



WILDWOOD

February 15, 2022

The Honorable City Council
City of Wildwood, Missouri
16860 Main Street
Wildwood, Missouri 63040

Re: Consideration of "Urban Night Sky Place" Designation for Community Park and Bluff View Park (Ward One and Six)

Council Members:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION >>> The Department of Planning and Parks was contacted in 2021 by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) regarding potential certification of Community Park as an "Urban Night Sky Place" designation. As per the information this group provided, the IDA is a *501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, dedicated to preserving the natural nighttime environment by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting eco-friendly outdoor lighting.* There are currently five (5) parks in the United States that are certified as Urban Night Sky Designations and this group believes that Wildwood's Community Park could be a great location for another.

Wildwood's Existing Lighting Regulations - In September 2000, the City adopted its first set of outdoor lighting regulations (Ordinance #647), intended to guide developers and City officials in design, operation, and location of all types of lighting options and purposes. The regulations were structured to preserve the night sky, reduce light trespass, and eliminate nuisance glare, thereby retaining the character of Wildwood's rural and suburban areas. These regulations were and continue to be more restrictive than many surrounding communities. Because of the challenges associated with advances in lighting technologies and new trends associated with the use of illumination for safety, visibility, ambience, and advertising the City has been considering necessary changes to the lighting regulations and, therefore, researched what would be required to become an IDA certified Dark Sky Designation in this process.

Therefore, at the direction of the Planning and Parks Committee, at the meeting held on November 16, 2021, the Department of Planning and Parks researched the anticipated time and expense related to the Urban Night Sky Place (UNSP) Designation, as well as the International Dark Sky Communities (IDSC) Designation.

Urban Night Sky Place Designation - The Urban Night Sky Place (UNSP) designation was created to provide recognition for public, outdoor spaces in and adjacent to urban areas, in which quality outdoor lighting practices and installations serve as effective examples of lighting best practices for surrounding communities. The designated locations identify places near urban areas, with exceptional commitment to and success in implementing the ideals of dark sky conservation and demonstrate that such places can serve as models of dark sky protection for neighboring communities. Currently, there are only five (5) certified UNSP designations in the world, Stacy Park, in Olivette being one (1) of them.

Aside from creating a Lighting Management Plan for the designated park(s), there would be no changes required of the City's lighting regulations for this designation. The application process would be the most time consuming component and was estimated to be approximately 3-4 hours per month and the initial cost of the application is \$250.00. This application can include more than one (1) park designation. Thereafter, the time and cost will be based wholly on the associated programs that are offered and educational materials developed, which is up to the City's discretion.

International Dark Sky Communities - An International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) is a town, city, municipality, or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal of dark skies. Dark Sky Communities excel in their efforts to promote responsible lighting and dark sky stewardship, and set good examples for surrounding communities. Currently, there are thirty-four (34) International Dark Sky Communities throughout the world.

Although the City of Wildwood is relatively close to meeting the requirements for an International Dark Sky Community Designation, it would require significantly more time, expense, and support from the community. The City's lighting regulations are deliberately more restrictive than necessary to preserve the night sky and semi-rural environment of Wildwood. However, this designation would require the City to have a Modern Lighting Ordinance (MLO) that goes beyond the current restrictions to include regulations pertaining to lower luminance levels and lower Kelvins, curfews on all publicly-owned lights, all public and private illuminated signs to be extinguished one (1) hour after sunset, until one hour before sunrise. Additionally, it would require an inventory of all City-owned lighting and, if not in compliance with the restrictions, must provide a 5-year plan to bring them into compliance. Additionally, the designation requires an amortization period, applicable to all publicly and privately-owned lighting, to end not more than ten (10) years from the effective date of the outdoor lighting policy, after which all non-conforming lighting still in place at the time of enactment must be brought into compliance with the policy. The amendments to the lighting regulations would take significantly more time and require assistance from a professional lighting consultant. The table below offers a comparison of the two (2) designations.

