

NKBA | KBIS

Lighting In Kitchen & Bath Design

Qualitative Research Report | June 2024



About This Report

The NKBA has monitored lighting trends as part of its annual Design Trends research for many years. This report contains the results of NKBA's first qualitative study on the topic of lighting in kitchen and bath design. It explores the role lighting plays in residential environments and how it benefits the safety, wellness, and evolving lifestyles of homeowners.

This research is intended to inspire and encourage designers to strengthen their expertise in lighting design as a means of better serving their clients, broadening their skill sets and growing their businesses. Any of the lighting insights shared in this report should be considered practical, motivational and inspirational, not technical in nature.

Please visit [NKBA.org](https://www.nkba.org) to find NKBA's official educational programs and materials focused on lighting, such as the NKBA Specialty Badge Program: Lighting Specialist, NKBA Lighting Webinars and NKBA Voices from the Industry on-demand sessions.

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Research Overview

Objectives

NKBA conducted this research to explore the topic of lighting in kitchen and bath design. Specifically, to gather intelligence and better understand:

- + **Current perceptions** of lighting within the K&B industry.
- + Purpose of **layered lighting** and its role in good design.
- + **Factors driving growth** of K&B lighting.
- + How innovative designers create elevated environments using **advanced lighting techniques**.
- + Ways lighting design is helping K&B designers **expand/elevate their businesses**.
- + How to inspire and encourage designers to **strengthen their skills and expertise in lighting design**.



Methodology

- + NKBA recruited designers who recently completed kitchen or bath projects that showcased their lighting knowledge/skills.
- + Researchers conducted 10 in-depth interviews, 60 to 90 minutes apiece, five on kitchen-specific lighting and five on bath-specific lighting.
- + Finally, NKBA conducted a lighting design literature review to complement the findings from the in-depth interviews.



Meet the Kitchen Lighting Designers



GINA D'AMORE BAUERLE | D'Amore Interiors | Colorado

Gina D'Amore Bauerle is an award-winning interior designer and partner at D'Amore Interiors in Denver. Since joining the family business 20 years ago as a teen, she has expanded its interior design services with projects around the U.S. and has been featured in regional and national publications. Gina has been honored with more than 50 design awards, including recognition from NKBA and NAHB, "Top Five Under Forty" in 2020 by *Colorado Homes & Lifestyles*, and the "Best Overall Bath" at NKBA's national Design Competition.



ADAM GIBSON, CMKBD | Adam Gibson Design | Indiana

Adam Gibson leads an architectural design team specializing in luxury homes, additions, kitchens and bathrooms, entertainment and outdoor spaces. AGD is known for infusing natural light, clean lines, warmth and an efficient use of space. His team brings outside-the-box imagination, an ear attuned to the client's needs, eco-friendly technologies and the desire to create a healthy environment to each of their designs.



ELIZABETH P. LORD-LEVITT, CMKBD | Elizabeth P. Lord Residential Design | Colorado

Specializing in residential design and construction, Elizabeth P. Lord-Levitt's energetic approach to her designs is a culmination of almost 20 years in the remodeling industry. As a CMKBD and CLIPP-certified designer with a master's degree in real estate and construction management, Elizabeth applies her construction knowledge to her designs, resulting in completed projects that are not only aesthetically impactful, but practicable, functional and obtainable.



LAUREN SCHULTE | Monarch Kitchen Design Studio | New York

Lauren Schulte owns Monarch Kitchen Design Studio, a full-service kitchen, bath, installation and interior selection enterprise. Monarch offers clients a choice of high-quality cabinets, countertops, flooring, tile, hardware, fixtures and paint selections to customize any home remodel. Working with a variety of industry-specific tradesmen, the company provides one-stop renovation from start to finish, simplifying the entire experience for clients.



DOUG WALTER, CMKBD | Doug Walter Architects | Colorado

Architect Doug Walter, AIA, CMKBD, has specialized in residential remodeling for 44 years. He has distinct expertise in lighting, accessibility, historic preservation and kitchens and baths. He has won 150 local and national awards (e.g., Kitchen & Bath Design Industry Awards at KBIS 2022 and 2023) and has judged numerous local and national contests. Doug is also a Contributing Editor for *Pro Remodeler* magazine and has presented seminars at many industry conventions.

