



SUCCESS STORY

LEDS A BRIGHT IDEA FOR LOCAL HARDWARE STORE

Columbiana Ace Hardware Saves Energy and Gains Customers with Efficient Lighting Programs

Columbiana, Ohio is known for its friendliness and support for small businesses. One of those small businesses is the locally owned Ace Hardware store, a downtown fixture that has become even more popular, thanks to a city-sponsored program with Efficiency Smart.

Residents go to Columbiana Ace to buy everything from nails to cleaning supplies to garden mulch. Since 2017, it is also the place to purchase long-lasting, energy-efficient LEDs at a discounted price.

“Customers love to say, ‘I got this LED bulb at Ace for 99 cents!’” said store manager Steve Grappy. “They spread the word to their neighbors, or people hear about the discount through advertising from Efficiency Smart. Everybody really likes the program, and it helps bring more customers to the store.”

To date, the store has sold more than 7,000 discounted LED bulbs. Many of those shoppers have become repeat customers. The program is one of several being offered through Efficiency Smart to help Columbiana’s residents and businesses become more energy-efficient.

How Ace Doubled Down on Lighting Savings

Columbiana Ace Hardware’s introduction to the city’s lighting programs was a year earlier, in 2016. At that time, management swapped out all the store’s overhead fluorescents with support from Efficiency Smart. The new fixtures gave off so much light that store owners had to paint the ceiling.

“No one noticed the wear and tear under the old, flickering fluorescents,” said Grappy. “The store is now brighter and more inviting for customers, and it’s a better work environment for staff.”

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Lance Willard
City Manager for the City of Columbiana



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The new fixtures have reduced the store’s energy consumption significantly. All told, the project will save store owners more than \$130,000 on electric bills before the fixtures need to be replaced again.

But perhaps the most surprising benefit of the lighting upgrade was what it didn’t provide.

“With our old lighting system, we were climbing up and changing ballasts and bulbs once a week,” said Grappy. “I think I’ve changed one bulb since we installed the new system, and that was because of breakage, not burnout.”

The Power of a City-Sponsored Energy Efficiency Program

Since 2011, Columbiana has engaged Efficiency Smart to help residents and businesses save money on energy in a variety of ways. In addition to discounts on efficient lighting, city residents can take advantage of rebates on energy-efficient products and guidance on reducing their energy use. Efficiency Smart offers several free tools to help customers understand their energy use and the steps they can take to reduce it, including an electric usage monitor, an online home energy assessment, and one-on-one consultations with a customer support specialist.

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Businesses, who are larger and more complex energy users, often need individualized support to lower their energy use and meet their unique business needs. Columbiana’s businesses have a dedicated Efficiency Smart account manager and the support of its energy consultants. They also receive custom incentives for the installation of energy-efficient equipment, from lighting to refrigeration to heating and cooling.

“The cheapest energy is the energy you don’t have to use,” said Willard. “Working with Efficiency Smart helps educate our customers and reduces Columbiana’s energy footprint, so that we don’t have to go out and spend millions to invest in a new power source.”



Set Up an Efficiency Program Today

City of Columbiana Electric Department is one of the municipal electric utilities that take advantage of the Efficiency Smart program to lower energy usage for commercial and residential customers. Since 2011, Efficiency Smart has helped residents and businesses use less energy and save money in more than 60 communities in four states. For more on how your business or community can engage, please contact us.