

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy

Public Meeting Notes

Date: January 14, 2020, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

Location: National Capital Planning Commission, Washington, DC

Attendees:

NCPC Staff Speakers: Meghan Dowker and Elizabeth Miller

Registered Attendees:

Nick Addamo	Duilio Passariello
Dan Avrit	David Selman
Delores Bushong	Tamika Turner-Graydon
Surabhi Dabir	Kimberly Vacca
Connie Fan	Kirby Vining
Kathy Ferger	Ruth Von Fleckenstein
George Koch	Mike Welther

Summary Proceedings: Elizabeth Miller providing opening remarks and Meghan Spigle Dowker presented the Monumental Core Streetscape Framework and Lighting Policy. This was followed by a question and answer period. These public meeting notes summarize the public's comments or statements and NCPC's responses.

Delores Bushong

- Member of streetlight task force and Mayoral streetlight advisory panel that testified at November commission meeting.
- Expressed concerns over the type of LEDs and light pollution. Questioned the amount of light or brightness of light.
- US Naval Observatory prefers lower light, lower kelvin, and lower lumens. The current amount of light interferes with their mission.
- When are comments made and when are they incorporated into and considered in the process?
- Will streetlights (under federal jurisdiction) have dimming capability? There have been other fixtures used, why were the Washington Globes selected as standard?
- Washington Globes produce a significant amount of up-light, are other manufacturers being considered?

NCPC:

- Comments are incorporated throughout the development of policy and guidelines.
- NCPC has met with the US Naval Observatory and understand their concerns with both color temperature and up-light.
- NCPC is coordinating with DDOT and will stay in sync with DDOT's timeline.
- NCPC is also coordinating with a variety of local and federal agencies such as AOC and NPS.
- It is unknown at this time if federal streetlights will have dimming capability.
- NCPC is currently conducting outreach to various NPS divisions to incorporate them into this process.
- Washington Globes and Twin-Twenties are considered a contributing resource to the character of various Historic Districts.
- NCPC wants to see the minimum amount of light to illuminate the shape of the Washington Globe without contributing significant up-light.

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy Public Meeting Notes

George Koch

- National Air and Space Museum has also had an observatory since 2009.
- Other agencies say that NCPC insists on use of Washington Globe fixtures. Is that correct? Is there a timeline for new fixtures?

NCPC:

- NCPC, CFA, and SHPO are all responsible for protecting globes as a historic resource.
- Changing fixtures would require a substantial Section 106 process.
- Changing all the streetlight fixtures is not currently in the federal or local scope of work.

Kathy Ferger

- The lines that power the bulb go through old gas line.
- A lighting engineer from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) said gas light was 7 watts, today the fixtures use a 200-watt bulb. Why has the brightness increased so significantly?

NCPC:

- More vehicles and increased vehicle speeds have contributed to more brightness today than in the past.
- It is also important for us to consider safety when discussing streetlight brightness.

Dan Avrit

- Preservation of the experience on the National Mall is a priority, it makes an impression.
- Regarding streetlight fixtures there was a SMECO pilot in Saint Charles, MD that was similar and useful to see on site. The pilot installation helped to see the difference.
- One type of fixture was an absolute glare bomb.
- It is possible to push a lighting manufacturer to create on site mock-ups.
- The LA example, from the presentation, is a great example of this visual difference.
- It is possible to push the lighting manufacturer to develop something much improved.

David Selman:

- The one pager handed out at this meeting mentions best practices regarding technology. What does technology refer to? There are a variety of technologies that can be and can be added to streetlight poles. Will additional technology require separate poles or be incorporated into existing poles?

NCPC

- The Streetscape Guide will address all elements of the streetscape, lighting is one component.
- Small-cell infrastructure will be incorporated at some point – once pole design and guidelines are finalized.
- Combining equipment together, as opposed to individual poles and attachments for everything, will help reduce streetscape clutter, which is important.

Meghan Dowker concluded question portion and summarized next steps

- There are many elements of the streetscape. After lighting we will move on to trees, then stormwater, then surface elements (paving, curb, and gutter), then street furnishings (benches, trash cans).
- This is a large undertaking; we are coordinating with 10 federal and local agencies and are working to balance a variety of needs.

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy

Public Meeting Notes

Date: January 15, 2020, 10:00am – 11:00am

Location: National Capital Planning Commission, Washington, DC

Attendees:

NCPC Staff Speakers: Meghan Dowker and Elizabeth Miller

Registered Attendees:

Nick Addamo	Duilio Passariello
Dan Avrit	David Selman
Delores Bushong	Tamika Turner-Graydon
Surabhi Dabir	Kimberly Vacca
Connie Fan	Kirby Vining
Kathy Ferger	Ruth Von Fleckenstein
John Fondersmith	Mike Welther
George Koch	

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Sally Blumenthal:

- Could you go over again the list of endorsers vs parties?
- How do local regulators fit into this? DCOP, DDOT, SHPO?
- How are you going to draw in local regulators, where rubber meets the road?
- Does this include small-cell for 5G?
- Are entities in Virginia such as DOD, Arlington National Cemetery, or the GW Parkway involved?
- At this stage this is a policy document. Will there be a separate public comment period on specifications? How detailed will they be?
- Is this just for streetlighting?

