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Contact: Julie McCrary
White Good
717-278-0515
jmccrary@whitegood.com

Allison Kennedy
White Good
905-466-4362
akennedy@whitegood.com

New Research Outlines Human Behaviors Impacting Kitchen and Bath Design

NKBA Living Impacts Design study forecasts primary kitchen and bath influences: connectivity, simplification, wellness and living in place

HACKETTSTOWN, NJ — (June 8, 2020) — As part of its ongoing commitment to provide leading insights into the kitchen and bath industry, today the [National Kitchen & Bath Association \(NKBA\)](#) released benchmark research on the impact people’s behavior, life stage and habits have on kitchen and bath design. NKBA *Living Impacts Design* research is a comprehensive study that examines the outside influences transforming how kitchens and baths will be designed over the next three years.

“The role our homes play in our lives has never been so evident as it has these last few months,” said Bill Darcy, NKBA CEO. “Even before months of quarantine and working from home created new challenges, understanding the impact of how we live in these spaces and its effect on design, specifically in the kitchen and bath, was something we wanted to investigate. It’s extremely important for our members to better understand the ‘why’ behind what’s impacting design, not just the ‘what.’ It’s critical to know how people’s personal goals and habits change the way the kitchen and bath are designed, as well as the products used in them, to improve our lives.

From the data four overarching themes emerged: **Connected Living, Simplified Living, Healthy Living and Living in Place.**

- **Connected Living:** The need for increased human interaction, information access and a connection with nature. **87% surveyed listed need for greater inclusion and visibility with open kitchen layouts**, multi-function spaces within the kitchen to work for a variety of activities (meal prep, entertaining, school and work-from-home).
- **Simplified Living:** Home is a shelter and a retreat from a chaotic world. **80% of respondents said minimizing clutter, cleaning and targeted storage is a critical design need** for the kitchen and bath. 69% want their bathrooms to be an escape and **61% want design spaces for easy meal-prep.**
- **Healthy Living:** Creating spaces that fuel and heal the body; establishing a deeper connection to nature, focus on wellness. **48% want kitchens that help them to be more health-conscious.**
- **Living in Place:** Multiple generations are living together under the same roof, so there is an increased need for spaces that work for all, no matter their age, ability or physical



challenges. **67% surveyed have a desire to age in place**, and more than **60% want kitchens and baths that are easily used** for all ages and skills.

“People need an escape from a chaotic world, and their home provides that safe haven,” explained Tricia Zach, head of research for NKBA. “Our lives are bursting with responsibilities and commitments. We’re tasked to do more with less time, and this research provides valuable insights to the specific tools and solutions people need to help them achieve a better quality of life.”

Key Design Trends Emerging

Several significant design trends are becoming evident as a result of these lifestyle changes, and are identified in the research.

Kitchen

- Larger kitchen islands — multifunctional for meal prep, dining, work-from-home
- Open floor plan with fewer walls, allowing increased visibility and broader sight lines to other rooms, entertainment, media, nature/outdoors
- Increased number of charging outlets
- Landing counters for groceries and food delivery
- Larger sinks and refrigerators to wash and store fresh produce
- Commercial finishes and fabrics for easy cleaning and durability
- Recycling and composting stations

Bath

- Large-format tile, thinner grout lines for easier cleaning
- Compartmentalized storage with integrated outlets (hairdryer, razor, toothbrush, phone)
- Self-cleaning toilets
- Larger, zero-clearance showers with integrated seating and decorative grab bars
- Heated flooring
- Wi-Fi connectivity
- Voice activation for shower, lighting, entertainment
- Larger windows for increased natural lighting
- Use of natural materials including bamboo, stone, live plants

The NKBA *Living Impacts Design* research also examines which lifestyle habits are most important to homeowners in various life stages (Millennial, Gen X, Boomers and Greatest/Silent generation). While the majority of the themes were universal across each life stage, there are specific areas of importance for each generation.

In the kitchen, Millennials with kids and Gen X are driving many needs. In the bath, younger generations place higher importance on the environment, while older generations rank the need to heal and age in place as a top priority.

Design Theme Prominence Based on Life Stage

Millennials without kids

- Kitchen: Health-conscious, connection with nature
- Master Bath: Limited impact on the environment, feeling of the outdoors

Millennials with kids

- Kitchen: Ease in meal prep, open layout
- Master Bath: Multi-tasking and productivity, limited impact on the environment

Gen X

- Kitchen: Open layout, comforting place to spend time, love to cook
- Master Bath: An escape, minimal clutter

Boomers

- Kitchen: Comforting place for spending time, entertaining, open layout
- Master Bath: Comfortable for all generations, promoting wellness

Greatest/Silent

- Kitchen: Comforting place for spending time, organization, minimal clutter
- Master Bath: Comfortable for all generations, minimal clutter

More than 750 design professionals in North America, including designers, architects, showroom managers, remodelers, contractors, dealers and manufacturers, participated in the study.

Additional details and a complete copy of the *NKBA Living Impacts Design* research is available for purchase in the NKBA store at store.nkba.org. NKBA members receive a complimentary copy of the executive summary and reduced rates for the full report.

About the National Kitchen & Bath Association and the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show

The National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) is the not-for-profit trade association that owns the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show® (KBIS), as part of Design & Construction Week® (DCW). With nearly 50,000 members in all segments of the kitchen and bath industry, the NKBA has educated and led the industry since the association's founding in 1963. The NKBA envisions a world where everyone enjoys safe, beautiful and functional kitchen and bath spaces. The mission of the NKBA is to inspire, lead and empower the kitchen and bath industry through the creation of certifications, marketplaces and networks. For more information, visit [NKBA.org](https://nkba.org) or call 1-800-THE-NKBA (843-6522).

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