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11-19-07

**A statement by Bert Ely to the Alexandria City Council** (public hearing)  
November 19, 2007

**The placement of street lights in the 300 block of South Lee Street**

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, I am Bert Ely, an Old Town resident. I am here to speak about the process by which the City determined where new “Gadsby style” street lights will be placed in the 300 block of South Lee Street. My interest in this matter arises from the fact that my friend,Carolyn Roehrenbeck, lives at 313 South Lee and from my work studying street-light placements as a member of an Old Town Civic Association committee developing waterfront-area planning standards. However, I am speaking this evening only on behalf of Carolyn and myself.

Six diagrams attached to my statement illustrate the street-light placements in an eight-block area bounded by Prince, Pitt, Wolfe, and Union. As Figure 1 shows, there is a mix of Gadsby-style street lights and modern, high-up lights in the area which have been positioned in a decidedly irregular pattern paralleling the haphazard placement of street lights throughout Old Town. However, as the green diagonal lines in Figure 2 show, there has been some success in placing the new Gadsby-style lights in an alternating side of the street or zigzag pattern, as now exists in the 200, 300, and 400 blocks of Prince Street and the 200 block of South Lee. Not only does this pattern provide a reasonably even distribution of light, but it also provides an aesthetically pleasing look consistent with Old Town’s historic appearance.

The zigzag light pattern should have continued into the 300 block of South Lee in connection with utility undergrounding in that block, and would have had there not been a last-minute, unannounced change in light placements. Figure 3 shows the present street-light placement in that block. Figure 4 shows the October 2006 light-placement plan, which clearly was inappropriate. After consultations with residents of the block, the City adopted a revised plan (Figure 5), dated September 29. That plan clearly continued the zigzag pattern of the 200 block of South Lee while providing an even distribution of light along the 300 block – this is the plan that should have been followed!

However, unbeknownst to most residents in the 300 block, that plan was scrapped for the October 23 placement pattern, as shown in Figure 6. As you can see, the zigzag pattern was broken and the distance between two lights was increased significantly. Presumably, this change was made because two residents objected to lights being placed in front of or near their homes. It is my understanding that one resident, Mr. Jon Wilbor, paid at least \$20,000 to the City to facilitate this change. The process by which this dark-of-the-night change took place was highly improper, at best.

