



## THE SOCIETY FOR THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY

### **5G Mobile Telecommunications Infrastructure, # 27570**

#### **Public Design Commission Hearing, August 10, 2020**

The vast majority of New York City lampposts are an adaptation of Donald Deskey's "cobra head" design from 1958, and given their modernist and utilitarian character, the proposed 5G equipment and "shroud" are a minimally acceptable design response to a putative need. These 5G objects are not "small and unobtrusive," but at least they derive from a similar design vocabulary as the current street light models, and hopefully will become obsolete in their turn.

The proposed fixtures are not appropriate in every location, and the roster of locations requires modification now. As a matter of procedure, it is absolutely insufficient to call for "additional review" by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Theoretically, Charter Section 864 h might enable LPC intervention, but obviously, any negative decision could be problematic as a matter of real world politics, affording a rich opportunity for the regulated sectors to portray the LPC as an enemy of progress, if it fulfills its mission.

Since 1997 when they received landmark designation, it has been established government policy to protect 62 original historic street lights which have survived, as documented in an extensive and wonderfully interesting historic designation report numbered LP-1961. Since that time, some of these designs, notably the Bishop's Crook, have been replicated commercially and erected in historic districts to complement the original streetscape.

There is no way that it could ever be appropriate to attach the proposed equipment to frail, ancient, individually designated original structures that are currently preserved by law for their beauty and for the city history they convey. Equally, it would be irresponsible to destroy the carefully restored and reconstructed streetscapes of historic districts—major tourist attractions and locations where real estate values have soared—by disfiguring the historic lamp replicas that complete a living civic picture of New York's past.

All designated historic and historic-replica lampposts should be removed from the listing of available sites for 5G equipment before the equipment is approved. The vast majority of available sites would remain, and historic preservation could be ensured from the outset, without any wasteful and likely ineffective bureaucratic wrangling.

Submitted by Christabel Gough, Secretary

August 7, 2020