

More than 100 metal halide fixtures installed throughout Reliable Buick GMC Cadillac of Roseville, Calif., were replaced with LED products.

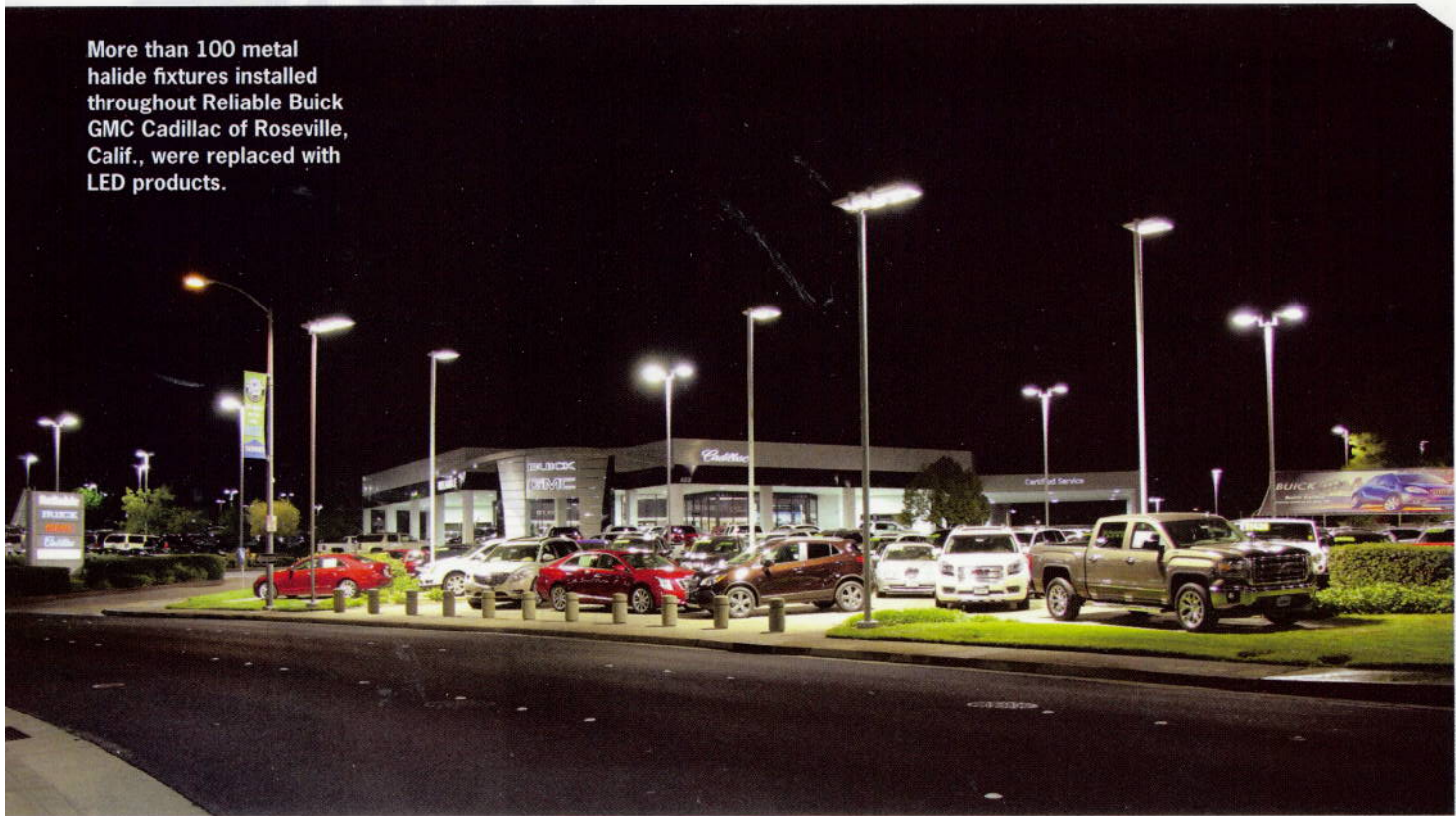


IMAGE COURTESY OF RELIABLE BUICK GMC CADILLAC

Light in the fast lane

Omega Pacific Electrical Supply and Cree team up to drive lighting quality and efficiency. by Susan Bloom

With four-and-a-half acres of space housing 250 new cars and trucks and another 100 used vehicles, Reliable Buick GMC Cadillac of Roseville, Calif., just outside of Sacramento, is a busy dealership within one of the nation's largest multidealer auto malls. Its position as a high-profile, heavily trafficked auto hub was precisely the reason that it recently pursued an extensive LED lighting upgrade within its outside lot, under its exterior canopies, and inside its showroom areas.

