LIT
OUTDOOR LIGHTING

FOR EXISTING SYSTEMS

— A DIAGNOSTIC GUIDE

When to *Fix*, When to Replace.

A homeowner's guide to diagnosing your existing outdoor lighting.

For the homeowner with a system that isn't quite right — flickering, dim, half-dead, or just disappointing. Read this before you spend another dollar trying to make it work.

BY LIT OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Family-owned, Covington-based. Serving the Northshore and Southeast Louisiana since 2021.

HONEST DIAGNOSIS
NO SALES PITCH

(985) 244-7733

01 FIRST, A WORD

You already have a system. It just isn't *working*.

Maybe it's been a few years and a few fixtures have given up. Maybe the previous owner installed it and you inherited the problems. Maybe it never quite looked the way you imagined when you wrote the check. Either way — you're not starting from scratch, and the question is what to do next.

Most homeowners assume there are only two paths: live with it, or rip it all out and start over. There's almost always a third one — targeted repair, on the parts that need it, while keeping what's still working. That third path is invisible to a lot of homeowners because the lighting industry doesn't make money pointing it out.

This guide is the diagnostic process we walk through with our maintenance customers. It tells you what's likely wrong, what you can probably fix yourself, what's beyond the scope of homeowner repair, and how to tell the difference. The goal isn't to convince you of anything — it's to help you make the right call for your specific situation.

OUR PROMISE

Most older systems have more salvageable parts than their owners think. Some don't. We'll tell you honestly which one yours is — even if the answer means we don't get the work.

02 WHERE TO START

A five-minute *walk* tells you almost everything.

Before you call anyone — including us — do this walk one evening when the system is on. You'll catch 90% of what's wrong with it just by looking. Bring your phone, take photos of anything that looks off.

1. **Walk the perimeter and count what's actually on**
   If you have eight path lights and only six are lit, that's your first data point. Note dead fixtures by location. Some failures are the bulb. Some are the fixture. Some are the wire feeding it.

2. **Look for color drift**
   If half your fixtures glow warm white and a few look slightly pink, blue, or green — that's LED degradation. The chip is failing in stages. Eight years is roughly when you start seeing it on residential systems.

3. **Find the transformer and listen**
   A healthy transformer hums quietly. A failing one buzzes loudly, smells warm, or feels hot to the touch. If yours has any of those signs, that's a serious finding — note it.

4. **Inspect the connections you can see**
   Where wires meet, look for corrosion (greenish-blue residue), exposed copper, electrical tape doing critical work, or wire nuts above ground. Any of those is a problem.

5. **Check the fixtures' aim**
   A landscape grows. Trees mature. Beds shift. Fixtures aimed three years ago may be lighting empty space now. This isn't broken — it's just out of tune.

03 WHAT YOU CAN FIX YOURSELF

Minor issues — an afternoon's *work*.

A single fixture is dark

FIX YOURSELF

One fixture out, the rest fine.

Likely the bulb. If the fixture takes a replaceable LED module, swap it. Match the wattage and color temperature exactly — 2700K is what most residential systems use. If the fixture is sealed (no removable bulb), it's a fixture replacement, not a bulb swap.

A fixture is loose or pointing wrong

FIX YOURSELF

Light is hitting the wrong spot, or the fixture is wobbling.

Re-aim and re-stake. Most landscape fixtures pivot at the base. Loosen the locking ring, aim, retighten. For path lights that have leaned over, push the stake back and tamp the soil around it.

Fixtures dim or flickering across one section

FIX YOURSELF

A whole branch of the system looks weak.

Likely a loose connection. Walk the wire run and look for the splice point. Many older systems use simple twist-on caps that corrode in Louisiana humidity. Replacing them with proper waterproof gel-filled connectors is a homeowner-level repair.

A fixture lens is cloudy

FIX YOURSELF

The fixture is on but the light looks weak or hazy.

Clean the lens. Mineral deposits, mud splash, and pollen build up over years. A soft cloth and water — or a plastic-safe cleaner — restores most of the output. Avoid anything abrasive.

04 WHEN THE SYSTEM IS DONE

Major issues — likely time to *replace*.

Most fixtures show color drift or yellow flickering

REPLACE

Multiple fixtures showing pink, green, or unstable color.

System-wide LED failure. If half your fixtures are drifting at once, you're past the useful life of the LED chips. Replacing fixtures one at a time as they fail means a mismatched system for years. Better to plan a full LED-lamp or full-fixture level replacement.

Fixtures are aluminum or plastic and showing visible damage

REPLACE

Cracked housings, flaking paint, or oxidation across multiple fixtures.

The fixtures weren't built for here. Aluminum and plastic don't survive Louisiana humidity for the long haul. Trying to repair fixture-by-fixture costs more over time than replacing with brass.

Transformer is failing or undersized

REPLACE

Loud buzzing, hot to the touch, or repeatedly tripping breakers.

