

Mario Kiezi, owner of Oakland Mall in Troy, stands by the new parking lot lighting made possible through DTE's Outdoor Protective Lighting program.



In a good light

Oakland Mall ditches costly maintenance and gets a brighter parking lot with DTE program.

One evening in 1968, a brand-new mall in Troy switched on its outdoor lights for the first time, welcoming suburban shoppers to browse and buy.

Fifty-six years later, Oakland Mall's original 250 parking lot lights shut off permanently. In their place emerged an array of high-efficiency LED lights, new fixtures, concrete foundations and underground conductors, casting an ambient glow that the mall's owner calls a "transformation."

"The whole place went from a dull yellow to a bright white," says Mario Kiezi, who bought the mall two years ago in a bid to revitalize the space. "It's a better, safer amenity; it's aesthetically pleasing for our tenants and our guests."

Oakland Mall's lighting transformation was made possible through DTE's Outdoor Protective Lighting (OPL) program, which offers maintenance-free exterior lighting to homeowners, businesses, schools, municipalities – just about anyone who has outdoor lighting needs.

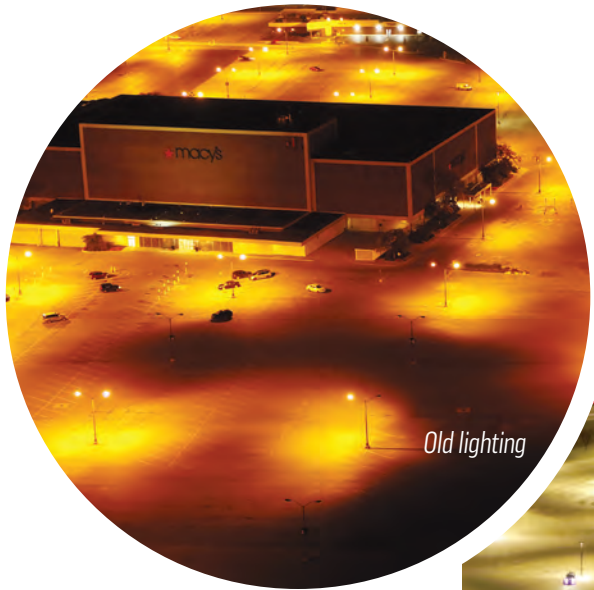
"Our installers can install a brand-new system, upgrade an old system and even add lighting onto existing DTE utility poles," says Glenn Roland, principal marketing specialist for DTE's Community Lighting department.

How the program works

The innovative program has three key components:

1. DTE can replace one or thousands of exterior lights at residential, municipal and commercial properties.
2. Customers are responsible for costs associated with installation, which can be partially offset by DTE construction credits and rebates. DTE also offers financing options for the remaining installation costs.
3. DTE owns, operates and maintains the outdoor lighting, giving customers peace of mind with a predictable monthly bill and no additional maintenance costs.

Sometimes, there is even zero installation cost to the customer, Roland says.



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“If the lighting solution is to attach a fixture on one of our wooden DTE utility posts, we may already have electrical distribution there, so there is little to no cost at all to the customer,” he says.

DTE’s outdoor lighting catalog covers a large range of styles and uses. All the lights available are energy-efficient LEDs controlled by photocells that allow the lights to turn on and off automatically.

“These are all great features, plus the customer has a lower carbon footprint, which makes them eligible for some energy efficiency rebates,” Roland says.

The process begins with a simple phone call, after which a DTE lighting specialist will visit the site, collaborate with the owner/manager and then generate a state-of-the-art lighting design for approval.

“Everything starts with a conversation: What is the customer looking for? What is the problem they are trying to solve?” Roland says.

Once the site visit is over, the final design phase can take a few weeks, depending on the project’s complexity.

With the final design in hand, the OPL team issues an agreement detailing cost, plus financing and rebates available.

“Typically, we get the lights installed within 90 days after signature,” says Roland, whose projects have been as small as a single unit to as big as hundreds of fixtures.

Savings all around

Customers who maintain private lighting systems often contact DTE to learn more about the efficiencies the OPL program offers.

“Our customers are finding they don’t want to be in the lighting business anymore, so they look to DTE as an affordable and practical solution to their outdoor lighting needs,” Roland says.

After purchasing the mall, Kiezi says he found himself exactly in that predicament: with outdated lights that were dim and inefficient and would break unpredictably.

Roland says Kiezi’s situation is not uncommon.

“If it’s a light that’s 25 to 30 feet up in the air, it’s costly to hire a company to come out and to replace a light fixture,” he says. “Just with that alone, there are a lot of unbudgeted and unforeseen expenses.”

Kiezi – whose family once owned an ice cream store at the mall and who calls the purchase a “sentimental” business investment – says the ongoing expense of maintaining the old lights was approaching six figures a year.

After the installation, even with DTE’s financing payment, he says his bottom line is net positive.

“Plus, we are no longer required to maintain, replace or fix broken fixtures; DTE comes out automatically,” he says. “Our team doesn’t have to pay attention to broken light bulbs, because DTE flags that and sends a crew.

“It’s so wonderful; it’s almost too good to be true.” 🇺🇸

TOOLBOX

📞 Call 800.548.4655 to learn more about DTE’s Outdoor Protective Lighting program.