Comparison of the Designations

	Urban Night Sky Place	International Dark Sky Community
Required Changes and Associated Staff Time		
Community Outreach	Develop educational programs/materials to distribute.	Develop educational programs/materials to distribute.
Programs	Staff evening hours required for night sky related activities.	Staff evening hours required for night sky related activities.
Lighting Regulations	Create a Lighting Management Plan (LMP) (park(s))	A quality comprehensive lighting policy like the IDA/IES Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) (for City)
Light Inventory Extent	Park(s)	Entire City
Lighting Changes	Possibly change light bulbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City owned lighting conforming with, or committed to conforming with, the lighting policy (if the latter, a detailed plan with a timeline for completion in no more than five (5) years) - Affects an amortization period, applicable to ALL publicly AND privately-owned lighting, to end not more than ten (10) years from the effective date of the outdoor lighting policy, after which all non-conforming lighting still in place at the time of enactment must be brought into compliance with the policy
Signage	Install/maintain designation sign(s)	Install/maintain designation sign(s)
Park Hours	Extend/eliminate park hours	Extend/eliminate park hours
Ongoing Maintenance		
Light Monitoring	Establish a Bright Sky Measurement Program	Establish a Bright Sky Measurement Program
Public Outreach/Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requirements not specified. - If interpretive programs are not typically offered, then extensive publications, flyers, press releases, media, social media, or other outreach are appropriate substitutes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and execution of at least two (2) community dark sky awareness events per year - Inclusion of dark sky education in community schools and curriculum - Inclusion of dark sky awareness documents (IDA brochures or community created brochures) with other community informational documents available for residents and visitors
Annual Report	Failure to submit annual report may lead to suspension	Failure to submit annual report may lead to suspension
Associated Expenses		
Application Fee	\$250.00	\$250.00
Lighting	Potential cost to change light bulbs in parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential cost to change lighting throughout City - Costs related lighting consultant
Ongoing Outreach	Cost of is undetermined	Cost of is undetermined
Police	Extended park hours may lead to increased policing.	Extended park hours may lead to increased policing.

Application and Maintenance of Certification

The formal application process for either designation takes approximately one (1) to three (3) years and would be certified upon approval by this organization's Board. Once certified, the City would be expected to continue to host regular programs to educate people about light pollution and the importance of dark skies. IDA Missouri is building a statewide team of experts that can provide training to City personnel on how to deliver such programs. Upon certification, IDA will continue to work with certified places to promote their work through media relations, member communications, and social media. Additionally, there are organizations, such as the St. Louis Astronomical Society and the Science Center, that may be available to host events onsite at no charge to the City, and therefore the expenses could be minimal and consist of additional staff hours in the evening and light refreshments. The Department of Planning and Parks could begin this application process immediately. The ongoing maintenance after certification would be similar with respect to the community outreach and recertification documentation. However, the International Dark Sky Community would require ongoing Code Enforcement to ensure that all lighting replacement met the City's new requirements.

SUMMARY AND COMMITTEE ACTION >>> Although the City of Wildwood is relatively close to meeting the requirements for either designation, the International Dark Sky Community designation would require significantly more time, expense, and, most importantly, the support of the community. Without the support and desire from the community to become an International Dark Sky Community, the additional lighting regulations required and costs associated may not be well received. If this designation is desired, it would require time to prepare and budget for and could be set as a long-term goal.

The Urban Night Sky Place Designation uses more of a positive reinforcement approach to motivate communities to engage in public outreach and implement dark sky friendly lighting that helps taxpayers' pockets, increases ecotourism, and provides educational and recreational opportunities for locals and visitors. With the guidance of the Missouri Chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association and assistance from the City of Olivette, the City could have one (1) or more parks certified within two (2) years.

The Committee has, therefore, recommended that the Department move forward with the application for the Urban Night Sky Designation Place for both Community Park and Bluff View Park, provided the extended park hours would not be problematic for the police department. The Department confirmed the extended park hours could apply only to the portion of designated land may meet the access requirement, or access must be available for a reasonable fraction of the length of the hours between sunset and sunrise. Other cities have achieved this by opening a portion of the park for a limited time (Ex. Open 9:00 pm – midnight), extending hours up to three hours after dusk, or opening a portion of the park on a limited basis (Ex. Extended hours the first Saturday of every month). The police department confirmed they would be able to patrol accordingly.

OTHER >>> If any of the City Council Members should have questions or comments before tonight's meeting about this information, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning and Parks at (636) 458-0440. This item is on tonight's Work Session Agenda, as "For Action," and a short presentation is planned in this regard. Thank you for your review of this information and action upon the request as well.

Respectfully submitted,

CITY OF WILDWOOD

Don Bartoni, Chair*

Planning and Parks Committee

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor
Steve Cross, City Administrator
John A. Young, City Attorney
Rick Brown, P.E. and P.T.O.E., Director of Public Works
Melanie Rippetoe, Assistant Director of Planning and Parks
Gary Crews, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation

* The Department of Planning and Parks developed this report, in conjunction with the Planning and Parks Committee. Content reflects the Committee's consideration of this subject and not necessarily an individual's position or opinion.