Meet the Kitchen Lighting Designers



PATRICIA DAVIS BROWN, CMKBD | Patricia Davis Brown Designs | Florida

Patricia Davis Brown is a highly accomplished and experienced interior designer with an impressive 38-year career in the design industry. Known for her expertise in creating stunning spaces, she is a Certified Master Kitchen and Bathroom Designer, specializing in high-end design projects. With an unwavering dedication to her craft, she continues to evolve and inspire others with her innovative design solutions.



JAKE GALANG, CKBD | Ilustracion by Jake | California

Jake Galang founded Ilustracion by Jake in 2006, initially providing drawings. It has evolved into an interior design firm that strongly believes in taking details and proportions from period styles and merging them with modern influences. Jake has worked and lived in multiple countries, which contributed to her hybrid design sense that melds the classic with the eclectic. She works closely with developers, investors and clients to design medium-to-high-end homes from the ground up or on renovations.



JOEY KIM, CKBD | Harts Design+Build | California

Founder and renovation lead of a boutique design and construction firm in northern California, Joey Kim balances finishes, top products and intuitive spatial layouts that result in easy-to-use and highly functional spaces her clients love. She believes a thoughtful lighting plan is at the core of every great design, and incorporates customizable, temperature-changing lighting layers to showcase the space's function and mood.



JENNIFER MCGEE | Jennifer McGee Design, Inc. | New Jersey

Jennifer McGee, founder and principal of Jennifer McGee Design Inc., is a Chicago native whose journey led her to New York City, where she established her esteemed interior design business more than 25 years ago. With a passion for creating spaces that are classically based but infused with a modern flare, Jennifer has earned acclaim and was named by *New York* magazine as one of the Top NY Metro design firms. Her work has been featured in *Town and Country*, *Traditional Home*, *Southern Accents*, *Design NJ* and other magazines.



AIMEE PEARSON, CKD | Kitchen and Lifestyle Designs, LLC | Tennessee

As an NKBA Certified Kitchen Designer with 30 years experience, Aimee Pearson specializes in kitchens, baths, outdoor kitchens and whole home design. She believes in educating herself on the latest technology in lighting and provides her clients with layouts, renderings, lighting plans and all selections for the entire project. She values strong collaboration with clients, architects and builders for an elevated blend of timeless design with modern twists that are unique to each client's aesthetics.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary | Key Insights



Residential Lighting Following Commercial Lead

- + **Residential design is taking lighting cues from the Commercial segment** (hotels, restaurants and offices), which has long been utilizing light to enhance function, aesthetics and user experience.
- + Residential lighting design was first incorporated into **luxury builds and remodels, but is slowly reaching the mainstream market**, in homes that were originally built to code and have been inadequately lit.



Mutually Beneficial for Homeowners and Designers

- + K&B lighting design can significantly **enhance the functionality of the space, elevate the aesthetics, and contribute to the homeowner's health, wellness and safety.**
- + Designers who understand the importance of proper lighting and **incorporate it into their kitchen and bath designs** will have a competitive advantage resulting in **increased revenue potential.**



Advocate for Lighting Show It's Worth

- + Lighting is too important to a project's success to be left to the architect, builder, general contractor, electrician or homeowner. **The designer needs to own it and advocate for it.**
- + **Educate clients on the benefits of proper lighting and visually demonstrate** the difference it can make in their home with before and after project photos, measuring footcandles with different light sources, taking them to a lighting lab, etc.

Executive Summary | Key Insights (cont'd)



Layered Lighting Elevates Kitchen & Bath Design

- + **Ambient, task and accent lighting**, strategically placed at various heights and locations in a space, can be **transformational**.
- + Designers agree that a minimum of **3-4 layers of lighting is needed to properly light a kitchen or bath, although some** designers use as many as 7 layers.
- + The number of layers needed **depends on the purpose of the space, how it is going to be used and what the homeowners want it to look like.**



Awareness & Education Key to Widespread Adoption

- + According to **NKBA's 2023 Design Trends report**, nearly **three-quarters** of designers admit that their **knowledge of lighting techniques and products is limited**.
- + Lighting experts in this qualitative study **confirmed that many designers lack the knowledge and experience to expertly light a kitchen or bath** and others are **intimidated, or even fearful, of lighting**.

