



# Dearborn/Adopt-A-Watt Sponsored Energy Efficient Lighting Upgrades Case Study

## Project Snapshot

The City of Dearborn entered into an agreement with Adopt-A-Watt, Inc. to update 102 lighting fixtures from 175W metal halide lights to high efficiency 80W induction fluorescent bulbs in city parking garages. Funded entirely through sponsorships, this project incurred no costs to the City and helped to reduce its energy use. In addition to the sponsored lights, the City received one sponsored electric vehicle charging station.

## Timeline and Implementation Process

- **December 2010** – The City and Adopt-A-Watt enter into the Sponsored Parking Structure Light Agreement, outlining the responsibilities of both parties as well as expected savings, in both kWh and dollar figures.
- **Spring/Summer 2011** – Adopt-A-Watt and Dearborn officially kick off the project with a media advisory and press release, which notifies the community and begins to generate buzz from potential sponsors. Adopt-A-Watt begins seeking sponsorships, pursuing primarily local organizations that would have the most potential benefit from local publicity. The City assists the recruiting process by verifying the partnership with Adopt-A-Watt and further explaining the nature of the project to potential sponsors.
- **Fall 2011** – Adopt-A-Watt crews convert bulbs, affix signs, and install the electric vehicle charging station.
- **December 2011** – Dearborn Mayor, John B. O'Reilly, Jr., performs the ceremonial throwing of the switch recognizing sponsors for their generosity and thanking them for helping Dearborn achieve greater energy efficiency. A city press release coinciding with the ceremony brings greater public awareness to the project and favorable media attention for sponsors.
- **Summer 2012** – Talks between Dearborn and Adopt-A-Watt continue around a possible "Energy Savings Agreement" to complete the second phase of the project, which would replace the remaining 101 fixtures in the parking structures.

## Funding

The City of Dearborn did not pay any upfront costs, making this program a unique example of how to fund energy efficiency upgrades. Instead, this project was supported by sponsorships from individuals, businesses, and non-profits.



Dearborn, MI  
Population: 98,153  
Governance: Mayor-Council

### What is Adopt-A-Watt?

Adopt-A-Watt leverages sponsorships to create an alternative public-private funding mechanism, allowing cities to pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Adopt-A-Watt is a Certified B Corporation, solving social and environmental problems through business.

Michigan law (Enrolled Senate Bill 213) requires electric service providers to establish renewable energy and energy optimization programs. This law helps align the goals of utility providers (such as DTE) and the Adopt-A-Watt program.



Sponsorship costs \$500 per fixture and sponsors can pay the tax-deductible amount over 10 years. In addition to the sponsorships, the City also earns a \$100 rebate per replaced fixture from DTE. This program funded the last seven fixtures of the 102 fixtures identified in the agreement.

The agreement replaced the target 102 fixtures, but there are still lights on the upper levels of the structures that need replacement. These are not ideal for sponsorship, however, because lower traffic flow on these levels results in less publicity. Recently, Adopt-A-Watt and Dearborn have been looking into an agreement similar to an energy performance contract. Adopt-A-Watt provides the upfront capital, which then gets paid back over the course of 10 years from the increased revenue the City receives due to savings on the energy bill. While some of the revenue goes directly back to Adopt-A-Watt to pay back the investment, there is still money left over to reinvest into other energy saving projects.

## Results

- Replacement of 102 fixtures in the west downtown city parking structures (95 replaced from sponsorships, 7 from DTE energy efficiency rebates), and installation of one electric vehicle charging station sponsored by Eaton Corporation.
- Over the course of ten years, Dearborn will save an estimated 612,512 kWh of electricity usage, comparable to the output from burning 256,000 pounds of coal. In addition to not having to pay for the lighting upgrades, Dearborn expects to see electricity, maintenance, and operating cost savings of approximately \$300,000 over the next 10 years, generating a source of revenue for the City.
- These savings will then serve as seed-money to pursue other green infrastructure projects, installing EV charging stations, solar PV systems and/or covering the \$5000 premium on EVs over standard internal combustion engines.
- Sponsors receive a prominent sign accompanying their sponsored lights, are invited to participate in the kick-off media event, and receive an honorable mention in the City's press release.

## Advice for Communities Considering a Similar Project

- Pursue sponsorship from local organizations because they benefit most from the publicity, plus they can potentially galvanize additional community support.
- Limit project size to something practical, such as a parking garage, downtown district, or library. Gathering sufficient sponsors takes a lot of effort, but smaller projects can generate enough savings to make larger projects possible.
- Revenue from savings should not just be diverted back into a general fund, but rather explicitly set aside for the pursuit of further green endeavors.

## Additional Information

- A copy of Dearborn's contract is available at [MichEEN.org](http://MichEEN.org) under the Michigan Green Communities Group.
- Visit [adopt-a-watt.com](http://adopt-a-watt.com) or contact Tom Wither at 866-643-5724
- More information/advice is available from Dave Norwood, Dearborn Sustainability Coordinator at 313-943-2159



Michigan Green Communities is a network of local government and university staff in the state of Michigan that collaborate with one another, through peer learning and information sharing, to promote innovative solutions and move sustainability initiatives forward at the local, regional, and state level.

For questions or information, visit [greenchallenge.mml.org](http://greenchallenge.mml.org) or contact Laura Matson ([lmatson@a2gov.org](mailto:lmatson@a2gov.org)).