

How to Improve Sleep, Health, Happiness, with Dark Skies in Sandisfield

We are a rural town, with beautiful dark skies, clean air and water. Unlike our neighboring town New Marlborough, we did not pass a dark sky ordinance but instead rely on education and good sense. Night lighting can disrupt the sleep of neighbors, and the abundant animals who share our town's fields and forests. Light trespass can create conflicts, and glare can actually compromise safety and security. The good news is that by directing light where it is needed one can use less energy and save money. Cutoff fixtures prevent light from going anywhere not needed. Floodlights without shielding are not only annoying but make it harder to see intruders or to see where we are going when going towards them. The best lighting is of a warm color (yellow or orange) as that light scatters less (and also better cuts through fog) and is less disruptive of sleep. Very efficient LED lighting was originally less expensive in blue colors, which are the worst for scattering, polluting the night sky and destroying the melatonin animals and people need to sleep. You may notice how annoying blue headlights on oncoming cars can be. Now that warmer colors are about the same price, there is good reason to use them instead. Light that goes up usually makes no sense, but also light going out and only slightly down does not have much benefit and may trespass onto neighbors or into forests or fields where it is unwanted and not needed. For security, if your budget allows, motion sensitive infrared cameras are the best way to spot anyone (human or animal) approaching your home and create no light pollution at all. Security lights that are motion sensitive are the next best.

When putting in new outdoor lighting, please consider the actual area you want lit and the cone of light thus needed, and buy lighting fixtures that only illuminate that area.

The International Dark Sky Association has four different brochures with more information. With the continued increase in light pollution, many cities and towns are passing ordinances to try to reverse this trend. You can visit <https://www.darksky.org> and/or find your way to the brochures at

<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/grassroots-advocacy/resources/public-outreach-materials/>

Together we can save money, make our neighbors happy, allow people and animals the ability to sleep, improve our health, and continue to enjoy the rarity of seeing the Milky Way and so many stars! Thank you!