

There is No There *There* When You Get There!

Photographs courtesy of Night Light, Inc.

Follette Library Resources in McHenry, IL

Hilton Hotel in Lisle, IL

There are office buildings that appeal to you in the evening, and there are those that do not. The only difference in a commercial site during the day and one at night is how it is lit; virtually nothing else changes.

Commonly, sites are just lit for safety and security; therefore, attention is mainly given to the entrances and exits, walkways and parking lots. The architecture of the building is highlighted only if the budget allows. When it is done, the new or existing landscape is not normally figured into the equation. Very large and bright fixtures are used many times overpowering the structure, not to mention the unsightliness of having to look at all the equipment. Once the landscape is installed and begins to mature, the initial lighting scheme is lost. From that point on, it is forever changing.

This does not need to be the case. If only the landscape and site lighting were coordinated, many of the issues would be eliminated. When the landscape is integrated into the

overall lighting scheme, the joint result is far more appealing.

Common sense would tell you that since the landscape is living and ever-changing, we probably ought to

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account for that change in the site and landscape lighting system. You wouldn't have to go very far to find a situation where the landscape has severely altered the lighting scheme

originally designed for a commercial complex. Trees and shrubs can be a nuisance or barrier if they block the light from reaching its original target. It is almost silly to see fixtures swallowed up by the plants. Trees can engulf parking lot lighting, and façade lighting can be blocked from effectively presenting a building or hardscaped areas.

If the intention is to create an image or theme to the office building(s) and surrounding site, then careful attention should be given to all the elements that could affect it. In the majority of cases, if an office building is more than five years old, the site and landscape lighting is already in need of alteration to adjust for the landscape changes. The maturation of the landscape adds to the character of the site if the landscape and lighting were initially jointly considered.

Of course, knowledgeable, periodic maintenance is necessary to

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address the subtle changes throughout the seasons. If done properly, a sense of place can be achieved where the overall image of the building and its surroundings is enhanced during the evening hours. This can be positive marketing rather than negative marketing through neglect and improper design.

With careful consideration, the landscape story can be told after dark by providing a visual harmony between the key site and landscape elements. If the trees are large enough they may be used to install attractive fixtures in the canopy of large trees, which creates drama by offering delicate moonlight shadows filtered through the trees onto the walkways, sitting areas, roadways

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and parking lots. When nighttime falls, light can be used as a paintbrush to enhance the beauty of the landscape and architecture while also providing safety and security. As a result, the improved image and curb appeal are a light show night after night.

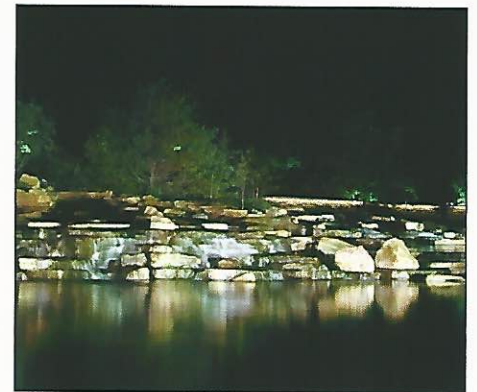
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aid pedestrians in their movement from one space to another after dark. This would also include any signage or entry landscape. The first impression of a property is often the main entry, which may be far removed from the main buildings and parking area. In providing a “there there when you get there,” it is very important to design any signage and main property entry landscape lighting while considering the rest of the site. This will allow for continuity, and if a lighting theme is used will allow for it to transition from space to space.

It is important to keep in mind that less is more. If the architectural lighting is overpowering, then the subtleties of the landscape are lost. As someone approaches a property in the evening, this person should receive an enjoyable experience. It is not necessary to break the bank to achieve an attractive ambiance after dark. Changes can be made gradually or in phases to fit into any budget or timeframe. It does not have to all be done at once.

If you are a property manager or site engineer and you know that your existing lighting system needs repair or upgrading, then this may be the time to address some of the benefits mentioned in this article. Contact your lighting professional for a full site review or survey to determine how to get the most from



Dell Webb Sun City in Huntley, IL



Prairie Stone Business Park, Hoffman Estates, IL

your investment. Remember, you need to have a “there there when you get there.”

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