The brain is dying. A failing transformer eventually takes the entire system with it — and an undersized one is doing damage every day it runs. This is the single most important system component.

Most wire runs show corrosion or buried splices

REPLACE

Greenish residue at every connection point, or wire nuts buried directly in the soil.

The infrastructure is compromised. Rewiring an entire system selectively is rarely worth it — the cost approaches a new install, and you're still left with the original fixtures.

05 THE THIRD OPTION

When professional *repair* makes more sense than either path.

The middle ground most homeowners don't know exists: targeted professional repair on the parts that need it, while keeping what's still working. Here's when that's the smart call.

A

The system is mostly good but a few things are off

If 80% of the fixtures are still working well and you have specific issues — three dead fixtures, one buzzing transformer, one section flickering — selective repair costs a fraction of replacement.

B

You inherited it and don't know what's installed

A professional audit can map out what you actually have — fixture types, transformer capacity, wire gauge, splice locations — so you know what you're working with before deciding anything else.

C

The fixtures are good but the design isn't

Sometimes the equipment is fine but the original layout was wrong — runway-effect path lights, missing tree uplighting, badly aimed fixtures. Re-designing with what's already there can transform the property without a full replacement.

D

You'd rather not spend a Saturday on it

Plenty of homeowners could fix their own minor issues. Many just don't want to. That's a legitimate reason to call us — pay someone else to do the half-day of work, get it done right, get on with your weekend.

06 SAFETY BOUNDARIES

What you should — and shouldn't — *handle* yourself.

Low-voltage landscape lighting is genuinely safer to work on than household wiring — that's why so much of it is homeowner-repairable. But there are still real boundaries. Here's an honest breakdown.

GENERALLY SAFE

What's homeowner-friendly

- ✓ Replacing bulbs in fixtures with removable LED modules
- ✓ Re-aiming and re-staking fixtures
- ✓ Tightening or replacing visible wire connections (with the transformer unplugged)
- ✓ Cleaning lenses and fixture housings
- ✓ Resetting and tightening transformer wire connections

CALL A PRO

What's beyond DIY

- ✕ Anything involving the 120V side of the transformer
- ✕ Replacing or upsizing a transformer
- ✕ Tracing a buried fault on a long wire run
- ✕ Diagnosing voltage drop across a multi-fixture line
- ✕ Anything that involves digging where the wire path is unknown

One universal rule: Always unplug the transformer before touching any low-voltage wire. The system is safe to work on when it isn't powered. Don't trust the on/off switch.

07 THE DECISION TREE

So which is it — *fix*, repair, or replace?

After your five-minute walk, work down this tree. The first answer that fits your system is the path forward.

Are most fixtures still working and the system gives roughly the look you want?

YES

PATH 1 · MAINTAIN

Targeted fixes, then schedule maintenance

Handle minor issues yourself or have a pro do them. Then move to a regular maintenance cadence.

NO

KEEP GOING ↓

Continue the diagnosis

Check the next question.

Is the transformer still healthy and most fixtures repairable?

YES

PATH 2 · REPAIR

Professional targeted repair

Selective fixture replacement, re-design, and re-aiming. Costs a fraction of full replacement.

NO

PATH 3 · REPLACE

New system from the ground up

When the foundation is compromised, replacement is the only honest answer.

08 IF YOU'D RATHER NOT

Or — let us *handle* all of it.

For homeowners who'd rather skip the diagnosis entirely, we offer a maintenance audit and ongoing care. Here's what that actually looks like.

1

A full system audit

We come out, walk the property, and check every fixture, every connection, the transformer, and the wire runs. You get a written assessment of what's working, what's failing, and what's nearing end-of-life — even if nothing is wrong yet.

2

An honest fix-or-replace recommendation

Based on what we find, we'll tell you which path makes the most sense for your system — repair, replace, or some combination. If the right answer is "you can fix this yourself in an afternoon," we'll tell you that too.

3

Ongoing care, if you want it

Annual or semi-annual maintenance visits to re-aim fixtures as the landscape grows, replace bulbs as they fail, inspect connections, and catch problems before they become expensive. Optional, but the homeowners who use it never go back.

A NOTE FROM THE TEAM

Get a real *answer* before you spend a dollar.

We've audited a lot of systems on the Northshore that the homeowner thought needed full replacement. Maybe a third of them actually did. The rest were one transformer, four fixtures, and a Saturday afternoon away from looking great again.

If you're not sure where your system falls — that's exactly the point of an audit. We come out, walk the property, give you the real picture, and help you decide. Whether the right answer ends up being us or a few hours of your own time, you'll know what you're dealing with.

Audits are free. There's no expectation that an audit becomes a project. Plenty of them just become peace of mind.

Melissa & Jonathan Kujawski

FOR EXISTING SYSTEMS

Schedule a *free* system audit.

CALL OR TEXT

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