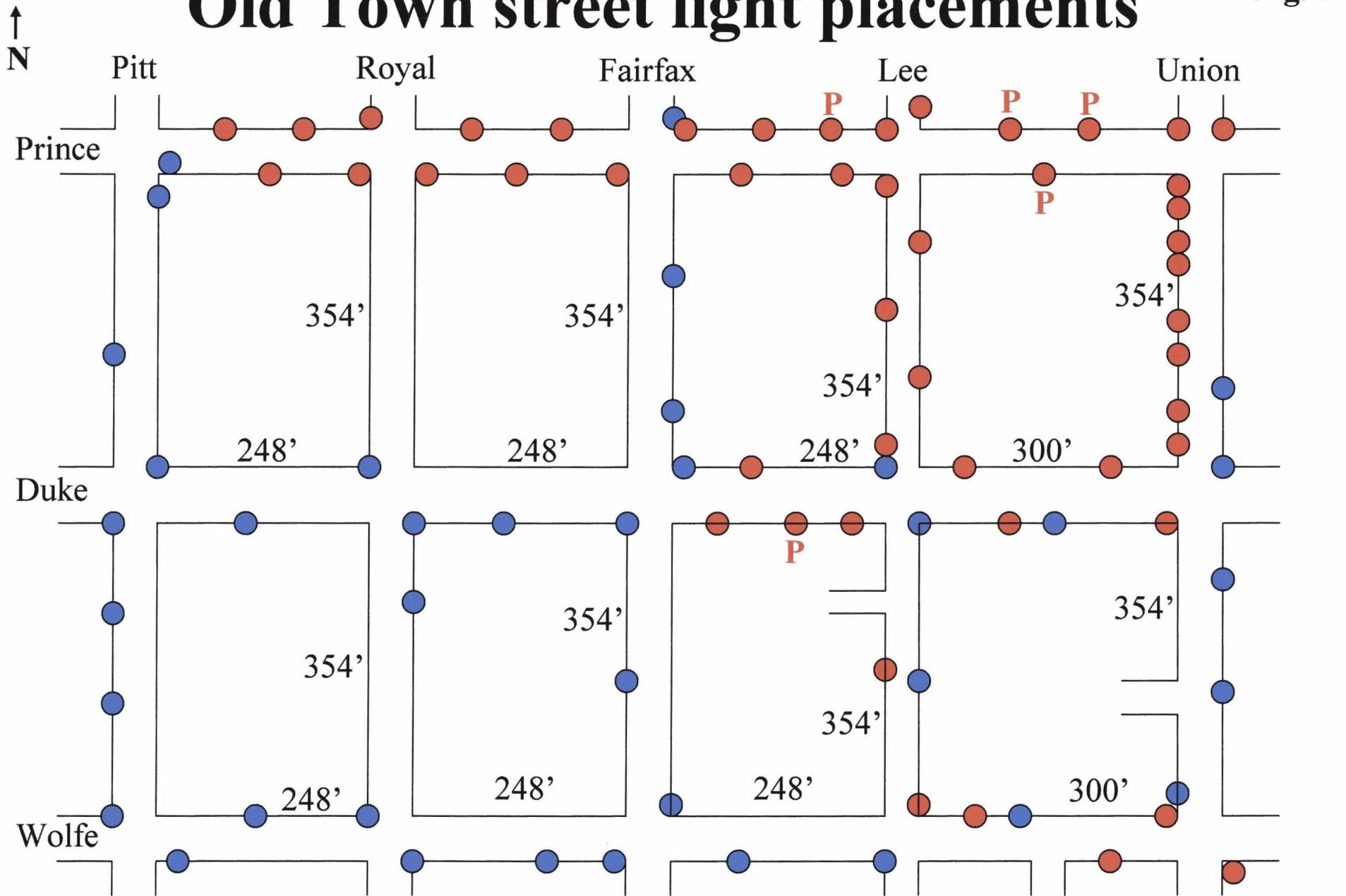
To relieve the City’s forthcoming revenue squeeze, perhaps Council should let residents bid to have a street light placed in front of their home, or not placed there, but if so, this should be an open bidding process in which all affected residents can compete. Perhaps someone in the 300 block would have bid more than \$20,000 to dictate a street-light placement. If so, the City left some money on the table.

If street-light placements are not put up for auction, then a consistent pattern and open process for placing lights should be followed, a process whereby lights are placed for the common good and the aesthetic appearance of Old Town, with appropriate shielding provided to keep light out of the windows of nearby homes. I recommend that Council adopt that process, and start by directing the City Manager to place the lights along the 300 block of South Lee in accordance with the sensible, logical September 29 plan.

Thank you for your time this evening. I welcome your questions.

