



The new lights have cut MCCC's electricity usage for lighting by 43%

The future looks bright

With DTE's help, Monroe County Community College brings its outdoor lighting into the 21st century.

The future is looking bright at Monroe County Community College even as darker months approach.

More than 220 new outdoor lights have been installed at the college's main campus in Monroe, roughly 45 miles southwest of Detroit.

The lights – a full LED system with brand-new posts – will brighten the paths, parking lots and entrances of the school, making the outdoor environment safer while supporting the school's energy efficiency goals and budget.

And after decades of enduring mismatched, dim and inefficient lights –

mostly original from 1967 – curious staff and neighbors flooded campus this June to see the lighting makeover, says Jack Burns, the college's director of campus planning and facilities.

"The sidewalk lights were rusting and falling apart, and some of the parking lot lights weren't functional," says Burns, a trained architect who has been in his current role for 11 years. "Lately, many people have been driving by purposely at night just to see [the new lights]."

As a college administrator, Burns says he is "protective" of the college's assets, especially when planning a project as big as replacing all 222 parking and sidewalk

lights. After researching several options, he found that one stood out above the rest: DTE's Outdoor Lighting Acquisition Program, which offers maintenance-free exterior lighting to public and private entities – pretty much anyone with outdoor lighting needs.

What the program entails

On the recommendation of a local civil engineering firm, Burns sat down with the DTE Lighting team, which outlined three key components to the program:

1. DTE can replace one or thousands of exterior lights for residential, municipal and commercial properties.



Through DTE's program, Monroe County Community College has 222 new lights.

“Initially, I thought [DTE’s Lighting Acquisition Program] was too good to be true, but we looked into it further and it just made sense.”

—Jack Burns, director of campus planning and facilities at Monroe County Community College

2. Customers are responsible for costs associated with installation, which can be partially offset by DTE construction credits and rebates. DTE offers financing options for the customer portion of the installation costs.

3. DTE owns, operates and maintains the outdoor lighting, giving customers peace of mind with a predictable monthly bill and no additional maintenance costs.

“Initially, I thought it was too good to be true, but we looked into it further and it just made sense,” Burns says about the service.

Customers like MCCC are perfectly suited for the Lighting Acquisition Program, says Thomas Balog, recently retired marketing program manager for DTE.

“They were engaged in the process, asking informative questions about the financial aspects of DTE owning, upgrading and maintaining a lighting system versus the previous standard, which was the college [doing the same],” Balog says. “They decided it was a good idea for the college to change ownership.”

The DTE engineering and design team worked closely with MCCC administration to help make selections from DTE’s large lighting catalog and fine-tune a cohesive, attractive lighting plan.

As part of the service, the DTE team also performs these steps:

- An acquisition survey to identify and inspect circuitry and check the condition of equipment.
- Contract pricing, creation and approval.
- Construction planning.
- Construction and field work management.

Safety and stewardship

MCCC has joined a growing field of DTE electric customers that have turned over their outdoor lighting to the energy company, which manages more than 200,000 lighting assets in its seven-county service territory in Southeast Michigan. The Lighting Acquisition Program’s attractive rate and cost structure make the switch “very affordable” for customers, Balog says, especially considering maintenance costs.

Maintenance was top of mind for Burns, whose facilities team often worked high off the ground in lifts to clean, replace or fix broken equipment, some of which was obsolete.

Even more important, however, will be the improvement in public safety for employees and students.

“My facilities employees who plow at night will be able to see substantially better the roads and parking lots now,” he says, “and



our security cameras will be able to pick up details better as well.”

Burns, who has switched to geothermal HVAC on MCCC’s main campus and envisions net-zero operations at both that location and the center in Temperance, Michigan, reports that after the lights were installed, the electricity usage for lighting was cut by 43%. Put another way, MCCC is saving slightly more than 73,000 kilowatt-hours annually, which is the amount of energy it takes to power 10 U.S. homes.

“It’s important to be a good steward of the environment and to use our resources wisely,” he says. “You can do things, or you can do things better and do them for the right reasons.” 🇺🇸

TOOLBOX

If you are interested in learning more about the Lighting Acquisition Program, call 800.548.4655. A DTE employee will reach out to you in three to five business days.