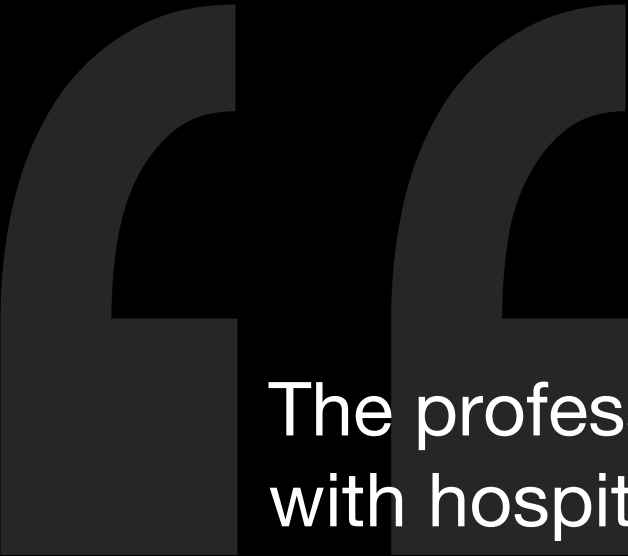


Building Lighting Skills is an Iterative Process

- + There is **no “one-size fits all”** when it comes to incorporating great lighting into K&B designs.
 - + **Partner with a lighting/tech integrator at the start of every project.**
 - + Build your own skills by understanding the **basics of lighting and incorporating them into each project**, aiming to improve each time.
- + Designers who learn how to expertly light a kitchen or bath can **increase their marketability** and advance their career.

Key Findings

Current Perceptions of K&B Lighting Design



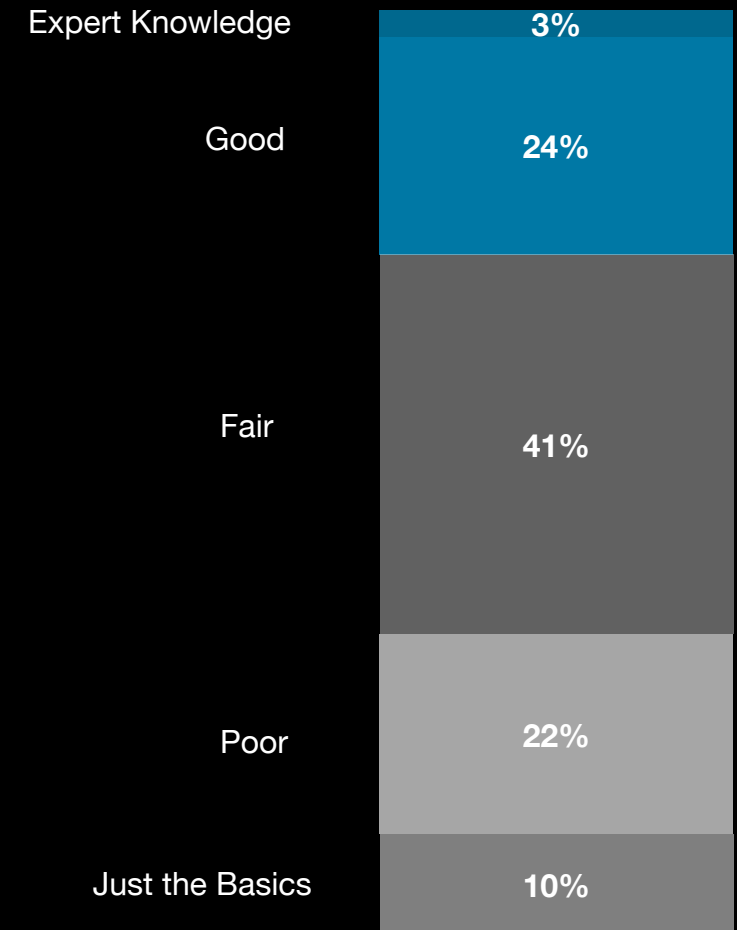
The profession of lighting design is mostly concerned with hospitality and other commercial real estate applications. Residential lighting design is currently focused on luxury build s/remodels and has been slow to filter down to average homes, which are built to International Residential Code and are inadequately lit.

