



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STREETLIGHT GRAND PLAN DRAFT REPORT

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

September 2, 2004

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I comment favorably as described below on the Streetlight Grand Plan Draft Report for Washington, DC., excluding the Monumental Core, Downtown Business Improvement Districts, federally-owned parkland and other designed districts with street lighting plans.

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The District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) has submitted its draft report for the District's Streetlight Grand Plan (Plan), which is intended to develop a uniform streetlight policy throughout the city. While it applies citywide, areas with adopted street light regulations are exempt. These areas include: the downtown streetscape area, the business improvement areas and the monumental core. The Plan has been developed to provide the city and its citizens with guidelines and standards for future streetlight improvements made in conjunction with sidewalk and/or roadway construction projects. The report and its recommendations result from a study that included research of technology, design principles, interviews with lighting vendors and other state agencies, including input from an advisory committee representing citizen groups, district agencies, the National Park Service, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.

The report includes background information on terminology and lighting conventions, illumination standards, lighting distribution, hardware recommendations and design principles. The major changes to the lighting guidelines from the current practices include: (1) replacing the widely used cobra head pendant posts with decorative teardrop pendant posts on residential and commercial streets in non-historic areas and along those portions of special streets with overhead power lines; (2) replacing the standard 'plain' globes with refractive, prismatic globes to improve illumination and direct light to the desired source and to minimize glare and light spillover; (3) replace yellow high pressure sodium lamps with white-light lamps, except for alleys when life-cycle cost is comparable to high pressure sodium lamps.

The historic plan of Washington, DC, as defined by special streets, the monumental core, historic and non-historic streets and historic districts provide the framework for the streetlight guidelines. The neighborhood context, historic significance, street significance and function, and the location of electrical power lines influence the Plan's guidelines. The plan contains five primary design principles: (1) Illumination will be consistent with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards; (2) the lighting should be designed to minimize the number of poles, maximize the spacing of poles, and be designed to the lowest acceptable wattage; (3) pole height should be based on the surrounding context, including the height of buildings, uses and the roadway and sidewalk widths; (4) no 400-watt conversion kits will be used in residential areas; and (5) lighting should enhance visibility and minimize glare through the use of refractive globes and shielding devices.

Standards for pole type, color, material, height and spacing addressed in the report and differ according to land use (commercial, mixed use and residential) and roadway classification, including bridges, alleys, freeways, tunnels, and underpasses.

I appreciate NCPC opportunity to serve on the advisory committee and participate in the preparation of the report and the District's receptiveness to incorporating our comments to date. I have reviewed the draft report and generally agree with the draft principles and guidelines developed by the District. I am pleased to submit these additional comments for DDOT's consideration.

Recommendations:

1. **Figures:** To clarify where each of the standards apply, incorporate Figure 5 (historic areas and non-historic and historic streets), Figure 6 (monumental core), and Figure 7 (special streets) into one integrated coded map, and designate the entire length of the defined significant streets and diagonal Avenues as special streets. Reference these designations in the definition section and remove Table 12 (List of Special Streets) because the streets will be depicted on the referenced integrated map.
2. **Exemptions:** Add text to clarify that federally-owned parkland is exempt from the provisions of the Plan and that the monumental core is defined as the boundary as defined in the Streetscape Manual prepared by the Interagency Initiative for the National Mall Road Improvement Program.
3. **Bridges:** Add a provision that requires in-kind replacement of lights on historic bridges and a statement that allows deviation from the cities' standard to allow specially design, decorative lights to be designed in context with new bridges that serve as entry gates to the city.
4. **Standards for Historic Streets and Districts:** Remove the note that Twin-twenty light poles are not desirable unless a special case. Twin-twenty's are an appropriate choice in historic districts.
5. **Standards for Special Streets:** Add Washington Globes, at heights of 16 and 18 feet, as an option in commercial, mixed-use and residential areas. Add DC grey as a color choice on special streets. Amend Note b to read – Replace upright lights in-kind. Add the following notes: replace Cobra head light poles with tear drop poles on special streets outside historic districts, replace Cobra head lights with upright light poles on special streets in historic districts; and Twin-twenty's should be used on special streets when the portion of the street is within a historic district.
6. **Next Steps:** Amend the Next Steps section, item 1, to include the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Park Service in any periodic reviews that result in necessary modifications to the guidelines.
7. **Teardrop Posts and lamps.** NCPC requests that the District consult with staff on the selection of the decorative posts that will become the standard pole type used in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Plan.

We look forward to continued participation as the District obtains and includes public comment and as the report is finalized.

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Executive Director