Fig. 1

# Old Town street light placements

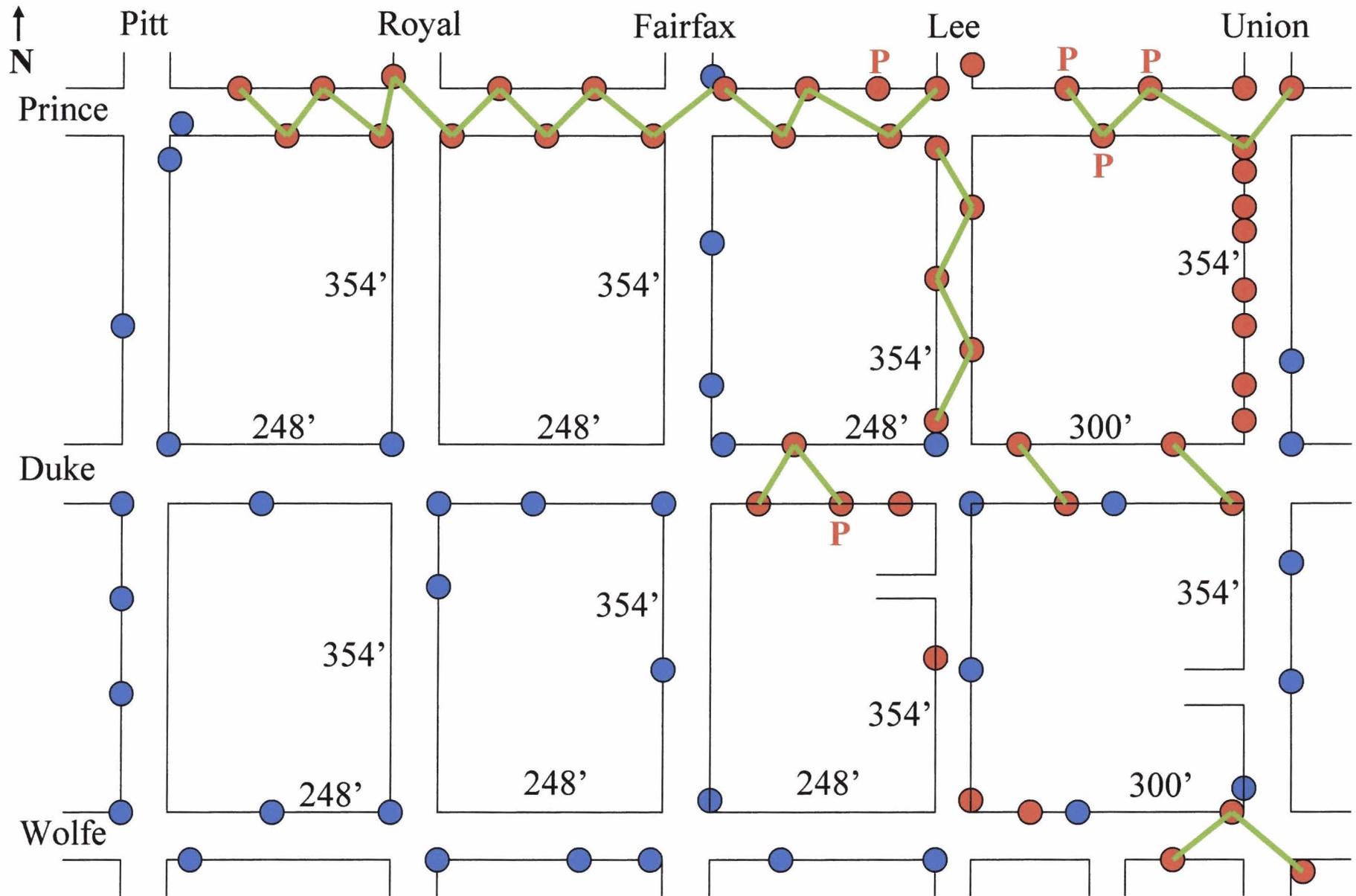


Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P    Modern, high-up street light: ●

