



ACHIEVABLE,  
ECONOMY-BUILDING, AND  
INSPIRING PUBLIC SPACE  
SOLUTIONS THAT MEET  
THE CHANGING NEEDS OF  
COMMUNITIES

# LIGHTING AS PLACEMAKING

CREATIVE PUBLIC SPACE LIGHTING AS THE URBAN SOLUTION WE NEED NOW

## BENEFITS OF DESIGNED PUBLIC SPACE LIGHTING

As we continue to adjust to rapid health, climate and economic change and new realities, our cities – especially densely populated ones – will need to create and adapt public environments and infrastructures to remain livable, safe, vibrant, and sustainable.

In a time of reduced budgets, pandemic, and economic challenges, and the need to use American Recovery Act dollars wisely, communities find themselves needing to do more with less to support community goals. On this stage, public space lighting design truly shines.

- 1. DOING MORE WITH LESS** to meet community needs for economic development, placemaking, image building and tourism—with higher impact for far less than many other types of improvement projects
- 2. SUPPORTING COMMUNITY GOALS** for public health, safety, cultural enrichment, quality of life, and messaging—visibly and responsively
- 3. INSPIRING AND LIFTING UP**—inspiring and building community pride when and where it's needed most



TOP FEATURE: Janesville's "Town Square" redevelopment transforms the riverfront with lighted plaza, water feature, art, and bridges

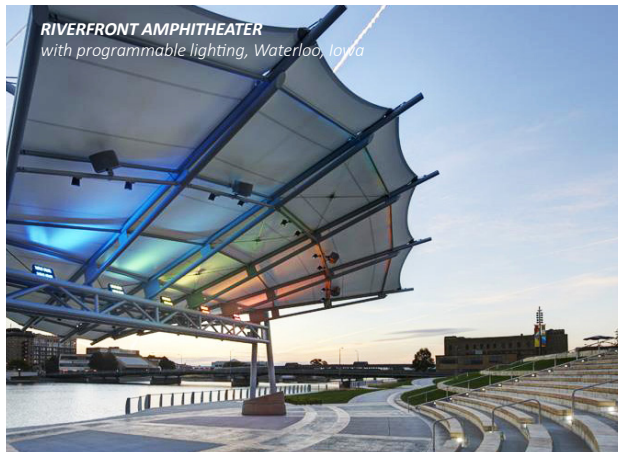


# INSTANT WOW FACTOR: JUST FLIP THE SWITCH

## TRANSFORM EXISTING SPACES

Consider for a moment the dramatic impact that a simple change in lighting can have on any place—even an existing one. Simply flip a switch and what was dark now feels vibrant, safe, and inviting.

Designed lighting has the potential to reinvent and define spaces without walls, focus attention, create motion, and instantly transform a place into a whole new venue—like lighting transforms a stage.



## BRIGHT SPOTS FOR THE ECONOMY

The vibrancy of our downtowns is directly tied to the vibrancy of our community and economy.<sup>2</sup> Finding ways to keep urban public spaces safe, visible, inviting, and relevant can have a dramatic impact on human health and society, becoming a major driver of economic recovery.

Innovative leaders are considering new “tactical urbanism” techniques for rapid and cost effective economic development and recovery. Solutions evolve rapidly to include iconic lighting features to attract investment and activity, extended-hours spaces defined by site specific lighting, and

closing streets to cars to increase safe and walkable open space, night and day.<sup>3</sup> Many of these solutions have application beyond the pandemic—into recovery and beyond.

Creative designers see these times as opportunity—and are viewing plazas and streets as potential lighting canvases where designed public lighting can be part of a rapid and very attainable solution.

## CREATING MORE SAFE, ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACE IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Pandemic coping tactics have led people outdoors for recreation, COVID-19 safe entertainment, socialization, and as a balm for mental health. Creative lighting features, lighting programming, and other designed lighting solutions deployed in public spaces can help carve out accessible new urban spaces and answer these unmet needs close to where more people live.

With more people attempting to socially distance outside in limited public space, communities and businesses look for ways to “spread the load” and extend the hours, uses, and seasons of public spaces that otherwise are underutilized. Lighting fills that void.

## TYPES OF CREATIVE LIGHTED FEATURES & DESIGNED SPACES

The possibilities for lighted features and spaces are limitless, and include: **lighted towers, auto and pedestrian bridges, gateways, pathways, streetscapes, building lighting and projections, trees and other landscaping, skating rinks and ice sculptures, parks, shelters, stages, giant screens, art pieces, and even dams and rivers.**

2 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/01/12/how-a-baltimore-design-initiative-is-rethinking-cityscapes-to-promote-economic-recovery-from-covid-19/>

3 <https://www.brookings.edu/events/webinar-who-gets-access-to-public-space-in-a-pandemic/>



# INGENUITY FROM AROUND THE US: DESIGNED LIGHTING SOLUTIONS FOR PUBLIC SPACE

**1. ADDING VIBRANCY AND BRANDING<sup>4</sup>** to struggling downtowns is a powerful way to make a place instantly identifiable and inviting, as well as attract new investment. **Davenport** Iowa's lighted pedestrian bridge and lighted towers in **South Bend** connect people with iconic places.

