



SELF-SERVICE CAR WASH LIGHTS UP MORE BUSINESS

Sometimes the simplest change can make the most significant impact. At 19th Avenue Car Wash in Forest Grove, an energy-efficient lighting upgrade fixed maintenance problems, improved customer safety, and increased business after dark. The City of Forest Grove Light and Power provided incentives that covered nearly 50% of the project cost, making the business' investment even more affordable.

Car wash owner Saul Chavez-Hernandez is delighted with the recent lighting upgrade.

The Chavez-Hernandez family has owned the self-service car wash for six years. Open 24/7, the business relies on good lighting to attract customers, especially after dark. Over time, the car wash's outdated light fixtures began to fail. According to Saul Chavez-Hernandez, co-owner, fixture parts were broken, and replacement bulbs were hard to find.

"We have four bays for car washing, but sometimes the lights in one or two of the bays wouldn't turn on," said Chavez-Hernandez. "If a customer showed up and the lights in the bay were out, we'd lose their business."

Saul's father, Miguel Chavez-Gonzalez, looked for upgrade options by talking with an electrical contractor for rough estimates. The cost was more than expected and put the project on hold. After conversations with city staff, Miguel learned the upgrade could be eligible for utility incentives. Before getting the project going, he passed away unexpectedly, leaving his wife Norma and family to carry on.

The car wash lighting upgrade is saving energy and helping to draw in more business, thanks to brighter light and increased visibility. Forest Grove Light and Power, Trade Ally Network NW, and Platt Electric worked together to help the family restart the project with a fixture plan and an outline of estimated expenses. Outdated lighting in the car wash bays, vacuum areas, and vending machine areas were replaced with all new LED technology. Controls were added to turn lights on and off automatically at dusk and dawn. With the improvements, the car wash expects to save an estimated \$1,440 in annual energy costs, not including savings from ongoing reduced maintenance and repair costs.

The difference has been striking. "We monitor activity at the car wash remotely, and right away, we saw a huge difference in visibility on the site," said Chavez-Hernandez. "It improves our ability to keep an eye on the property, plus we're confident the property is safer for customers in the evening. We're also seeing cars at hours of the night when we never saw them before."

"Without incentives, it would have taken us a lot longer to do this project," he continued. "Everyone helped us and were sensitive to our need as a small business to move things along very quickly." Rodeo, "Incentives helped get this project within our budget and were a large factor in pulling the trigger."

