



Photo credit: Kelly Carroll

Nevada's Dark Sky Initiative Prepares to Dim the Lights in Boulder City

A Nearly \$2 Million Federal Grant Is Awarded to Boulder City, Nevada to Protect and Enhance its Starry Skies

By Colin Robertson, Administrator, Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation

Citywide Retrofitting of Municipal Street Lights to Begin in 2023

A new model and rationale for retrofitting municipal lighting in favor of dark sky friendlier lighting are underway in Boulder City, Nevada. In September, the U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation (NDOR) and the City of Boulder City, Nevada \$1.9 million in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The funds will be used to purchase and install dark sky-friendlier dimmable luminaires on each of Boulder City's 2,560 municipally owned street lights.

The grant was awarded as part of the EDA's Tourism and Outdoor Recreation notice of funding opportunity authorized by the ARPA, and led by NDOR. NDOR also administers new Nevada's dark sky destination program, authorized by the passage in 2021 of Nevada Senate Bill 52, sponsored by then Lieutenant Governor Kate Marshall. Combining Boulder City's dark skies, its proximity to Lake Mead National Recreation Area (the nation's first and oldest National Recreation Area), and the community's prominent recreation opportunities, lead the EDA to support the project, in part because of its potential to be replicated elsewhere.

With enthusiastic support from outdoor recreation industry partners and advocates such as the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce, Rail Explorers (a pedal-powered rail bike and tour company), and Desert Adventures (a Lake Mead kayak retailer and rental company and outfitter), the City of Boulder City and NDOR were able to combine efforts and make the compelling case that retrofitting the City's municipal lighting would not only be good for the environment and quality of life in Boulder City but retain existing and create new jobs for Boulder City's burgeoning outdoor recreation- and heritage tourism-oriented economy.

Interestingly, unlike many federal grants, the project required less cash to match the federal funds awarded for the project because the EDA accepted the City's "force match"—the City of Boulder City's commitment to using their existing workforce to do the retrofit work. The scenario made the grant award work, as the otherwise 20-percent cash match would have been too onerous for a small, rural community such as Boulder City.

The project will begin in 2023 and will be completed no later than five years from now. For further information about the project and partners, please visit the City of Boulder City at <https://www.bcnv.org/916/Dark-Skies-Project> and the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation at <http://dcnr.nv.gov/divisions-boards/ndor>.

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