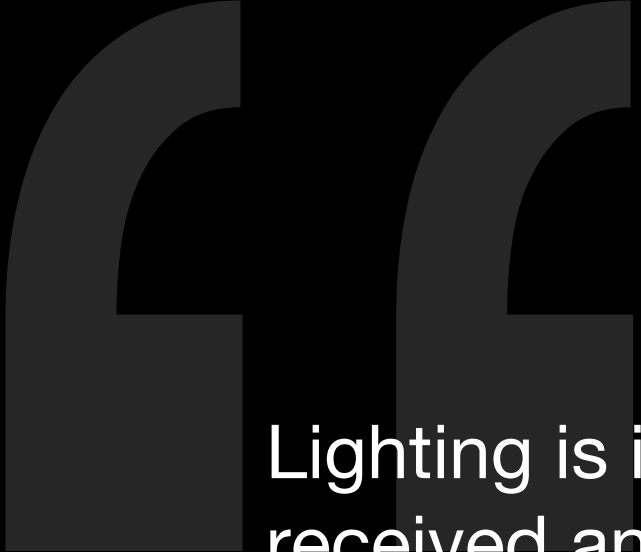
— Doug Walter, CMKBD

Knowledge of Residential Lighting Design Is Limited

- + Lighting is one of the most powerful yet least understood tools in the designer's tool kit.
 - + **Only 27% of NKBA designers/specifiers feel their lighting knowledge is good or expert.**
- + Many designers:
 - + Are **intimidated by or unaware** of the nuances of light levels and temperatures, and what's ideal for kitchens and baths.
 - + **Lack the knowledge and experience** to expertly light a kitchen or bath.

Knowledge of Lighting Techniques and Products





Lighting is important, yet few people do it. I've never received an architectural plan that had a true lighting plan on it, accounting for beam spreads, candle power, lumens, kelvin temperature. They're all afraid of it.

— Patricia Davis Brown, CMKBD

Lighting Design Is Often Overlooked and Under Utilized

- + Too often, **no one takes ownership of lighting details** in a residential build or remodel — not the architect, builder, designer or electrician.
- + Homeowners **have a false sense that the lighting details have been thought about.**
- + Complying only with the requirements of the 2024 International Residential Code will **result in lighting that is grossly inadequate, particularly in kitchens and family rooms**, which are lighting-intense spaces.





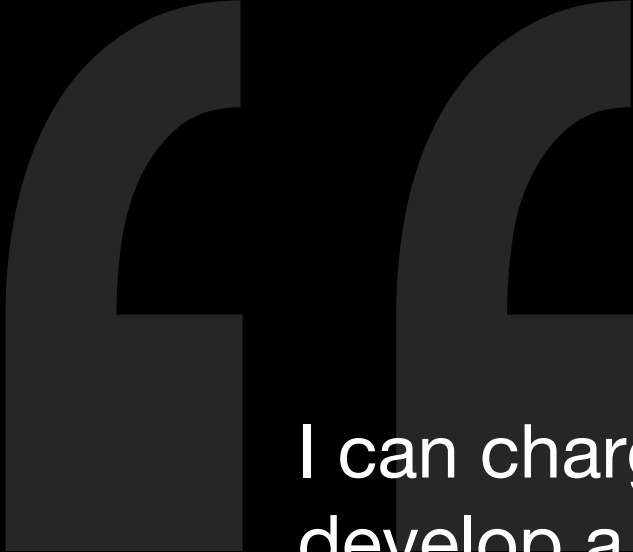
Lighting is too important to a project's success to be left to the architect, builder, general contractor, electrician or homeowner. The designer needs to own it.

— Consensus of Designers Participating in NKBA's *Lighting In Kitchen & Bath Design Study*

Benefits of Acquiring K&B Lighting Design Knowledge

- + Good lighting **complements and enhances a designer's work** — highlighting unique features, setting the desired mood and creating comfortable illumination.
- + Being highly **skilled in lighting design enables a residential designer to:**
 - + Protect the **health, safety and welfare** of homeowners.
 - + Have a **competitive advantage** over their peers.
 - + **Increase demand** among consumers for their residential design work.
 - + **Increase revenues** by charging more for their design work and/or by charging for their lighting design services.





I can charge what I deserve to charge for my time to develop a lighting plan. I've diversified my offerings and created multiple income streams. Lighting design is one of my offerings.

— Patricia Davis Brown, CMKBD

Role of Lighting in K&B Design



Some say lighting is the most important element in design. A thoughtful, creative lighting scheme enhances the beauty and mood of a space, improves functionality and contributes to the health, wellness and safety of those who live there.