"About two-and-a-half years ago, we began a remodeling project by replacing the sheet rock under our 10,000-square-foot outdoor canopy," said Bruce Westrup, second-generation president of the nearly 45-year-old dealership. "Seeing our outdated light fixtures, I realized that we didn't want old lights in our fresh remodel. We'd had 250W, flush-mount metal halide fixtures up there for 20 years but found that they had turned all different colors, and suffered

from lumen depreciation, and that a portion of them were always requiring some level of maintenance or replacement. I'd seen LEDs at a nearby gas station and noticed such an absolute difference, and we decided that an LED solution would help our cars stand out while saving energy and reducing maintenance."

Westrup immediately contacted Todd Lewis, principal of San Francisco-based Omega Pacific Electrical. "Here

on the West Coast, one of Bruce's biggest issues was utility costs, which are higher than the national average," Lewis explained. "He wanted to reduce energy and maintenance costs, but as one of 17 dealers in a large and competitive auto mall, it wasn't just about the light itself but the way the light makes products look and appeal to customers."

The decision was made to replace the more than 100 metal halide fixtures throughout the interior and exterior of the dealership with a collection of Cree LED products, including Cree's 4000 Kelvin BetaLED Essentia fixtures for the indoor showroom. Installation was performed by Century Lighting and Electric in Auburn, Calif., in 2011 to 2012.

"When I saw the 4000 Kelvin prod-

uct inside, it just had me," Westrup raved. "It allowed us to highlight cars like a jeweler highlights diamonds. It really brought out the quality of the paint job and metallics and the color was pure."

Lewis agreed. "Inside, where more than two dozen 250W metal halide fixtures were casting a range of different colors over the dealership's fleet of cars, Cree's BetaLED fixtures really made the colors pop and showed off the quality of the metals and their colors," he said.

Outside on the lot, the 250W fixtures replaced with Cree LEDs had a similarly positive "night and day" impact on the vehicles. "In all cases, the powerful new fixtures delivered an attractive 54% energy savings," said Lewis.

"Cree's optics on the different fixtures, their superior forward throw of light, and their bright but uniform illumination were exceptional," Westrup added. "After installing them, our merchandise popped so much more and really had a sparkle—so much so that even our franchise corporation, through which we had to get special approval to use these cutting-edge lights, was surprised and delighted. These were above and beyond their specs."

A DRIVING FORCE

Looking back on his dealership's LED upgrade, Westrup said, "It was a business decision made based on energy savings, maintenance reduction, and the power of their display, and we're thrilled with the way the LEDs have let the quality of our products show through. LEDs aren't necessarily inexpensive, but one to two years later the lights still look like they did the first day we turned them on and the cars look fantastic."

Just as important, he added, "I was educated on these options because Todd kept me in the loop and brought me all of the information I needed to make an informed decision. We're extremely appreciative of that."

Equally thrilled that Reliable Buick GMC Cadillac has become a "technology destination" that other dealers

within the auto mall are clamoring to emulate, Lewis is confident in the comprehensive package of benefits that LED solutions bring to the table.

"You have to see it—the Reliable dealership has set a new standard and created a totally new buying experience for its customers," Lewis said. "We applaud them for their leadership in driving energy-efficient LED lighting

and asking other business owners, 'What are you waiting for?' LEDs are a right-now, 'go' technology—even without rebates. LEDs are an absolute game-changer, and they're what make this business exciting." ■

Bloom is a 20-year veteran of the lighting and electrical products industry. Reach her at susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com.