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On the Street Where You Live ... Better Lights Bring Better Quality of Life

By: [Dennis McCafferty](#) | 2010-02-17 | [Share This Article](#)

A Michigan company provides better security, "greener" options and even revenue builders—all within a simple street light.

Say goodbye to the mean streets of the city. Say hello to "green streets" instead.

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A downtown area using the digital banner display to promote an upcoming event.

That's green as in more environmentally friendly—as well as cash-producing—for modern municipalities. The notion of the big city being a gritty, dark place at night could become passé with the availability of a new IT solution called Intellistreets. The product, from Farmington Hills, Mich.-based Illuminating Concepts, transforms simple city street lights into conduits for "green" living, emergency preparedness, entertainment and even ad revenue.

It all started in 2002 at the Henry Ford Museum's Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Mich., where planners wanted to introduce audio in a historic park without building unsightly speakers. Illuminating Concepts stepped in to build the speakers within the light poles. The company then added to the tech enhancements within the poles, including wireless communications for security officers; alert function; and programmable lighting control to dim and increase lighting as traffic time demands, saving on energy costs without any employee monitoring.

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The Intellistreets system operates on a wireless mesh network, providing communication among all light poles within the network, as well as back and forth between individual light poles to an interface server. This means if communication throughout the system is disrupted for any reason, each light pole has the ability to continue to function independently.

As for revenue opportunity expansion, the Intellistreets system offers digital video signage in the form of a large LED banner on a light pole, much like the vinyl banners currently seen in city environments. Unlike vinyl banners, however, LED banners can display a wide variety of continually changing content, including still images and video. This opens up possibilities for advertising, as well as local public service announcements that would, for example, guide large crowds to public transportation stations during a big festival event.

While a number of these applications aren't new, the integration of so many within something as common as a light pole is groundbreaking, says Mike McNalley, director of Business Energy Services for Detroit-based DTE Energy, which provides utility services for the city. In the end, there's a tangible economic effect. "This technology brings people to downtowns like Detroit, rather than simply lighting the streets," he states.

As for the future, executives behind Intellistreets anticipate expanding to offer parking-meter capabilities and even recharging stations for electric cars on the product's light poles.

"We have the potential to transform formerly 'pedestrian' urban corridors into interactive environments that promote warmth, vitality, continuity, security, sustainability and community," says Ron Harwood, president of Illuminating Concepts.

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