



Illuminating San Diego

San Diego in the Dark Ages

If you take an evening stroll in the cities of Los Angeles or Phoenix, you may notice a major difference from San Diego: well-lit streets. San Diego is among the nation's darkest cities, a reason many residents cite for not walking more or using public transit.

Walk*SanDiego* created this brochure to help neighborhoods understand why their streets aren't better lit, what the current lighting standards are, and how neighborhoods can self-fund the installation of more street lights.

We encourage all neighborhoods to consider working toward greater nighttime visibility — one more way we can all leave San Diego a more walkable, livable place than we found it.



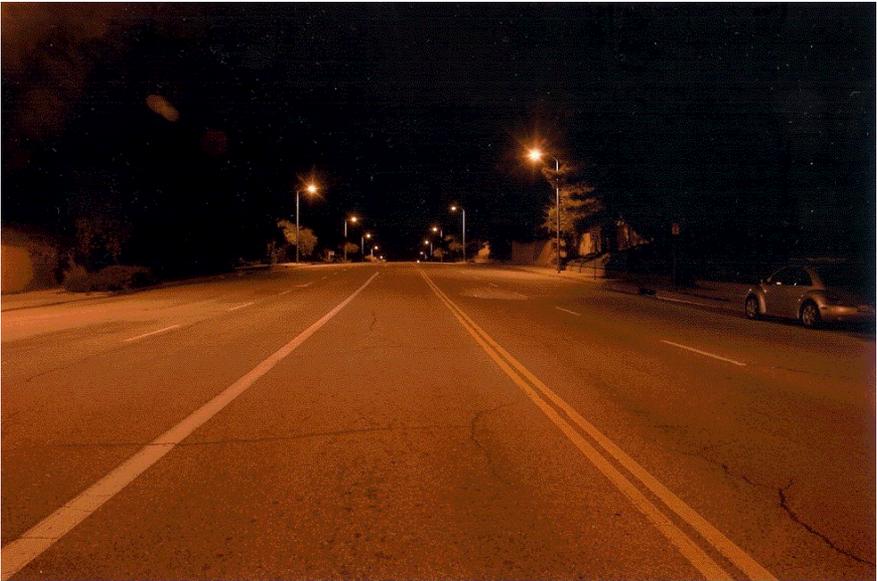
www.walksandiego.org



Why Is street lighting important?

The primary benefit of good street lighting is increased safety for drivers and pedestrians. In cities where lighting has been systematically improved, pedestrian fatalities have been reduced 30-80%, and total traffic crashes have been reduced 10-44%.¹

In 2003, 307 pedestrians in San Diego were hit by vehicles during dark hours.² Many of these tragedies could be avoided with better nighttime visibility. Equally important, adequate street lighting would encourage more walking, greater use of the transit system, and provide “eyes on the street” — an effective deterrent against crime.



A properly lit street provides safety for all while avoiding light pollution, light trespass, and glare.

¹ Public Lighting Needs. A Special Report for the Committee on Public Works United States Senate and United States House of Representatives by the Joint Committee of the Institute of Traffic Engineers and the Illuminating Engineering Society.

² Source: County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency, Emergency Medical Services.



Why Is San Diego so dark?

In both the past and now, San Diego's residential street lighting requirements for new developments have been significantly less strict than what is required in other cities. Although the city is slowly adding new street lights to improve already built neighborhoods, at the present rate of funding, it will require more than 100 years to meet the need. In 2005, only \$200,000 was allocated to install new lighting, while the backlog of requests exceeds \$20 million.¹

The vast majority of San Diego neighborhoods have street lights spaced close to 600 feet, which provides a much lower lighting level than what is recommended by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI). No systematic study has been done to determine the city's total lighting deficit and the associated cost for improvements.



Unlike most neighborhoods in other U.S. cities, most San Diego streets are poorly lit. San Diego is among the nation's darkest cities.

¹ Source: Transportation Department, City of San Diego



What is considered good street lighting?

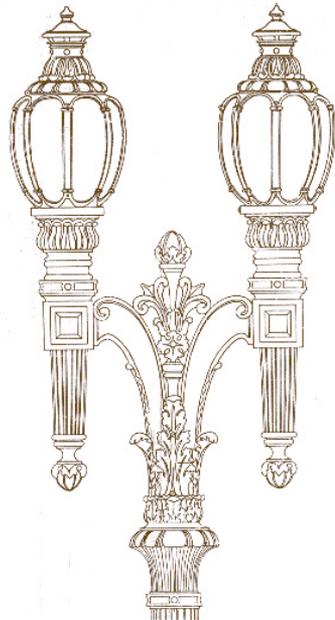
Applying the ANSI’s current standards (RP-8) for roadway lighting results in a spacing of 150 feet or less for continuous pedestrian lighting when using the 30-foot tall “cobra” style street lights typically found in residential neighborhoods. This is the spacing standard employed by most American cities. At this spacing, pedestrians can see and be seen at a distance and make out obstructions in their path.

