



Citizens Association of Georgetown Public Safety

Light Up Georgetown to Deter Crime

**by John Rentzepis & Rich Hinds,
Co-chairs, CAG Public Safety Committee**

CAG urges all residents to “leave the porch light on” to deter nighttime crime. A significant increase in illumination of our neighborhood could have an immediate and noticeable impact on crime.

Dark Streets Attract Crime

Unfortunately, portions of many Georgetown blocks are dark at night, due to poor street lighting and negligible front door lighting. This can make residents and pedestrians feel vulnerable. For example, a resident wrote: “I was held up at gunpoint a number of years ago on Dumbarton Street at 10 pm. There were two of us (both males in our 40s) walking together after having dinner on Wisconsin Avenue. I noticed later that Dumbarton Street was particularly dark at night, with very few porch lights turned on. A month or two after the hold-up, while working with ex-offenders, I was told by a client ‘when we are short on money, we look for the darkest streets in Georgetown and find a hit or two.’”

Keep Your Front and Rear Lights On at Night

Manually turning your lights on and off each night /morning is a chore, and easily forgotten. Two better options exist:

1. The first is to replace the conventional on/off switch with an automatic timer switch:
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Intermatic-ST01-Adjusting-Switch-Timer/dp/B005H3AXKM> (heavy duty, \$33)
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Intermatic-EJ500-Indoor-Digital-Switch/dp/B0088LMEVQ> (light duty & does not adjust for sunrise/sunset, \$20).
2. The second is to add a photo-sensor attachment between the fixture socket and bulb. This turns the light on/off automatically with each sunset/sunrise:
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Philips-429746-Compact-Fluorescent-14-Watt/dp/B00B4CPKWQ> (\$8)
 - <http://www.homedepot.com/p/GE-Automatic-Light-Control-18265/203716763>(\$12).

The Philips compact fluorescent light (CFL) listed above has a photo-sensor built into the bulb. The GE automatic light control listed above, on the other hand, is a photo-sensor product that screws into your light fixture and requires a separate bulb. For both products, you need to measure the space in the fixture to ensure that the photo-sensor and bulb will fit. Also ensure that any photo-sensor or photo-sensor light you purchase will fit the existing socket of your light fixture. Timers will always work and installation is relatively straightforward, but you may want to have an electrician do the job.

For residents with alleys, consider adding a motion-activated light mounted up high. Such a light is particularly effective if combined with a camera. For more



information on interior and exterior cameras, see the CAG report: “Information on Security Cameras” (available at www.cagtown.org or from the CAG office).

Outside Lighting – Cost

It is cost-effective to replace incandescent lights with LED bulbs. For residents who do not wish to install a timer or photo-sensor, but wish to keep their light(s) on 24/7, this would provide a considerable reduction in operating expense. Rick Cunningham has calculated the following:

- Replace a conventional 60-watt bulb with an 8-watt LED bulb of equivalent light output. The bulb is \$3 to \$10 at Lowes/Home Depot. The annual electricity cost if the bulb is on 24 hours/day is ~\$7; the annual electricity cost if the light is on 10 hours/day is ~\$3.
- Replace a conventional 100-watt bulb with a 17-watt LED bulb of equivalent light output. The bulb is \$15 to \$20 at Lowes/Home Depot. The annual electricity cost if the light is on 24 hours/day is just ~\$15; the annual cost if the light is on 10 hours/day is ~\$6.

Outside Lighting – Installation

Replacing an incandescent bulb with an LED bulb is something most homeowners can do themselves if the exterior fixture is easily accessible. Installation of a photo-sensor is also a good option if it will fit in your exterior fixture. Installation of a timer switch can be done by anyone comfortable replacing a light switch, or quickly by a licensed electrician. Installation of a light fixture at the back of a property with a motion detector is a job best left to an electrician. You can find or ask for recommendations for an electrician on the CAG-sponsored Georgetown Forum listserv. One resident reports being always satisfied with electrical work by Becker Electric in Alexandria. Or you can visit Consumer Checkbook (checkbook.org). To find out more about the Georgetown Forum listserv, or to join the Forum, visit www.cagtown.org.

. . . AND ABOUT THE STREET LIGHTS

Making sure street lights are working is also important to the safety of residents and pedestrians on that block. There is an established process in DC to obtain city services. Call 311 (the Mayor's City-wide Call Center) or go online to <http://311.dc.gov> and report the need for service. Precise information has to be supplied on the location of the problem, including the nearest street address of the light, tree, etc. You will be assigned a reference number to track or check online for the status of the service. We will all work together on these issues – but reporting a problem on your block first to 311 is the best approach to getting the problem solved.