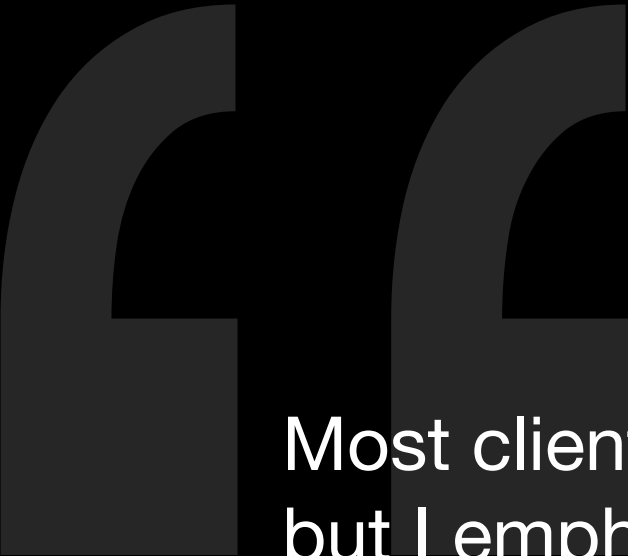
Source: The Art of Interior Design: Creating Beautiful and Functional Spaces (March 2023)

Improve Functionality

Proper lighting **improves a room's functionality** by:

- + **Catering to the room's specific purpose and activities** and illuminating tasks typically performed in that space.
- + **Brightening the space to improve visibility** for homeowners and guests of all ages.
- + Offering the **flexibility to control brightness based on task, user and time of day.**
- + **Personalizing the lighting plan to match** homeowners' lifestyles.
- + Adjusting the **intensity and positioning of lights to create ambiance ranging from cozy and intimate to bright and energetic.**





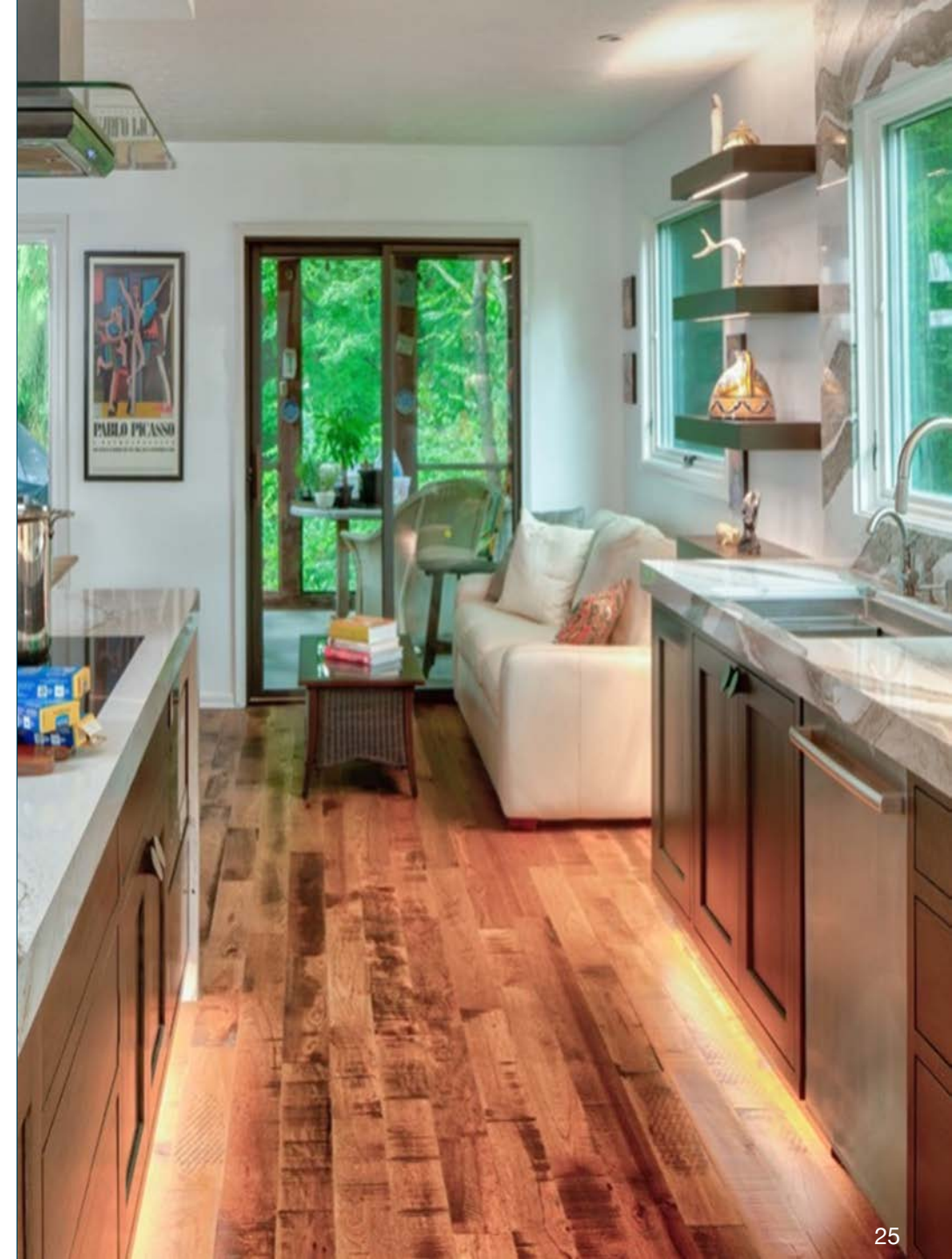
Most client conversations are based on aesthetics, but I emphasize function. If your kitchen is dark, you can't function. Focus on function first – I can make any functional kitchen pretty.

