

News Release

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ComEd Installs Off-Grid Renewable Lighting at Bronzeville Schools

New pilots support Chicago Police Department student safety goals

CHICAGO (Feb. 12, 2019) – Even as daylight gives way to darkness, the walkway at Beethoven Elementary School in Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood is bright thanks to off-grid lights powered by renewable energy and installed by ComEd.

Powering the lights are 30-foot-tall Remote Power Units (RPUs), miniature power plants that are not connected to the electric grid but draw energy from a wind turbine, solar panels and battery storage. Manufactured by ARIS Renewable Energy, the RPUs were officially activated Friday in a ribbon cutting ceremony led by Beethoven Elementary School Principal Mellodie Brown. Speakers included Third Ward Alderman Pat Dowell and Illinois State Sen. Mattie Hunter. Commander Dion Boyd represented the Chicago Police Department and the Safe Passage Program, which aims to keep kids safe to and from school.

“We thank ComEd for enhancing the safety of our campus with leading edge renewable energy-powered lighting,” said Brown. “Our science teachers will enjoy using the lights and the data collected from the solar and wind production and battery charging to design class lessons related to environmental science and sustainability.”

ComEd installed the lights earlier this month at Beethoven and at Bronzeville’s Dunbar Vocational High School. The off-grid lights are the latest pilot projects in ComEd’s Community of the Future initiative, which is focused on using smart grid technology to become more connected, green and resilient, while developing interests and skills among students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

“We hope this innovative lighting solution will not only light up the physical paths students walk on, but show them that STEM isn’t just something you study in a classroom; it can transform everything from the internet to your walk to school,” said Shay Bahramirad, vice president, engineering and smart grid, ComEd.

The RPU has a unique wind turbine that enhances airflow into the blades, causing a generator to efficiently produce energy and power the LED lighting. It combines the potential for wind at any hour of the day with daytime solar and a battery storage unit large enough to power the light for up to five days with no generation. The RPU powers its own internet connectivity to monitor and control its operation.

Other Community of the Future technology pilots include a microgrid that will enhance the security and resiliency of the electric system; an electric vehicle transportation service for seniors; a community energy storage pilot; interactive kiosks that provide real-time information, emergency alerts, wayfinding and free Wi-Fi; and sensor-based technologies that are being piloted with nearby Illinois Tech. The Community of the Future also features STEM education programs for Bronzeville and Chicago-area high school students, who are applying microprocessor technology to design solutions that address community needs and enhance quality of life.

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ComEd is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation (NYSE: EXC), a Fortune 100 energy company with approximately 10 million electricity and natural gas customers – the largest number of customers in the U.S. ComEd powers the lives of more than 4 million customers across northern Illinois, or 70 percent of the state's population. For more information visit ComEd.com and connect with the company on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).