# Symmetry of new light placements

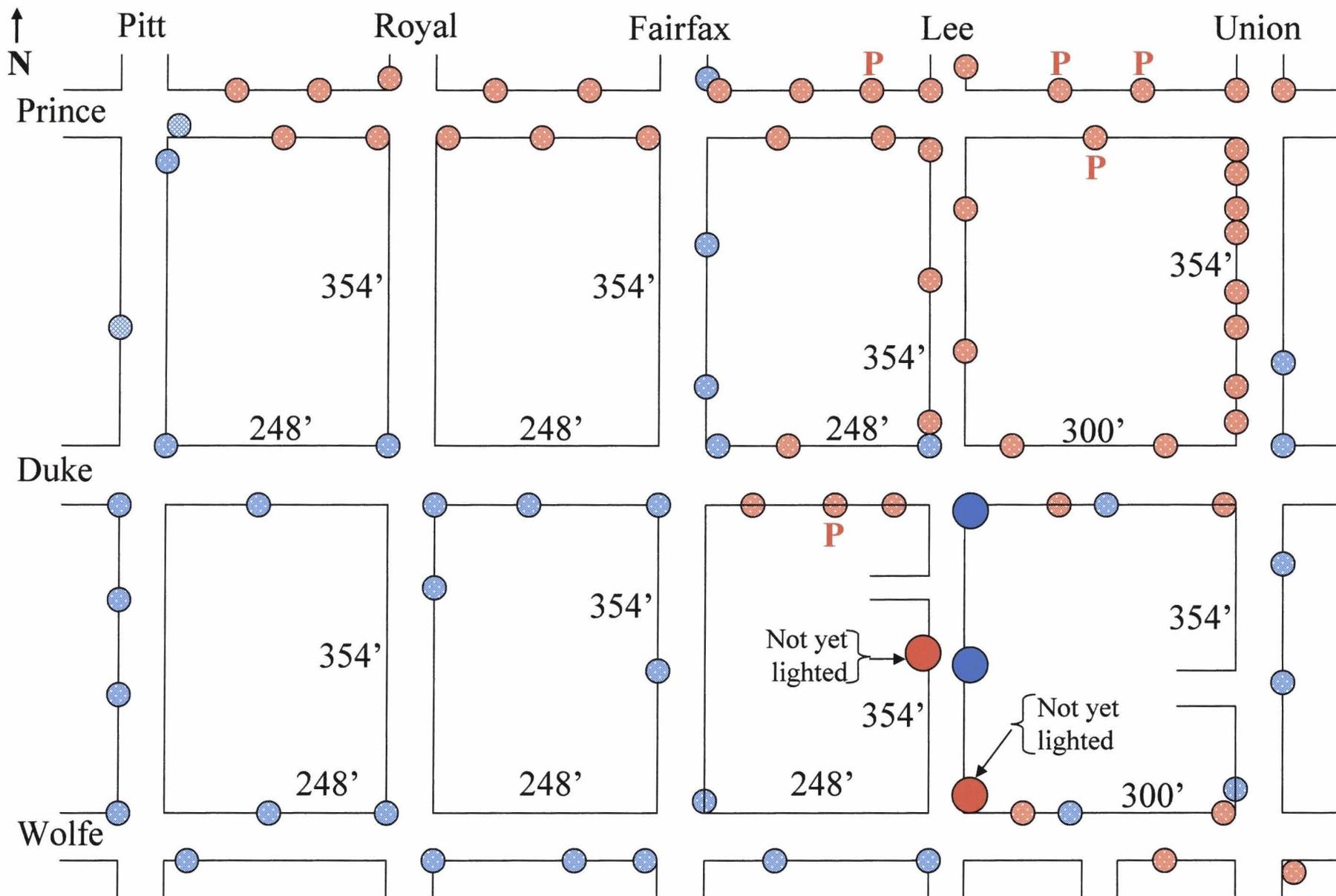
Fig. 2



Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P Modern, high-up street light: ●