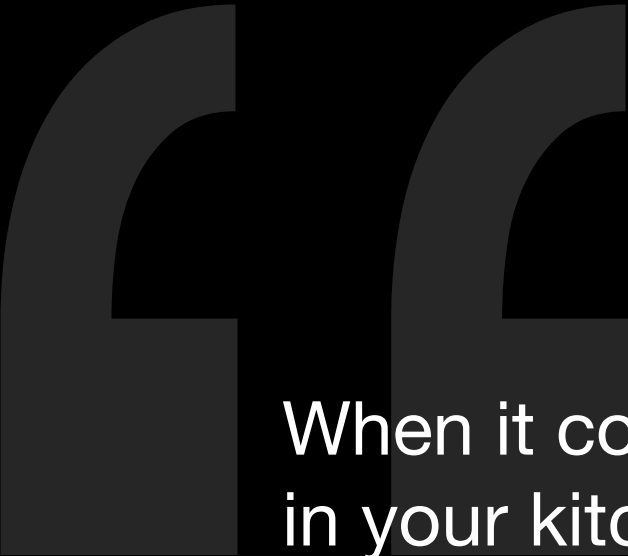
— Elizabeth P. Lord-Levitt, CMKBD

Elevate Aesthetics

Proper lighting **elevates a room's aesthetics** by:

- + Creating a **desired ambience and mood**.
- + Adding **texture and depth** through layering.
- + Accentuating the **true colors and natural beauty** of other design elements in the space.
- + Highlighting the beauty of **architectural details, artwork and other focal points**.





When it comes to designing the perfect ambiance in your kitchen or bath, lighting plays a crucial role. A well-thought-out lighting plan not only illuminates a space but also enhances its aesthetics.

— Consensus of Designers Participating in NKBA's *Lighting In Kitchen & Bath Design Study*

Brighten and Visually Expand

Proper lighting **brightens and visually expands** a room by:

- + **Eliminating shadows and harsh lighting.**
- + **Defining areas of an open floor plan** to feel either open and inclusive or cozy and intimate.
- + **Influencing the way colors, textures and surfaces appear** and are interpreted at any time of day.
- + **Controlling how natural light flows through the space.**





Eliminating natural light is a skill I use to make small spaces really pop and look larger by accentuating the lighting and glass. I could paint your walls and your cabinets black, and still make the space feel bigger by the lighting that we would use.

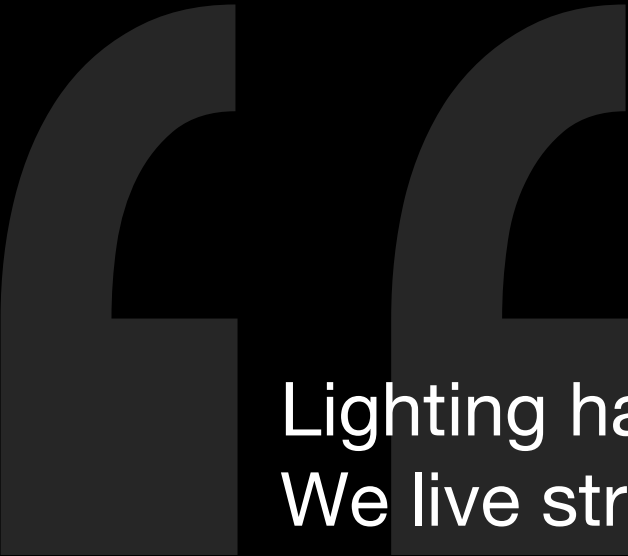
— Lauren Schulte

Contribute to Health, Wellness and Safety

Proper lighting **contributes to the health, wellness and safety** of homeowners by:

