

## Customer Spotlight

# Mechanicsville Building and Supply Retools Its Lighting

When Leon “Sonny” Hill started working at Mechanicsville Building and Supply in 1964, he never could have imagined what doing business “in the future” might be like. But after nearly half a century of dedication, Hill is now president of this Mechanicsville, MD, hardware store. And while he runs the small business in many traditional ways, he recognizes the importance of making innovative improvements that are in the store’s best interest. When SMECO approached him about upgrading his facility’s lighting through its Small Business Solutions program, Hill was immediately on board. The decision paid off in a brighter, more inviting space and more than \$6,000 in rebates to the contractor that significantly lowered Hill’s out-of-pocket costs.

## Savings Summary

**Program:** Small Business Solutions

**Estimated energy savings:**

25,472 kWh

**Incentives paid:** \$6,066

**Estimated payback:** 0.46 years

## Identifying the Opportunities

Built in 1954, the 6,100-square-foot facility includes 2,400 square feet of retail space, two additional rooms for screen repair and plumbing and hardware supplies, and a basement shop for lumber and glass cutting. With the old, inefficient lighting, the space felt dreary. So when the opportunity to switch to energy-efficient lights and save money with SMECO’s rebates came knocking, Hill responded without hesitation. “I just knew I had to strike while the iron was hot,” Hill says. “The deal was too good to pass up.”

## Installing the Upgrades

Following a visit from SMECO’s approved Small Business Solutions contractor, Hill was pleasantly surprised by how easy the process would be for him. After an onsite energy assessment, SMECO’s contractor recommended specific lighting upgrades to meet the store’s needs, arranged the installation, managed the recycling of all old equipment and even handled the paperwork.

Hill upgraded most of the store’s lighting inside and out, converting 65 fixtures containing old T12 lamps and magnetic ballasts to an energy-efficient T8 system—replacing a total of 165 lamps. Because the store is open seven days a week, a team of two contractors performed the installations while sharing the space with customers. “The workers were ‘top shelf,’” says Hill. “They arrived when we opened and stayed well past closing to complete the upgrades in just one day. It all went very smoothly.”



The new lighting has enhanced the appearance and comfort of the sales floor.

*“The decision to upgrade was a no-brainer. It’s more efficient, economical, and creates a better experience for customers. It gives you a good feeling all around!”*

– Sonny Hill, President and Owner,  
Mechanicsville Building and Supply

## The Benefits

For Hill, his six employees and his “family” of customers, the benefits of the lighting upgrade are clear. The store is brighter, with a friendlier atmosphere that better reflects the business. A benefit Hill did not anticipate was the difference in temperature. Compared to the old lighting, the more efficient lamps keep the business cooler because they release less heat from wasted energy. Plus, with 80 percent of the cost paid by SMECO directly to the contractor, the store’s investment will pay for itself in less than half a year.

Hill encourages other companies to consider energy efficiency improvements. “It’s the way to go for small businesses,” he says. In fact, Hill shared his experience and outcomes with neighboring businesses and inspired several of them to make similar improvements.



Sonny Hill (center) outside the facility with members of his staff, Justin Wood, Timmy Goldsborough, Bruce Pelczar and Jack Berry.

**SMECO’s Small Business Solutions program** is intended to help small business owners use energy more efficiently. The program includes an onsite energy assessment at no cost and recommendations for improving energy efficiency. It also includes full turnkey service for putting energy efficiency to work for you as part of your long-term business plan. Businesses that participate in the program can receive incentives that cover up to 80 percent of the total cost for most energy efficiency retrofit projects, including materials, labor and recycling. Visit [SMECO.coop/save](https://www.smecho.coop/save), email [business@smecho.coop](mailto:business@smecho.coop) or call **866-235-6044** to learn more.