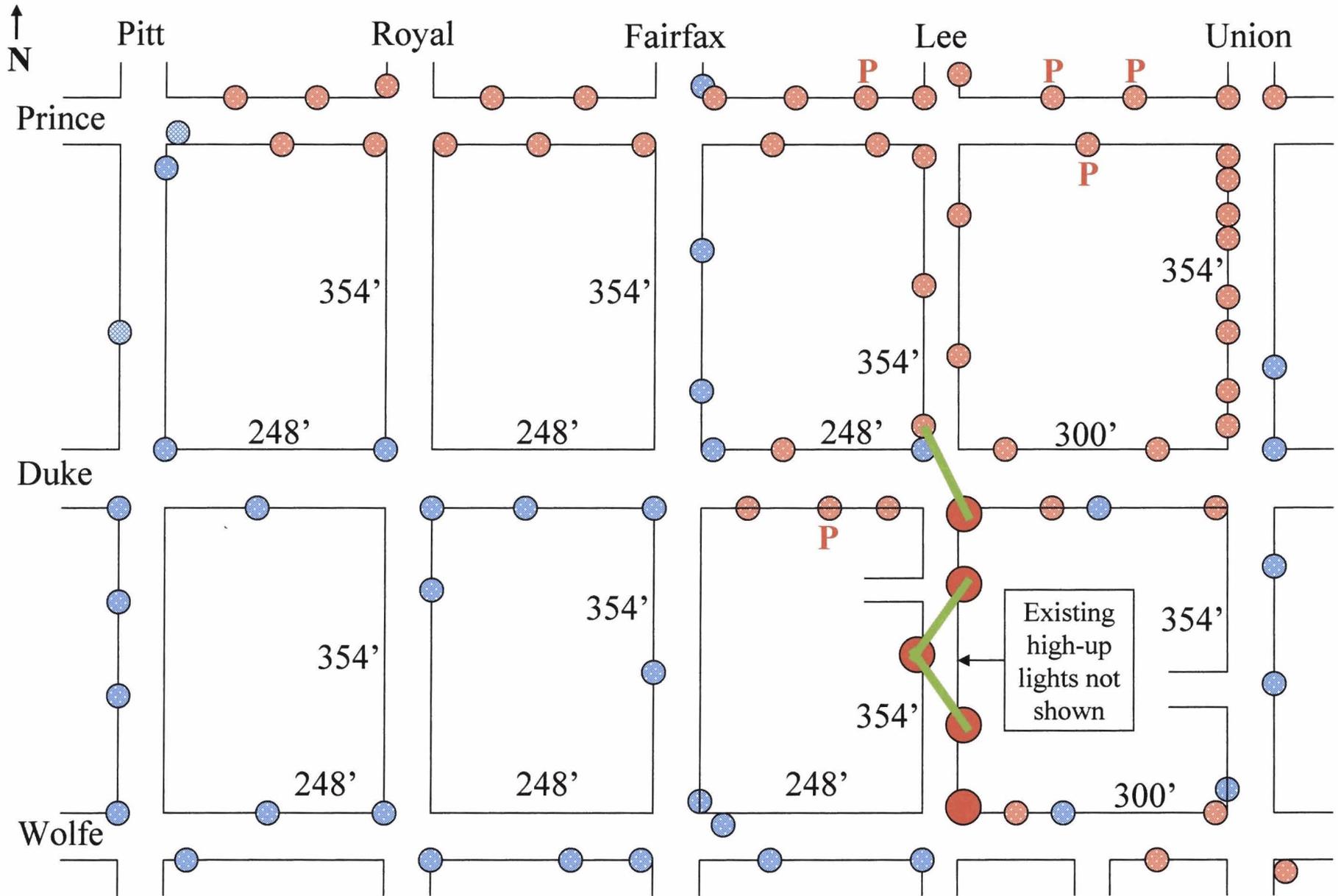
# Present light placements in 300 block of S. Lee (bolded) **Fig. 3**



Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P Modern, high-up street light: ●

