

# Lighting Code Update and Adoption, City of Ft. Collins

## Community Engagement Merit Award

[Website](#)

In 2016, Fort Collins's City Council adopted a resolution expressing support for incorporating dark sky policies and standards into Building Codes, Land Use Codes and Streetscape Standards. In support of Council's stated objectives, City staff evaluated codes for development projects and proposed updates to better align with Council's intent.

The Land Use Code changes align with Council's stated objectives as requirements address all aspects of light pollution by limiting light trespass, intensity and glare, and provide increased protections for sensitive areas, such as Natural Areas and residential neighborhoods, while allowing greater lighting levels in commercial areas. In essence, the code will no longer uniformly apply standards across the city and instead promote more thoughtful and tailored lighting plans that respond to the context and land use of development sites.

The goals of the proposed code updates include:

- Promote nighttime safety, security, productivity, enjoyment and commerce on new development sites;
- Create a "lighting budget" approach to site lighting that responds to the specific context of the site and needs of the development;
- Minimize glare, obtrusive light, artificial sky glow, excessive energy use, and impacts to adjacent properties and neighborhoods;
- Protect Natural Areas and the local natural ecosystem from the damaging effects of electric night lighting; and
- Address recent technological advances in outdoor lighting, particularly the advent of energy efficient LED lighting.

### **Community Engagement**

Engagement was an opportunity to ground community members in understanding the implications of proposed code changes. The lighting engineering firm, Clanton & Associates, prepared a Case Studies and Cost Comparison Analysis of existing and proposed lighting requirements on five recently completed development projects. In general, the report concluded existing requirements fall short in controlling over-lighting

and glare, and that new requirements would not result in more expensive lighting installations.

Bringing this analysis to life, staff facilitated four separate evening tours of the development projects to help communicate the technical implications of the code. Attendees were asked to fill out on-site questionnaires that evaluated the qualitative aspects of existing lighting installations. Staff used the Case Studies Report and input received during tours to further advance the code.

Following the tours, staff engaged the broader community through a variety of virtual activities that include public open houses, presentations to a variety of groups (Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority, Police Services, Boards, Building Services Team, Light and Power Team, Capital Projects Team, Engineering), and facilitated two Technical Advisory Committee workshops. Staff also facilitated a virtual training session for City Planners responsible for reviewing new lighting plans and applying standards.

Key considerations brought up during engagement influenced the code, such as how to address built-to lot line development, the 20-hour commercial activity unique to downtown, including specific provisions for athletic fields, circumstances that would trigger compliance for existing development, and clearer intent statements for specific lighting installations such as stringed-lighting.