

County of San Diego General Plan Update
BORREGO SPRINGS
COMMUNITY PLAN
Updated July 1, 2009

Community Background

c. Environmental Setting (PAGE 8)

..... We are a unique San Diego County community, with no traffic lights and few streetlights or sidewalks. Homes and humans share the natural desert landscape with abundant native plants that provide precious habitat to the many wild animals. The environment is our greatest natural resource, and there is significant concern about growth's impact on the delicate desert. Our local characteristics—clean air, **dark night skies**, underground water supply, scenic mountain vistas, natural flora and fauna—are vital to the future wealth and vitality of Borrego Springs. This “Village in a Park” is truly a “desert island”.

c. Environmental Setting (PAGE 10)

Dark Night Skies

The **dark night sky** over Borrego Springs and the surrounding desert area is so spectacular that a 2003 *USA Today* article rated the Anza-Borrego Desert one of the top ten stargazing locations in the nation.



Residents and visitors to this area are privileged to view the wispy Milky Way in our **dark night sky** along with thousands of sparkling stars. Light pollution from local and encroaching growth is threatening our **dark sky**, even though County lighting ordinances now call for outdoor lighting that does not point upward. Consistent lighting code enforcement—especially critical where our proximity to Palomar and Mt. Laguna Observatories makes **dark skies** essential for scientific operations—appears impossible to implement.

“Starry Splendor,” by Dennis Mammana,
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Community leaders are working with the International Dark-Sky Association (I.D.A.) to designate Borrego Springs as California's first Dark-Sky Community. This would serve to promote our community as a preferred destination for star-seeking visitors. Anza-Borrego Desert State Park will also pursue an International Dark-Sky Park designation.

COMMUNITY VISION (PAGE 17)

2028: Our community is recognized as a major destination for tourism

We are also a leader in energy efficiency and recreation, supported by San Diego County land use policies and planners in achieving these goals:

- Conserving and protecting natural open space, native plants, scenic views, and dark sky and dark ground environment; and

COMMUNITY CHARACTER VISION (PAGE 18)

2020: Borrego Springs is honored as a “Distinctive Destination”

Borrego Springs is named one of twelve “Distinctive Destinations” in the nation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In presenting the award, judges highlighted the following community qualities and accomplishments:

- Recognized as an “International Dark Sky Community”;

Community Conservation and Protection (PAGE 32)

a. County Ordinances & Regulations

Implementation-LU-3.2.1

1. Review county administration and enforcement of existing zoning, grading, and lighting ordinances and building codes within the Plan Area, and put in place strategies to ensure prompt, consistent, and effective enforcement to prevent difficult-to-reverse damage to: fragile, non-regenerating desert lands; dark skies and dark environment; and viewsheds and neighborhoods.

e. Lights and Lighting (PAGE 36)

The Plan area is highly susceptible to light trespass and degradation of its unusually dark night skies and dark night environment, both of which are unique and important elements of community character. Goals and Policies addressing Lights and Lighting are located under Dark skies and dark environment, in the Conservation and Open Space Chapter of this Community Plan.

3. Conservation and Open Space (COS) (PAGE 60)

3.1 Resource Conservation and Management

Challenges to our community are headlined by issues such as ...

The **preservation of our dark skies**, and retaining the high quality of life for our residents and visitors, present and future.

b. Plant and animal habitats and wildlife corridors (e.g., woodlands, grass lands, riparian corridors, etc.) (PAGE 62)

...Residents of Borrego Springs enjoy the close proximity of wildlife near their homes and throughout the Valley as they travel to the town center to conduct business. ... The howl of coyotes is a common accompaniment to the **dark skies** of the desert.

G. **Dark skies and dark environment (PAGE 67-69)**

Borrego Springs is poised to become the second "**International Dark Sky Community**" in the United States. Throngs of visitors venture to Borrego Springs and the nearby Anza-Borrego Desert State Park from all over the world to experience the natural desert landscape and the astounding clarity of the desert's night sky. The tendency of city dwellers when they move to the backcountry is to illuminate their property and residences. The **Dark Sky Initiative** will help educate Borrego Springs' residents and new arrivals to the benefits of preserving the night sky resource of our desert community.