**2. DRAWING ACTIVITY TO MAINSTREET BUSINESSES** including restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues along the **main streets** of communities large and small. Many are moving into outdoor spaces to stay viable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lighting helps define and make those spaces safe and appealing.<sup>5</sup>

**3. HELPING GROW NEW KINDS OF TOURISM** with dramatically illuminated features such as snow sculptures and winter ice castles. The winter ice castles in **Lake Geneva** are becoming an annual destination for state and nearby state residents.<sup>6</sup>



**ILLUMINATED ICE CASTLES,**  
*Lake Geneva, Wisconsin*



**HOAN BRIDGE LIGHTS,**  
*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*



**ILLUMINATED TOWERS,**  
*South Bend, Indiana*

Shakespeare Lighting Design  
Matt Cashore photographer



**LIGHTED DINING IGLOOS,**  
*Chicago, Illinois*



**SEASONAL ICE RINK,**  
*Monona, Wisconsin*

**4. ACTIVATING SPACES 24-7, 365** to invite day-to-night activity from a mix of adjacent uses. In **Monona**, Wisconsin, a new lighted riverfront park serves an adjacent hotel, restaurants, and apartments. A combination of creative lighting and fire features make the park vibrant and inviting at all hours, and warmly lit for skaters in colder months.

**5. BUILDING COMMUNITY, MESSAGING, AND "INSTAGRAM-WORTHINESS."** Recently the City of **Milwaukee** lit up its Hoan Bridge lights representing positive Milwaukee stories. For the community the lights were both an Instagram-worthy downtown draw, and a symbol of "bridging Milwaukeeans together."<sup>7</sup> The "Light the Hoan" experience continues to change throughout the seasons for a variety messaging and holiday celebrations, making it an appealing photo op for residents and visitors.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/seven-steps-build-reputation-visibility-for-competitiveness/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/illinois/chicago-rooftop-bar-igloos-il/?utm\\_source=pinterest&utm\\_medium=social](https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/illinois/chicago-rooftop-bar-igloos-il/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=social)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.genevanationalresort.com/ice-castles>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lightthehoan.com/dedicate-a-bulb/>



# WHAT'S NEXT IN PUBLIC LIGHTING DESIGN?



Creative minds dream up new lighting designs and technologies every day. Consider these recent concepts:

- **PROGRAMMABLE LIGHTING MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE** lets the city of **Emmen**, Netherlands define flexible lighting profiles for weekends, seasons, and events.<sup>8</sup>
- **INTERACTIVE LIGHTING.** **Indiana** University Dept. of Brain Sciences commissioned an interactive light installation: “Consciousness”.<sup>9</sup>
- **SOLAR-POWERED FEATURES.** One example is an artfully undulating, solar-powered canopy proposed for the **Evansville** Arena. The installation will use motion-activated LED lighting to define the space and encourage visitors to interact with their environment.<sup>10</sup>

## MAKING IT HAPPEN — PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

Benefits of designed lighting for public space cross into many areas of the community. To make such projects happen, it can be helpful to form new creative partnerships of multiple stakeholders.

**Public-private partnerships between mainstreet businesses, corporations, chambers of commerce, and governmental bodies** have proven successful.

Public Space lighting projects may qualify for a variety of creative funding sources including:

- **Stimulus and recovery funds for businesses affected by COVID-19**
- **Tourism grants**
- **Mainstreet block grants**
- **Transportation funding for bridges, transit stations and streetscape**
- **Arts and public space grants**



8 <https://www.lighting.philips.com/main/cases/cases/parks-and-plazas/emmen>

9 <https://www.shakespearelighting.com/project/limestone-brain-psychology-brain-science/>

10 <https://www.floornature.com/blog/solar-shift-an-interactive-light-installation-powered-by-clean-energy-7246/>



**EYE LEVEL STUDIO** is the design and communication division of **VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES**, a multi-disciplinary team of masters in urban planning, economic development and redevelopment. Eye Level Studio’s design expertise and carefully curated arts consortium includes **SHAKESPEARE LIGHTING DESIGN** — a respected lighting design company with worldwide experienced. This combined expertise make us ideal partners for creating exciting, future-ready visions and public space design implementation. Visit us at [WWW.EYE-LEVELSTUDIO.COM](http://WWW.EYE-LEVELSTUDIO.COM) to learn more.

© Copyright 2021 Eye Level Studio and Vandewalle & Associates, Inc.