have been residential customers
- Rebate amount: \$1,744.61
- Number of inquiries: 8, 2 of which have applied and have been approved
- Applications in process: 1

In addition, SBC staff received the following testimonials from applicants who have used the program:

- "This was such a quick and easy process."
- "I'm showing off my new lights and telling my neighbors to get on board."
- "I am excited about this program and hope more people take advantage of it. It was so easy!"

Based on the participation levels, staff is pleased with the interest in the program thus far and appreciative of the SBC team for administering this program. In the first 30 days of the program, some questions arose from applicants that were not contemplated in the original program outline. Staff recommends that the Council authorize the following adjustments to the program to broaden the availability of the program for more residents and property owners in the community:

- Approve rebates for purchase of lights prior to program launch in April, but installed after program launch;
- Approve rebates for new construction and new additions to encourage installation of Dark Sky lighting;
- Expand the energy efficient lighting options beyond ENERGY STAR approved lighting to allow all LED energy efficient lights that do not exceed 3000K to be eligible (3000k is a rating of LED color that corresponds to dark sky compatibility); and
- Define Large Multifamily Housing Units as five units or more. Based on Council direction and approval of program guidelines in March, Single Family Homes & Multifamily Housing (defined as more than one unit) may receive up to \$75 per fixture, up to 8 fixtures. For multifamily developments of 5 or more units, each unit is eligible for 8 fixtures with maximum rebate amount of \$75. In this scenario, 8 fixtures at \$75 each in each of the 5 units would receive a maximum rebate of \$3,000. This exceeds the maximum rebate amount of \$2,500 for Commercial Buildings. Therefore, staff recommends redefining Small Multifamily as 4 units or less to have parity between the two categories. Large Multifamily Housing will follow the same rebate

amount allotments as provided to Commercial Buildings. See table below for proposed rebate allotments per building type.

Building Type/Size	# of Units	Max # of fixtures	Max Amount of Rebate
Residential Single Family Homes	1	8	\$600
Multifamily = 2 units	2	16	\$1,200
Multifamily = 3 units	3	24	\$1,800
Multifamily = 4 units	4	32	\$2,400
Multifamily \geq 5 units	5+	50	\$2,500
Commercial Buildings	-	50	\$2,500

As a reminder, this program only funds reimbursement of outdoor residential and commercial lighting within the Town of Truckee, that is Dark Sky friendly, energy efficient, and Town of Truckee compliant.

In addition, with the March approval of the program, the phase I project development cost of \$11,006 was mistakenly left out of the contract request amount. Therefore, the staff recommends that the Council authorize a project budget amendment and contract amendment in the amount of \$11,006 for the phase I project development expense. This would bring SBC's total contract amount for the Dark Sky Lighting Rebate Program to be \$102,726.

Communication and Outreach

The Dark Skies movement is gaining traction County wide, with our western county partners, Nevada County and Cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City also sponsoring a photo competition. Their competition is very similar to the Town's photo competition and runs through June 17th. Western county partners competition is being administered through Nevada County arts Council and can be found here: [DARK SKIES PHOTO CONTEST — Nevada County Arts Council](#). We were able to share much of our collateral with the County partners for their use and are excited to collaborate on this initiative which is spreading countywide.

The Town's photo competition is also receiving great community interest, with photos being submitted through the Sierra Sun at [Don't Be Afraid of the Dark Photo Contest | SierraSun.com](#). As of May 9th, 32 beautiful night photos have been submitted, highlighting many different areas in town and many of the different beautiful elements of the night sky! As a reminder, we have three categories for submissions, professional, amateur and youth and are offering the following prizes:

PRIZES:		
Professional Category	Amateur Category (18+)	Youth Category (Under 18)
Grand Prize: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$500 Sustainable Truckee Gift Card 2. Picture printed on metallic canvas and put on display 	Grand Prize: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$500 Sustainable Truckee Gift Card 2. Picture printed on metallic canvas and put on display 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$500 Sustainable Truckee Gift Card 2. Picture printed on metallic canvas and put on display
2nd Place: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$250 Sustainable Truckee Gift Card 	2nd - 5th Place Prize: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Free night skies photography workshop and hike 	2nd - 5th Place Prize: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Free night skies photography workshop and hike (<i>with a +1 for their accompanying adult</i>)
3rd Place: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$100 Sustainable Truckee Gift Card 		

Following the June 17th submission deadline, winners will be selected, and a photo reception will be planned and hosted in partnership with the Truckee Recreation and Parks District.

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: \$11,006 funded in Capital Improvement Project 2414 Dark Skies from the Sustainability Designation.

Public Communication: Publication of this staff report and significant social media advertisements, radio ads and press release.

Attachments:

March 12, 2024 Staff Report available at:
<https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=59705233&repo=r-6a91ddbc>