A goal of this initiative will be to educate individuals and organizations and create ways to encourage them to fully consider the effects of their plans and actions relative to outdoor lighting throughout the Borrego Valley. Actions can include consideration of light fixtures, bulb selection, and location of lighting, orientation of fixtures, timer settings, motion detectors, and actual need for lighting. Studies have shown that 30% of all lighting in America actually points out toward space, illuminating trees, buildings, and signs.

An educational program should be instituted in Borrego Springs regarding lighting needs, ways to reduce residential and business lighting, conserving energy, re-directing existing lighting to reduce light pollution, and ways to avoid unnecessary use of so-called security lights and driveway lighting in residential areas.

Issue-COS-1.7 Plan Area Highly Susceptible to Light Pollution. The Plan area is highly susceptible to light trespass and degradation of its unusually **dark night** skies and dark night environment, both of which are unique and important elements of community character.

Goal-COS-1.7 Limit the degradation of the **dark night sky** and dark night environment.

Policy-COS-1.7.1 Establish and enforce a set of lighting standards specific to the Plan area to conserve and protect the unique **dark sky** and dark environment.

Goal-COS-1.8 New and retro-fitted exterior lighting contributes to conserving the dark sky and dark environment of Borrego Springs.

Policy-COS-1.8.1 Ensure that all new and retro-fitted exterior lighting fixtures and systems use indirect lighting and source shielding to eliminate light “spill”. Institute a Plan-Area-wide program to eliminate existing instances of light trespass, with the exception of emergency lighting.

Policy-COS-1. Require, to the extent feasible, shielded fixtures in all private and public street and parking area lighting to substantially confine illumination to the lighted area.

Goal-COS-1. Protection of all properties from future light trespass by exterior lighting from adjoining properties.

Policy-COS-1. Require shielding for all new and retro-fitted exterior light fixtures such that no ray of light exiting an exterior lighting fixture directly from its light source falls outside the boundaries of the legal parcel on which the fixture is situated.

Policy-COS-1. Limit the maximum night-time intensity of light reflected from any surface of any land, improvement, or structure.

Implementation-COS-1.

1. Create a Borrego Springs Lighting Standards Addendum to the San Diego County Lighting Ordinance to protect and enhance the dark sky and dark environment resources by establishing standards on the installation of all new light fixtures within the Plan Area to limit intensity, glare, light trespass, and degradation of dark sky and dark environment from exterior and landscape lighting.
2. All exterior fixtures (with certain exceptions for low-wattage and decorative fixtures) be shielded and emit light in such a way as to confine substantially all light rays emerging from the fixture to fall within the boundaries of the legal parcel on which the fixture is installed;
3. Establish maximum surface light intensity levels to limit dark sky and dark environment degradation through reflection;
4. Require frosted lamps wherever unshielded fixtures may be permitted;
5. All unnecessary commercial, agricultural, and residential outdoor illumination is reduced or eliminated;
6. Commercial uses for nighttime lighting are defined and limited in intensity, hours of use, and size of lighted areas.
7. Retrofit all existing public street and parking area lighting with shielding.
8. Create a program to assist private owners to shield existing street and parking area lighting.
9. Develop DPLU regulations specifying that all exterior fixtures

(with certain exceptions for low-wattage and decorative fixtures) be shielded and emit light in such a way as to confine substantially all light rays emerging from the fixture to fall within the boundaries of the legal parcel on which the fixture is installed.

10. Institute a Plan area-wide program to identify and eliminate existing instances of light trespass, with the exception of emergency lighting.

11. Institute an education and enforcement program for sources of glare and light trespass.

6.2 Economic Development & Vitalization

k. Proposed Study Elements (PAGE 97)

- Incorporate native landscaping, attractive pedestrian crosswalks, and effective, **dark-sky appropriate lighting** and way-finding elements.