- + **Boosting energy levels with a bright, invigorating environment or inducing relaxation with an intimate ambience.**
- + **Helping to stabilize circadian rhythms and improve overall mood, physical and mental health and cognitive performance.**
- + **Providing adequate illumination to help prevent falls, cuts, burns, accidental poisoning or prescription drug mistakes.**

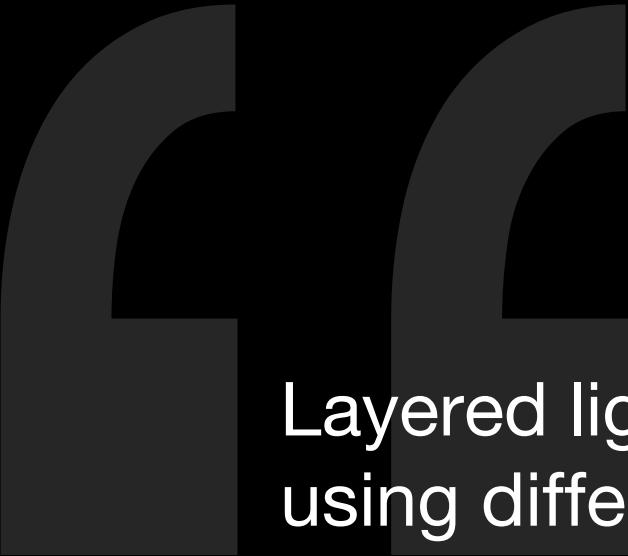




Lighting has become critical to health and well-being. We live stressful lives and being able to have your home truly be a haven where you feel good and you're able to rest from stress is important. Studies are showing how mimicking circadian rhythms are critical to feeling good.

— Jennifer McGee

Layered Lighting



Layered lighting is a design technique that involves using different types of lighting to create depth, ambiance and functionality in a space. By incorporating various fixtures strategically placed throughout the room, lighting designers can achieve a visually pleasing and functional environment that caters to different needs and moods.

—Source: Layered Lighting: Illuminating Your Space in Style (October 2, 2023)

1

Ambient Lighting

- + **Basic Definition*:** Also referred to as general lighting, ambient lighting provides an overall illumination that allows people to move about safely. It is most efficiently delivered by a surface-mounted, hanging or portable fixture.
- + **Purpose:**
 - + Provides general, evenly distributed lighting, ensuring the space is adequately illuminated.
 - + It's usually the primary source of illumination in a room.
 - + Contributes to the mood and ambience of the space.
- + **Examples:** Natural light is often used as an ambient light source. Designers also create ambient lighting with overhead light fixtures, such as:
 - + Chandeliers
 - + Flush mounts
 - + Recessed lights
 - + Pendants
- + **Designer Tip:** Base ambient lighting decisions on the size, structure, aesthetics and purpose of the room.

2

Task Lighting

- + **Basic Definition*:** Task lighting provides the illumination required for a particular task, such as reading or meal preparation.
- + **Purpose:**
 - + Drives the functionality and performance of the room.
 - + Highlights certain areas and remove shadows, glares or other distracting features.
 - + Creates dimension when used with ambient lighting.
 - + Filters out distractions while performing tasks when used alone.
 - + Illuminates work surfaces and provides concentrated light in work areas.
- + **Examples:** Designers often use the following for task lighting:
 - + Pendants
 - + Under-cabinet lights
 - + Sconces
 - + Vanity lights above mirror
- + **Designer Tip:** When choosing task lighting, analyze a room's primary function or focus and consider how much light each specific area requires.