# October 2006 lighting plan for 300 block of S. Lee (bolded) Fig. 4

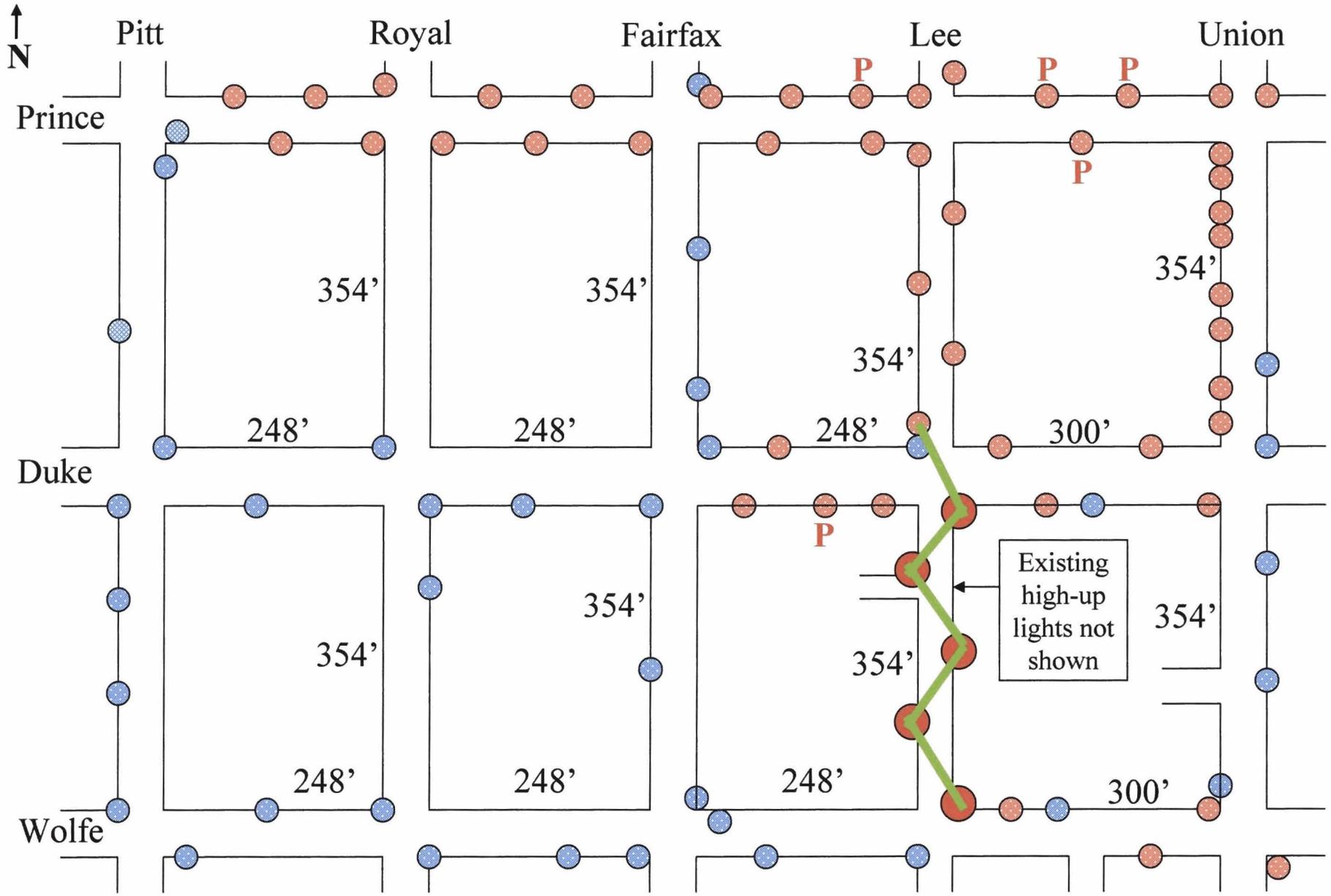


Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P Modern, high-up street light: ●

