

Introduction

On June 6, 2006 the Sanibel City Council adopted Ordinance 00-10, known as the Sanibel Dark Skies Ordinance. The purpose of this law is to protect the natural beauty of Sanibel's night skies as well as the habitat for our nocturnal and crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk) species, particularly our sea turtles during nesting season.

Why does Sanibel have a "Dark Skies Ordinance"?

The purpose of Sanibel's Dark Skies Ordinance is to minimize light pollution on the Island by eliminating lights that cause cumulative sky glow, reflect light directly up into the sky or cast light over the open waters of the Gulf and Bay. Light pollution dims the night skies, causing the stars and moon to be less visible.

Additionally the Dark Skies Ordinance is critical to the protection of the sea turtles that nest and lay their eggs on Sanibel's beaches. Our sea turtles rely on the moon for guidance to and from the water. Excess light may discourage nesting turtles or result in the disorientation of turtle hatchlings. Sanibel is home to many crepuscular and nocturnal species. Our community's Dark Skies Ordinance helps to protect nighttime wildlife as well as their habitat. The final goal is to eliminate light glare that may be distracting to

operators of motor vehicles and therefore improving roadway safety.

What is the Timeline for Compliance?

All new construction since the adoption of the Dark Sky Ordinance has been required to be built in compliance with the Ordinance. Ordinance 00-10 provided all Sanibel property owners 14 ½ years, until January 1, 2015, to bring all non-complaint lighting fixtures into compliance. In the interest of complying with the spirit as well as the intent of the law the City of Sanibel brought all lighting on City grounds into compliance in 2004.

What are the basic Requirements of the Dark Skies Ordinance?

The City of Sanibel's Dark Sky Ordinance does not prohibit lighting but rather regulates the types of fixtures & lights to minimize light pollution on our Island. Specifically, the City of Sanibel's Dark Sky Ordinance prohibits "up lighting". The ordinance does permit "down lighting" which means all outdoor lighting fixtures, including display signs, building, parking lot and aesthetic lighting must utilize fixtures which shine downward.



Noncompliant



Compliant

Does the Dark Skies Ordinance require non-complaint lighting fixtures to be replaced or does the ordinance allow modification of existing fixtures?

Yes, the Ordinance does permit property owners to modify existing non-compliant fixtures.



Non-compliant



Compliant

What specific lighting requirements apply to Coastal properties on Sanibel?

Standard Dark Skies code applies to coastal areas, in addition to regulations that help protect sea turtles. Yellow, low wattage bulbs will be required along the shoreline in order to reduce light pollution as much as possible. In addition, indoor lights that are easily visible from the beach should be shielded after 9 P.M. Using tilted shutters or blinds over your windows is an easy way to accomplish this.

Does the Dark Skies Ordinance Provide for Exemptions?

The historical Sanibel Lighthouse as well as emergency lighting needed by the Fire and Police Departments is exempted from the Dark Sky Ordinance.

Where can I find a copy of the City of Sanibel’s Dark Skies Regulations?

The City of Sanibel’s Dark Skies Rule can be easily accessed online at the www.mysanibel.com. -While on the City’s home page click on the “City Codes” icon. Once on the City Code page select “Link to Sanibel Code of Ordinances – Municipal Code Corporation,” which will bring you to the Municode database. Enter “dark skies” into the search browser and “DIVISION 4. OUTDOOR LIGHTING – Sanibel, Florida – Code of Ordinances will pop up.

Can someone visit my property and advise me if my current fixtures are compliant?

Absolutely. The City of Sanibel Planning Department staff is available to visit your property and advise you if your current fixtures are compliant with the Dark Skies Ordinance. The Planning Department can be contacted by calling 239-472-4136 or emailing Director James Jordon at jimmy.jordan@mysanibel.com.

Can the City Recommend a Contractor to Bring my Fixtures into Compliance with the Dark Skies Ordinance?

The City cannot recommend contractors. However, the City does maintain a list of electrical contractors licensed to work on Sanibel. This list can be accessed online at <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Building/Licensed-Contractors> or in person at the City of Sanibel’s building department; located in Sanibel City Hall at 800 Dunlop Road.

Who Do I Contact with Questions Regarding the City of Sanibel Lighting Standards?

Please contact the City of Sanibel Planning Department, by phone at 239-472-4136, or email at jimmy.jordan@mysanibel.com for any questions you may have regarding the City of Sanibel’s Dark Skies Ordinance.

