



QUICK GUIDE TO BLANCO'S AMENDED 2018 OUTDOOR LIGHTING ORDINANCE

PURPOSE: To provide an easily understandable guide to the major provisions of the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance passed by the Blanco City Council that came into effect on October 9, 2018, and amended by the City Council on January 31, 2023.

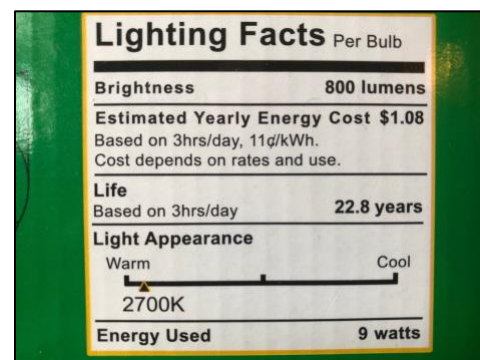
BOTTOM LINE: In general, you can have as many lights on your property as you want, and they usually can be as bright as you want as long as they meet two criteria:

1. The light cannot shine off your property onto another property or a city or state right of way, and
2. The light must have a Correlated Color Temperature of not more than 2,700 degrees Kelvin.

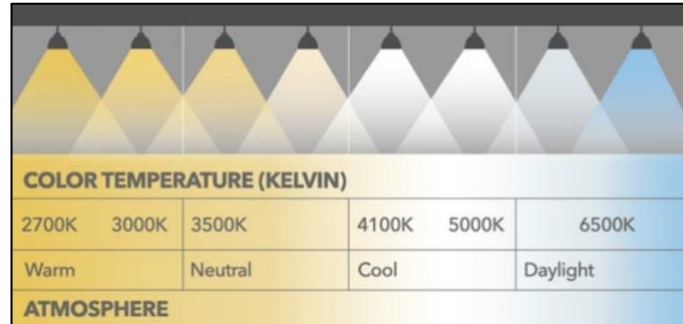
PURPOSE OF THE OUTDOOR LIGHTING ORDINANCE: To protect the night sky from light pollution coming from lighting that shines upwards into the night sky; to reduce annoying and dangerous glare for drivers, pedestrians, and neighbors; to preserve the night sky for the enjoyment of residents and visitors; to protect the health of Blanco citizens; and to encourage the astro-tourism industry in and around Blanco.

WHAT IS "CORRELETED COLOR TEMPERATURE?"

This is a measure of where the light falls in the visible spectrum. It is now federal law that the packaging for all consumer bulbs must show information about the color temperature of the bulb. This is often labeled "Light Appearance" and ranges from "Warm" to "Cool." An American Medical Association study warns that light with a Correlated Color Temperature above 3,000K inhibits the body's ability to produce melatonin at night. Melatonin is a hormone that, among other things, helps the body ward off cancer. Additionally, it has been shown that light above 2,700 Kelvin scatters more readily in the atmosphere and worsens light pollution. Hence, the City of Blanco requires that outdoor lights be no more than 2,700K both as a public health imperative and an environmental issue.



HOW DOES CORRELATED COLOR TEMPERATURE AFFECT THE COLOR OF LIGHT? Here is a chart showing how light gets bluer and bluer the higher you go in Color Temperature. It's the blue light that the American Medical Association and IDA wants us to minimize. Keep it warm and safe!



WHERE CAN I FIND BULBS WITH A COORELATED COLOR TEMPERATURE OF 2,700K OR LESS?

These bulbs come in all types and sizes. Some big box stores have them (though you must sometimes have to hunt hard to find them). On-line shopping websites have them. The non-profit Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky (www.blancocountynightsky.org) has a “Products” tab on its website that takes you directly to flat bottomed LED bulbs with 2,700K temperature.

WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT FLAT-BOTTOMED LEDS?



It is simply that the light emitted by the bulb does not shine outwards in all directions to cause glare and pollute the night sky. The light only shines down. A great many existing fixtures in Blanco that do not meet the requirements of the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, could come into compliance simply by changing the bulb out to a flat-bottomed LED. And, because LEDs use much less electricity to produce the same amount of light as traditional incandescent bulbs or even CFLs, you’ll save money...and they’ll last longer!

WHERE CAN I FIND NIGHT SKY-FRIENDLY FIXTURES?

Buyer beware! Manufacturers will sometimes label a lighting fixture as a “Dark Sky” fixture when it actually isn’t. You have to use your own judgement. If the fixture allows light to shine off property and above the horizon to pollute the night sky, it isn’t a “dark sky” fixture and it won’t comply with Blanco’s Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. If you want to be safe,



choose a fixture that has the seal of approval of the International Dark Sky Association. These can be found at www.darksky.org. Otherwise, hardware stores and online outlets have many, many dark sky fixtures to

choose from. Just be careful that really are what they claim to be!



WHERE CAN I READ THE COMPLETE 2018 OUTDOOR LIGHTING ORDINANCE AS AMENDED?

The ordinance is much more comprehensive than has been presented here so, if you are a builder, an electrician, or a contractor, it is best that you read the entire document to make sure your fixtures will be in compliance. You can look at the ordinance in person at City Hall or on the City's website (www.cityofblanco.com). It is also posted on the website of the Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky (www.blancocountynightssky.org). The latter has much helpful information on why and how to protect the night sky.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

In addition to the websites mentioned above, an excellent source of night sky preservation information, to include links to dark sky outdoor fixtures in big box stores, is the Hill Country Alliance (www.hillcountryalliance.org/NightSkies).

