

A New Hue Turns Streets and Moods Blue

Opinion by John Peterman

“We invested our own money to create a certain ambiance for our community to recreate the original warm glow of gas lamps that lit our neighborhood at the turn of the twentieth century. Now, without any input from residents, the city has decided to make these changes out of the blue (pun intended).”

John Peterman lives in Lowry Hill.

As the sun sets over Lowry Hill, East Isles and Kenwood, a new type of light illuminates our streets — and not everyone is happy about it.

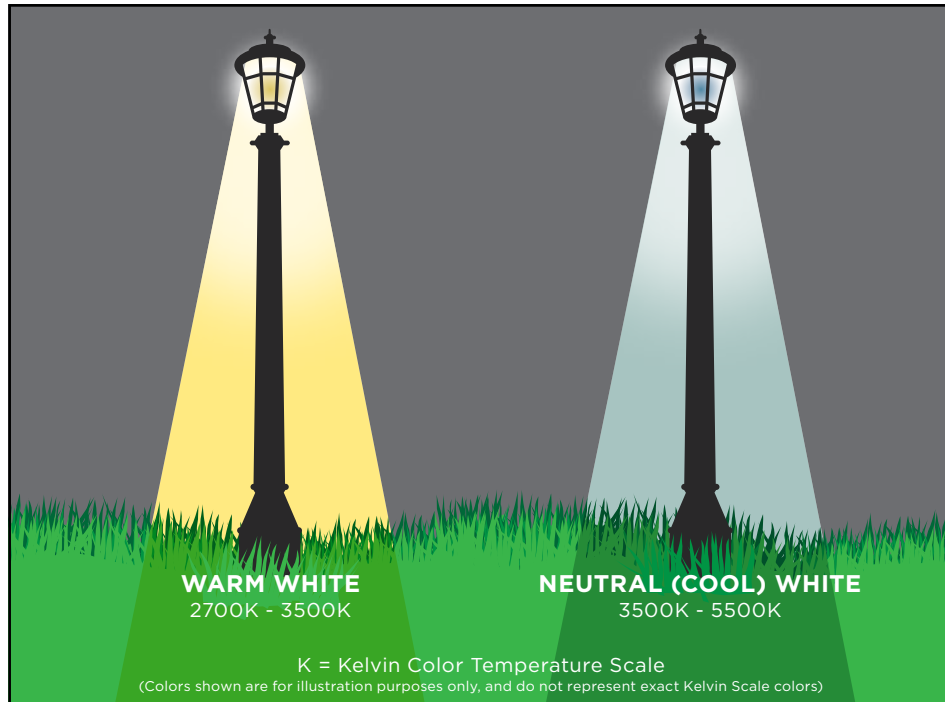
Minneapolis Public Works has recently begun replacing its existing 2700k warm white street light bulbs with 4000k LED bright daylight bulbs, a move that has caused some neighborhood residents to feel left in the dark.

Neighbors have expressed frustration with the new blueish bulbs, which they say create a stark, clinical atmosphere that is at odds with the character of our community.

Warm hues are historic and homey.

The warm, golden glow of the old bulbs is an integral part of what makes our neighborhood feel like home.

In fact, when the new lighting was installed in 2005, a survey of East Isles residents showed that 78% rated the appearance of



New cool tone bulbs replace warm hues which has angered many neighbors. (Illustration Christopher Bohnet)

the lights as either “good” or “very good.”

As many longtime residents will recall, these streetlights were paid for by the neighborhoods themselves, using Neighborhood Revitalization Program funds, commonly referred to as NRP.

We invested our own money to create a certain ambiance for our community to recreate the original warm glow of gas lamps that lit our neighborhood at the turn of the twentieth century.

Now, without any input from residents, the city has decided to make these changes out of the blue (pun intended). Even more frustrating is the patchwork appearance of these mixed light colors, which will continue for the next 10-12 years.

I have talked to several residents who have attempted to voice their concerns to Ward 7 Council Member Katie Cashman, but their calls have gone unreturned. I personally left three voicemail messages with her office over the last two months, and I, too, have not received a call back.

This is in stark contrast to the responsiveness residents received from Council Member Lisa Goodman and her staff. It's always frustrating for residents to feel

like their elected officials aren't listening.

Bureaucratic Blues

I reached out to the Public Works Department, and they spoke to me about this decision to standardize the city's street light bulbs. As suspected, the decision was made with efficiency and cost-effectiveness in mind.

A department employee said that by using the same bright daylight bulbs throughout Minneapolis, they can streamline their maintenance and replacement processes. It may take some getting used to, but in the long run, this will be more cost-efficient for the city as a whole, the employee explained.

As the debate over street light bulbs continues, one thing is clear: the warm, inviting glow of Minneapolis' neighborhoods may be a thing of the past.

For many residents, that's a bitter pill to swallow. Only time will tell if the city's techno blue-toned future will be embraced by all — or if some will be left longing for the warm, familiar candlelight of years past.



Hill & Lake Press

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