NCPC:

- Parties from 1992: AOC, DDOT, FHWA, NPS. Endorsers added in 2005: CFA, GSA, NCPC, NGA, SI
- One of the difficulties is that the federal and local land uses in the city have changed. Now, people are living in places where weren't before. People now live next to cobra head fixtures.
- DDOT is a party. DCOP will be joining the working group. NCPC is focuses on areas where there is federal interest.
- Beyond the monumental core there are federal interest areas within areas of local jurisdiction and uses. Therefore, there are two scopes of work. First, the monumental core inside the 1992 Streetscape Manual Boundary. Second, NCPC is working with DDOT and DCOP on select streets that extend beyond the 1992 Streetscape Manual Boundary.
- Small cell is separate project being managed by DDOT. Once the District finalizes the design, small cells will be included in manual.
- We have reached out to regional NPS superintendents. Next month, we will share our work with them – with the goal of improving consistency.
- We will proceed with specifications, once DDOT receives council approval on its P3 partner.

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy Public Meeting Notes

- We are considering American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official (AASHTO) and Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) standards, which have recommended foot-candles based on road type.
- We are looking at recommended foot-candle ranges and parameters for color temperature in Kelvins.
- Yes, we only plan to go develop specifications for street lighting.

Bonnie Garrity:

- Member of International Dark Skies Association and volunteer with streetlight task force.
- There is a concern that new LEDs will be much brighter than high pressure sodium. How will we do this in order to not increase brightness? How will we lower the brightness?
- There is concern over the Naval Observatory, the telescopes cannot filter out blue light. Light pollution major threat to their mission.
- The Washington Globe fixture is low hanging fruit. Manufactures are working to improve technology, such as Amerlux. They have an engine that drives light down, while maintaining glow. Whatever light exists will reflect down; it's challenging to keep light localized
- Are you working with a lighting designer?

Sally Blumenthal:

- Many of these issues can be addressed by fixtures themselves, especially height.
- The teardrop is the worst combination. They are too tall; they belong on a highway. With LEDs they are way too bright.
- The notion of shielding the globes could go a long way to addressing some of these issues.

NCPC

- The Washington Globes and Twin-Twenties are beautiful historic fixtures and are unlikely to be replaced.
- New LED technology and luminaire design creates opportunities to better control light, for maximum impact. We will only use 3,000 in accordance with DDOT criteria and on select streets; and will work with the DDOT to minimize up-lighting and to dim lights to reduce brightness where appropriate
- CFA also recommends a lighting designer.
- Due to the technical nature of streetlighting we are working with Stantec, a lighting consultant.

Duilio Passariello:

- Member of the DDOT streetlight advisory committee.
- We are at a point in LED technology to solve many of these issues.
- You mentioned brightness, the only way to address this is through optical design.
- The inside of the fixture must be designed to illuminate pavement without glaring.
- It is crucial that streetlighting is reduced so buildings are clear and pristine.
- Constitution is a difficult avenue to transit due to glare.
- Up-light is partially from light escaping out the top of fixture, but also an upward reflection of light that was cast down.

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy Public Meeting Notes

- Light that is going up out of the globe is low, this can be addressed through design and brightness projected down.

NCPC:

- Up-light and reflection of light is important in each setting.
- We are balancing how to manage safety, historic character, and numerous other factors.

Anne Lewis:

- Architect working on the preservation of city wildlife.
- We will soon be releasing 10 years of data.
- We have picked up approximately 3,000 birds in a 13-block area.
- The birds are attracted by urban glow.
- All lighting should be reduced to protect birds.
- Cities are passing regulations on lighting and bird safe design: NYC, SF, Cook County, Toronto.
- The trend is to consider birds and wildlife in terms of lighting plans.
- Most deal with buildings and streetlighting. Contemporary issues could include environment.
- There is an opportunity in terms of wildlife, especially bird life, which has declined 29% in last few years.
- Streetlights and public buildings are the biggest issue.
- Private buildings are largely compliant.

NCPC:

- NCPC is considering environmental impacts and looking at what other capital cities are doing.
- London dims or turns off light to mitigate environmental impacts.

John Fondersmith:

- Member of the Committee of 100.
- Is the presentation available online?

NCPC:

- We presented at the November Commission meeting. That presentation is available online, as well as a staff report.
- Today's presentation and video will also be posted online.
- Comments can be submitted there.

Anthony Delorenzo:

- In terms of sense of arrival, why are bridges excluded?
- Two areas of focus to further touch on: In relation to climate change, could we address energy use? How could renewable energy be used for these projects?
- Elaborating on safety, I appreciate minimal light. We could use a larger conversation to discuss at what lighting level people feel safe and ensuring the perception of safety.

Monumental Core Streetscape Project: Urban Design Streetscape Framework & Lighting Policy Public Meeting Notes

- Net zero parks could also be an energy goal.

NCPC:

- Bridges were considered for context. Only a few bridges are under federal jurisdiction. Most are within the city's jurisdiction, and we do coordinate with them.
- Our current work focuses streetscape objects and elements as opposed to systems.
- Our next task will focus on landscape and environmental systems, dealing with stormwater and heat island effect.
- It is unlikely that we will address hard infrastructure systems.
- We can broadly speak to energy savings from LED conversions.
- Regarding public safety in streetlighting, NCPC is looking at darker, under-lit areas and locations with pedestrian and vehicle conflicts.
- We are also looking at settings where we can maintain low lighting levels for environmental reasons.
- We are working to determine where we can go dimmer to save energy, still provide safety, and maintain views.

Ruth Robbins:

- Member of Friends of Chevy Chase Circle and member of NPS friends' group.
- We (the circle) are absolutely a gateway.
- The circle is federal property and contains a fountain. We want to add lights and we are looking to NCPC for guidance.
- When can we expect a streetscape companion review guide?

NCPC:

- We are just starting work on guidance.
- We expect completion roughly mid-2021.

Alison Taylor:

- Hord Copeland Macht-landscape architect.
- I'm interested in balancing light pollution and sustainability issues, such as heat island effect and solar reflectance index.
- If you put down SRI paving that met LEED standards it would be more reflective. This combined with more downlight can create a very complex lighting scenario.