# 9-29-07 lighting plan for 300 block of S. Lee (bolded)

Fig. 5

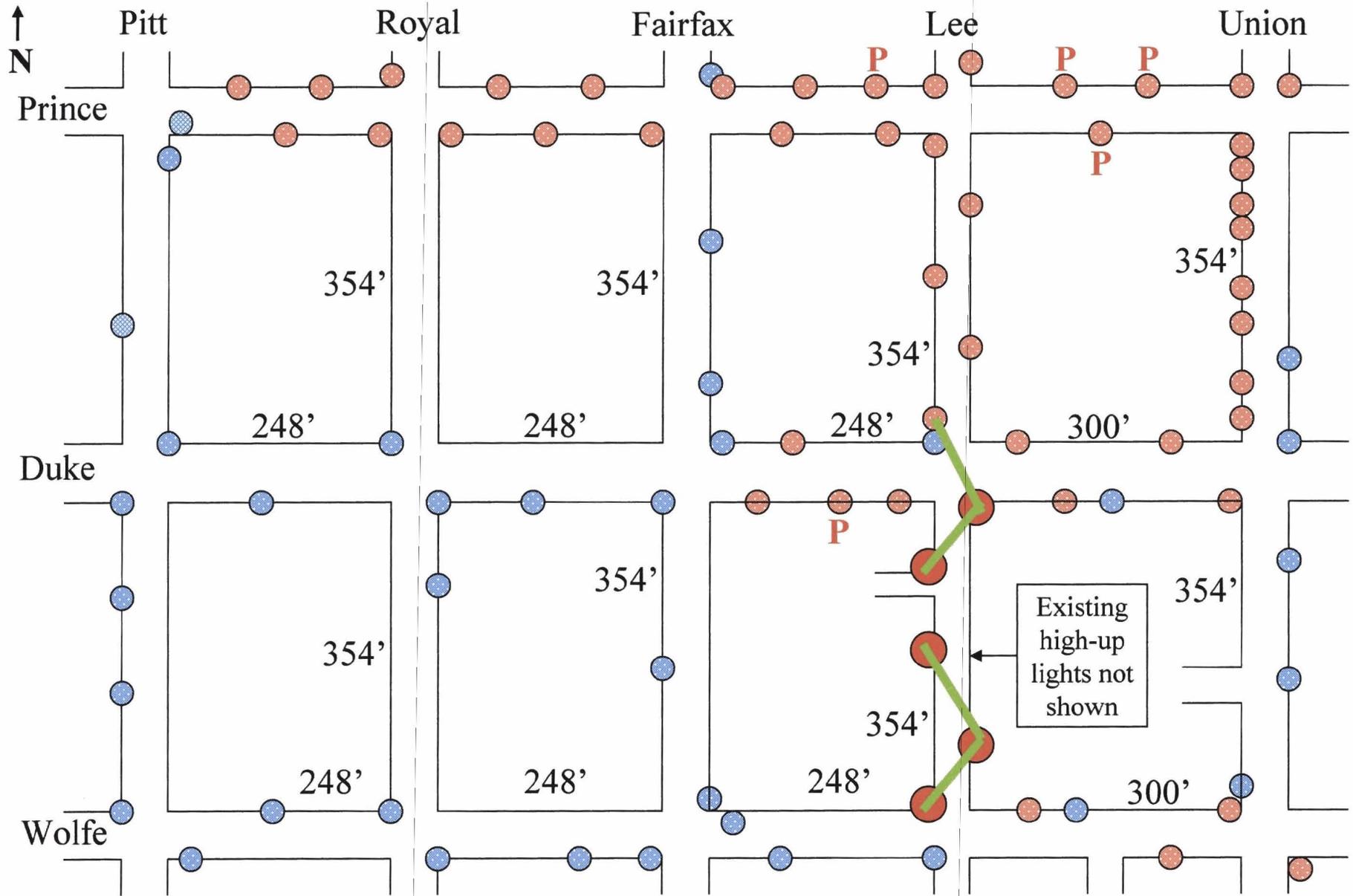


Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P Modern, high-up street light: ●

# 10-23-07 lighting plan for 300 block of S. Lee (bolded)

Fig. 6



Approximate scale: 1" = 160'  
 Street rights-of-way width = 43', except Lee = 33'

Old-fashioned "Gadsby-style" streetlight: ●  
 Private gas light: P Modern, high-up street light: ●