What are the current street lighting standards in San Diego?

Historically, street lights were installed at intersections and mid-block where the block length exceeded 600 feet. Unfortunately, lights spaced 600 feet apart — the length of two football fields – offer little help to a pedestrian.

In the 1990’s, the city’s spacing standard was shortened to 300 feet, and 150 feet within 1/4 mile of all transit stops. However, no new funds were allocated to implement these policies in existing neighborhoods, or to even determine the number of non-compliant gaps.

In 2002, the city changed from low pressure (yellow) to high pressure (white) sodium vapor bulbs, except within 30 miles of the Mount Palomar Observatory. White lighting greatly improves color rendition and nighttime ambience.





What about light pollution?

Improperly designed street light fixtures create light pollution, light trespass, and glare. Light pollution is light directed into the sky. Light trespass is light directed into adjacent properties. Glare is light directed into the eyes of pedestrians and motorists. A properly designed fixture, known as a full-cutoff fixture, directs all of the light to the pavement, eliminating these problems and providing more usable light. The City of San Diego's current street light standard requires full-cutoff fixtures.

Should neighborhoods who don't want street lights be forced to accept them?

Other than meeting current lighting standards, neighborhoods that have no interest in installing additional street lighting are not required to do so. However, community groups that represent their local residents should consider the impact of this decision on the elderly, disabled, children, and others who may not be well-represented.

Wild about MAD's

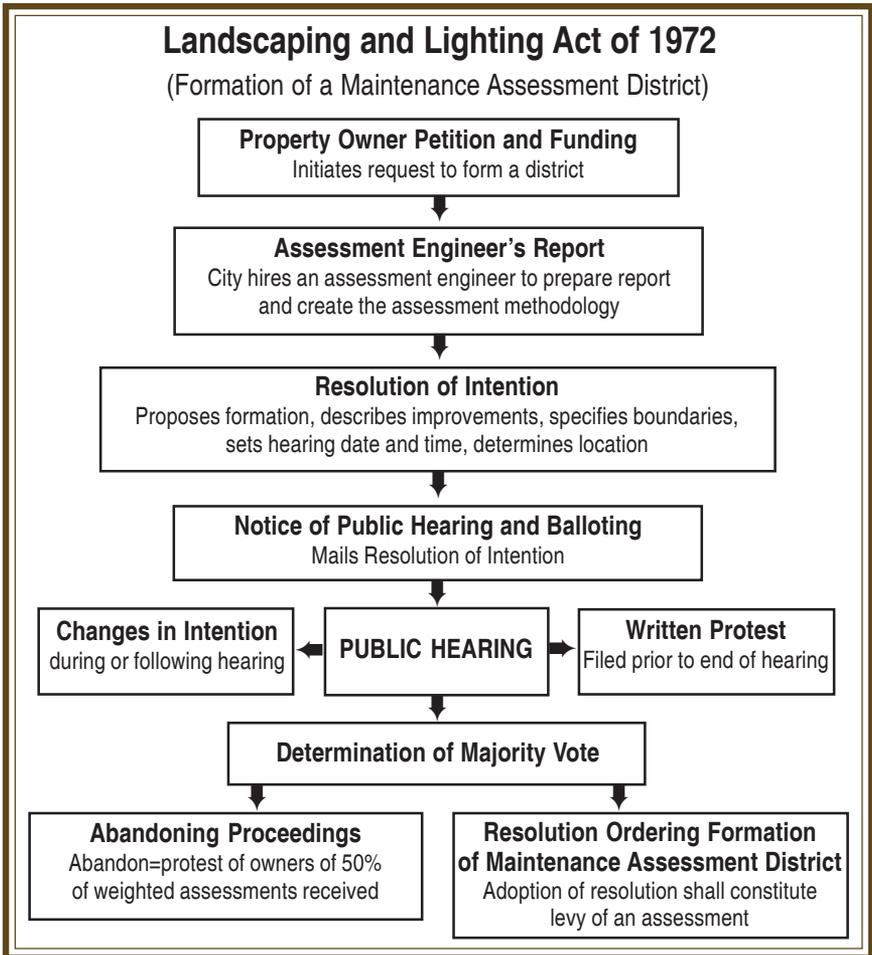
So, with few street lights and no funding for more, what should residents of dark neighborhoods do? Fortunately, there is a self-funding option available — the Maintenance Assessment District, or MAD.

