

# Where there's a will, there's a way

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## Insights on achieving International Dark Sky Community Certification - an overview of survey results

Navigating the path to an [International Dark Sky Place](#) certification may have its challenges, but it's worth it for many reasons, according to DarkSky certified community representatives from across the United States. "Just do it," was a common refrain made by those responding on behalf of their International Dark Sky Community, in a [survey](#) sent to them by the Dark Sky Cooperatives' Communications Team at the start of the year. The purpose of the survey was to identify the economic perspectives, challenges, and points of inspiration that supported their decision and process to become DarkSky certified, and to share the insights gained with others who may be considering a similar a DarkSky certification for their own community.



International Dark Sky Community, Paonia, Colorado, beneath the Milky Way  
Photo credit: Aaron Watson, [Dark Skies Paonia](#)

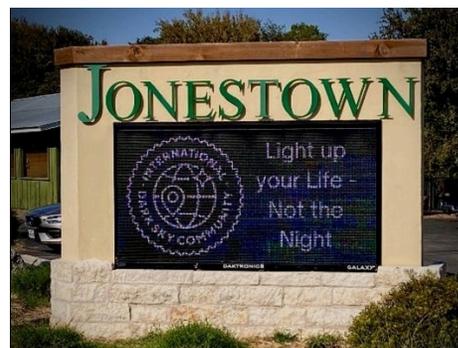
The purpose of the survey was to identify the economic perspectives, challenges, and points of inspiration that supported the decision to become DarkSky certified, and to share the insights gained with others who may be on a similar path towards a dark sky certification. (Click [here](#) for [full report](#) of survey results.)

The survey was sent to 37 U.S.-based [International Dark Sky Communities](#) (IDSC) that were formally recognized at that time - early January 2025. Responses came in from

seven states, including AZ, CO, FL, IL, OR, TX, and UT, submitted by 19 representatives from 18 communities - nearly half (48.6%) of all U.S.-based IDSC certified at the time. Seven of the reporting communities were certified prior to the COVID-19 pandemic between 2011 to 2019. Eleven were post-pandemic, certified between 2021 to 2025, with the majority in the last 2 years. The DarkSky advocates who responded included a range of professionals including town or village manager, town planner, economic development officer, natural resources specialist, and community volunteers with or without a personal background in astronomy.

When asked why their community pursued a DarkSky Certification, "to align with the values of the community," "to protect the environment / wildlife," and "to protect the rural character of their town" were equally the most common reasons reported by 17 out of 19 respondents (89.5%). Although many of the questions were intentionally weighted towards getting an economic perspective, interestingly, only 2 of the 19 respondents reported an economic objective (via local taxes) as a primary reason for seeking this certification (10.5%). All responses to this question are provided below:

- To align with values of the community - 17 (89.5%)
- To protect the environment / wildlife - 17 (89.5%)
- To protect the rural character - 17 (89.5%)
- For human health reasons - 8 (42.1%)
- To align with values of elected officials - 6 (31.6%)
- To align with values of key stakeholders - 6 (31.6%)
- For the economic (tax) return - 2 (10.5%)
- For bringing the town back to life after having a negative past – we needed something new to be known for - 1 (5.3%)
- To support nearby observatories - 1 (5.3%)



A marquee in Jonestown, Texas, encouraging residents to "Light up your life, not the night."

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*Photo Credit: Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy*

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