

Lopez, Donna

From: Catharine Taylor [cpt@CatharineTaylor.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 16, 2013 4:34 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna
Subject: Lighting Ordinance, needed fine-tuning
Attachments: 1, 23 Berkeley Street, approaching sundown.JPG; 2, 23 Berkeley Street, at dusk.JPG; 3, 23 Berkeley Street, at nightfall.JPG; 4, 23 Berkeley Street, at night.JPG

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council,

My husband and I are very interested in the modifications to the Lighting Ordinance that are under consideration.

We live at 23 Berkeley Street in a Residential A-2 zoning district that abuts a Residential C-2 zoning district. Our nearest neighbor is a six-story rental apartment building, the Craigie Arms, at 24 Concord Avenue. The owners are generally good neighbors and we have no problems with our proximity. . . except for their lighting of the alley separating our buildings.

The lighting is mounted on the face of the building 30 to 40 feet up on the wall facing our and our and adjacent gardens. The fixtures are direct rather than indirect and glare into our windows, across our garden, and across Berkeley Street 150 feet away into the windows of our neighbors on the far side of the street at 22 and 24 Berkeley Street.

Recently 24 Concord's owners replaced sodium bulbs, which cast a yellow light, for bright white bulbs. This effectively turns our garden into a lunar landscape. Without expertise, I would estimate that they cast light perhaps twice as strong as the earlier ones, immeasurably brighter (actually more blinding, deer-in-the-headlights style) than the down-directed streetlights not too far away. I imagine the new bulbs more energy-efficient, but also know that installed in these ill-placed, inappropriately directed fixture, they make was always an unsatisfactory situation into a nightmare.

We would like to enjoy our garden after dark, but these lights turn a slightly bucolic oasis into something resembling the infield at Fenway, neither pleasant nor healthy (unless you're batting in homers). Do I have to say we (any more than our neighbors) don't like having their beams dazzling and reflecting through our windows all night?

The solution is simple: to follow what seems to have been the intent of the 7.20 Illumination section of the City Ordinance, installing indirect fixtures that light only the alley, not the rest of the neighborhood. These would be just as (if not more) effective if

they were located at six or eight feet from the ground, beaming downward. They would also diminish night sky pollution.

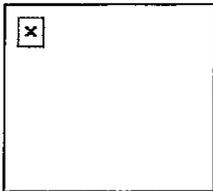
We fully appreciate that the effective lighting is essential for security. Unfortunately, excess, ill-considered lighting in this situation not only disturbs the residents of neighboring properties, it also casts a blinding light so unpleasant that vision is impaired; one is likely to blink away from the light and in doing so perhaps overlook suspicious activity or even where one was putting one's feet.

Is there a modification to the Ordinance that would require neighbors to install down-directed fixtures at a more appropriate height – 6–8 feet or so -- and with effective but not dazzling lamping? (Be good if energy efficiency were included in the requirements, no?)

The attached photographs show the lighting conditions and may help convince you how important it is to refine the language of the Ordinance so that we all may sleep better, enjoy the evenings, and not pollute the sky overhead.

Yours sincerely,

Catharine Taylor



Catharine P. Taylor
23 Berkeley Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel.: 617-547 1615
Cell: 617-818 6479
E-mail: cpt@CatharineTaylor.com