The remainder of this brochure describes how MAD's are formed, typical costs, and how to get started. As proponents of greater pedestrian safety, *WalkSanDiego* urges all of the city's recognized planning groups to take advantage of this funding mechanism and work to brighten the city's dark streets.



What exactly is a MAD?

A MAD is a property assessment district formed by a majority vote of property owners in a clearly defined geographical area for the express purpose of improving street lighting, landscaping, or other street improvements. The approval process involves identifying the boundaries of the district, determining the cost, and obtaining a majority vote of the property owners. Typically, it takes five to ten months to form a MAD. The diagram shows the major steps in forming a MAD.





Will the city help in forming a MAD?

Yes. The initiating party for forming a MAD pays for the preparation of an *Assessment Engineer's Report*, the cost of balloting within the district, administrative costs, and other incidental expenses. The San Diego City Council has created a *MAD Formation Fund* of \$150,000 to help finance these start-up costs. If needed, a maximum of \$50,000 is available once sufficient community interest has been demonstrated. Loans from this fund are repaid from the district's first year of assessments. The city's MAD policy (No. 100-21) can be found at www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/pdf/madformationcouncilpolicy.pdf.

How much will it cost?

The cost to improve street lighting in a residential area varies due to factors such as whether power lines are overhead or underground, type of street light pole and placement, lot width, street width, and method selected to determine the cost per lot. At WalkSanDiego's request, the city's Parks and Recreation Department developed a "typical" MAD cost scenario:²

- *Cost for houses served with overhead electric service:*

First year cost = \$1,200 to \$1,600/lot (includes MAD formation and installation)

Future years cost = \$60 to \$100/lot (ongoing maintenance)

- *For houses served with underground electric service:*

First year cost = \$2,200 to \$2,600/lot (includes MAD formation and installation)

Future years cost = \$60 to \$100/lot (ongoing maintenance)

²Assumes 2005 costs, 50-foot wide lots, 30-foot wide streets, 600-foot blocks, 150-foot street light spacing, and property assessments based upon lot width. Inflation was not considered in future year assessments. The District area was assumed to be 100 blocks. In general, formation costs (initial engineering, balloting, etc.) will be lower as the size of the district increases since the costs will be spread among a larger number of lots.

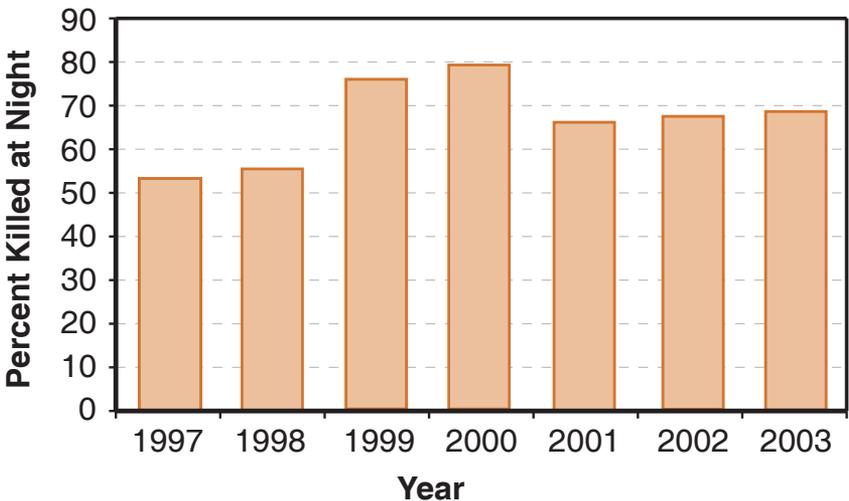


How can I form a MAD in my area?

Contact your City Council member’s office and ask to speak to someone about improving street lighting. (Find out which council member represents your neighborhood at www.sannet.gov/directories/government.shtml or call City Information at 619-236-5555.) Discuss your lighting ideas with the Council representative and also ask for contact information for your local Community Planning Committee (CPC). Then discuss the issue with the CPC chair, ask for their support, and ask to have the topic put on a planning meeting agenda.

For additional information on forming a MAD, visit www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/general-info/mad.shtml, or call the MAD Business Manager at 619-533-6778.

Pedestrians Killed from Car Crashes During Nighttime Hours



WalkSanDiego extends thanks to City of San Diego staff in the preparation of this brochure: Andrew Fields, Parks and Recreation Department; Samir Hajjiri, Planning Department; and Frank Yates, Transportation Department.