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SECTION: D.C. Extra; T09**LENGTH:** 783 words**HEADLINE:** District Letters to the Editor**BODY:**

A week ago Sunday night, I biked home to find flashing lights at the intersection of Nash Street and Kenilworth Avenue NE. On a dark stretch of pavement, detectives with flashlights searched for debris, clues to a hit-and-run accident that had taken place a few hours earlier. A young woman, I learned, had been struck and killed as she crossed the street.

The one-way, one-lane service road that the woman had been crossing runs next to Kenilworth Avenue and is a buffer between the highway and the residential streets of Eastland Gardens and Kenilworth. Though the speed limit is 25 mph, the road looks much like the highway beside it, and cars normally go considerably faster than the posted limit.

A series of pedestrian bridges, one of which the young woman had presumably used or was about to use, allow walking access to the Deanwood Metro station and to stores and bus stops on the opposite side of the highway. With the speed of traffic on the service road and the high volume of schoolchildren and other neighbors who must cross this road daily to use these pedestrian bridges, many residents find it surprising that the area has not seen more fatalities.

In the 24 hours after the accident, residents complained of long-standing problems with streetlights along this section of the Kenilworth Avenue service road. They do not work and have not for some time. This puts nighttime pedestrians at further risk, having to cross the street in relative darkness in an area infamous for speeding vehicles.

It seems that complaints about the useless streetlights have been surfacing for a long time, yet residents have seen no response. I called the mayor's Citywide Call Center on June 22 to report one of this string of lights that is unlit at the top of my own street. It is still not working.

While doing research on my neighborhood, I found that lack of light and lack of municipal response are not new for this area. On March 27, 1911, The Washington Post published a letter written by John H. Paynter, a Deanwood Heights resident.

In the letter, he alleges that a pedestrian was struck and killed by a streetcar as the person attempted to walk home at night along an unlit stretch of roadway. He goes on to decry the "scant consideration" the municipality gives to the area's problems.

"The residents of this section, from Minnesota Avenue to Chesapeake Junction, are almost entirely Negroes.

"Whether this has operated as a restraining influence in the withholding of essential municipal improvements cannot be positively alleged; yet, we are confronted with the fact that other sections, not nearly so thickly settled, have every advantage of lights and roads to insure safety of travel to the pedestrian as well as to vehicles of whatever motive power. The life that went out Saturday night is one more protest against the neglect from which this far Northeast section is suffering."

Correctly or not, residents in this corner of Northeast, on "the wrong side of the river," still perceive the government as slow to react to their needs and complaints, slow to act to correct blatant problems. More than 90 years later, things still get done around here, it seems, only by long and hard complaining, or by tragedy.

Paynter ends his letter: "Perhaps if there had been lights along the railway the sacrifice of a life on Saturday night might have been avoided. . . . Meanwhile the people suffer and are killed."

Perhaps if there had been lights in the 1200 block of Kenilworth Avenue on Nov. 9, a life might have been spared. Let's hope that we residents of Eastland Gardens and Kenilworth finally get the attention we need in the form of working streetlights and a workable solution to a chronic problem of high-speed cars in a residential pedestrian area.

Meanwhile, the people walk and wait in darkness.

Joe Lapp

Kenilworth

Editor's note: **Arlene Carter**, 46, was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver about 5:45 p.m. Nov. 9 in the crosswalk on Kenilworth Avenue NE. Earl A. Johnson, 32, surrendered to police the next day and was charged with negligent homicide.

Bill Rice, spokesman for the city's Department of Transportation, said streetlights in the area were out of order when the incident occurred. Lights there are "series lights" similar to those in other parts of the District. When one goes out, all do. The system is about 50 years old, and the city can no longer buy replacement parts, although it is trying to cobble together a temporary loop with parts no longer used by the National Park Service, Rice said.

The city intends to replace the streetlights as part of the repaving of Kenilworth Avenue, a project the city hopes to begin within a year.

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Document 1 of 2. [NEXT](#) »

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