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# Dorchester Reporter



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## New street lights get applause

By [Gintautas Dumcius](#)

Apr. 14, 2011

A pilot retrofitting program aimed at shedding more light on Dorchester's neighborhood streets is expanding city-wide, Menino administration officials say.

Over the course of the winter, the city installed 2,500 new "cobrahead"-style street lights on residential streets in various neighborhoods, including St. Mark's, Uphams Corner and Codman Square. Other areas included Allston Brighton, Jamaica Plain and Roxbury.

The new lights, which were installed with the help of power company NSTAR and energy efficiency block grant funds, use longer-lasting, 39-watt light emitting diodes (LEDs), allowing for greater night-time visibility because the distribution of light is more even in its focus on the street, and involving less energy usage.

City officials estimate they save 70 percent on their energy bills, and \$2 million a year from switching out from the current "cobrahead" street lights, which use 175-watt mercury vapor.

"It's a great return on investment for us," said Jim Hunt, Mayor Thomas Menino's chief of environment and energy. "We're so pleased that we are taking it to scale."

Out of the city's 64,000 street lights, about 40,000 are "cobraheads."

The city is starting with the 20,000 least efficient "cobrahead" lights this year. Hunt said the project was originally piloted on residential and neighborhood arterial streets only. The expansion will hit major thoroughfares, but historic streets won't be included.

Local residents say they have noticed a difference. "It's like night and day on Myrtlebank," said Sean Weir, head of the Cedar Grove Civic Association. "For the most part, I think it's great."

Hunt attended the civic association's Tuesday night meeting at St. Brendan's Church to offer a demonstration of the brighter lights.

City officials say they worked with St. Mark's Area Main Street, the BOLD Teens, and the Codman Square Neighborhood Council on the installation.

The expansion was announced last week at a City Hall press conference in which state environmental officials handed over a \$1 million check to the city. It is the largest grant allowed under the state's "Green Communities program" and can be used for projects that reduce energy use.

The money will also go towards "auto igniters" in 600 natural gas streetlights so the lights aren't on all day and also to lighting controls at municipal ballparks, among other environmentally-based projects.

"The big challenge will be this building," Menino said, referring to City Hall, which he called a "concrete bunker." Added Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Richard Sullivan in a statement: "The city of Boston has demonstrated leadership in its commitment to energy efficiency

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