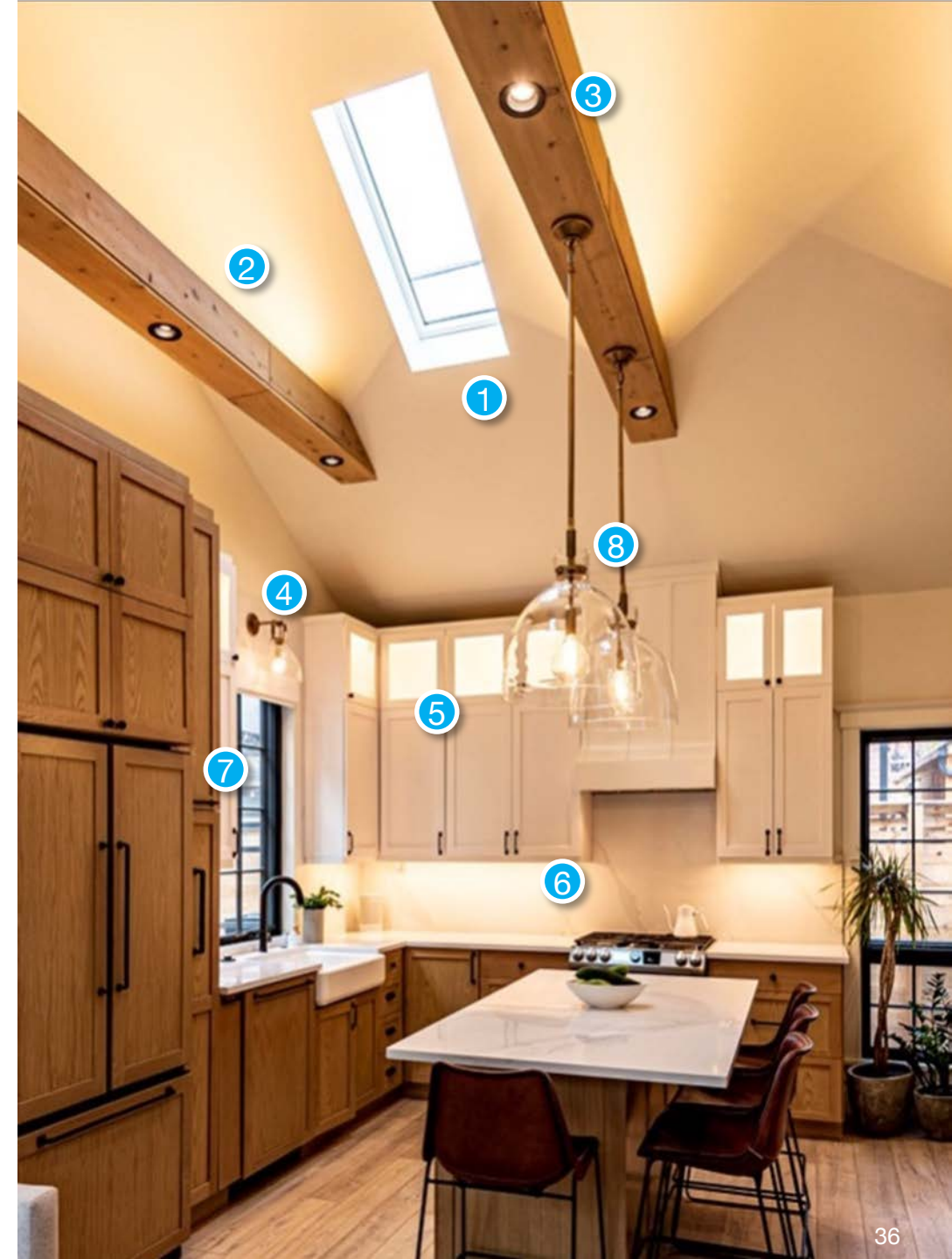
3

Accent Lighting

- + **Basic Definition*:** Also referred to as decorative lighting, accent lighting focuses on or draws attention to a particular area or object.
- + **Purpose:**
 - + Adds depth, drama and visual interest by highlighting specific objects, textures or architectural features.
 - + Creates focal points and adds elegance to the space.
 - + Illuminates dark spots or hard-to-reach areas, like corners or vaulted ceilings.
- + **Examples:** Designers often use the following for accent lighting:
 - + Track lighting
 - + LED tape
 - + Spotlights
 - + Rope lighting
 - + Picture lights
- + **Designer Tip:** Accent lighting is considered the “jewelry of the room,” so designers use it to add the necessary bling and finishing touches that complete and elevate the overall design.

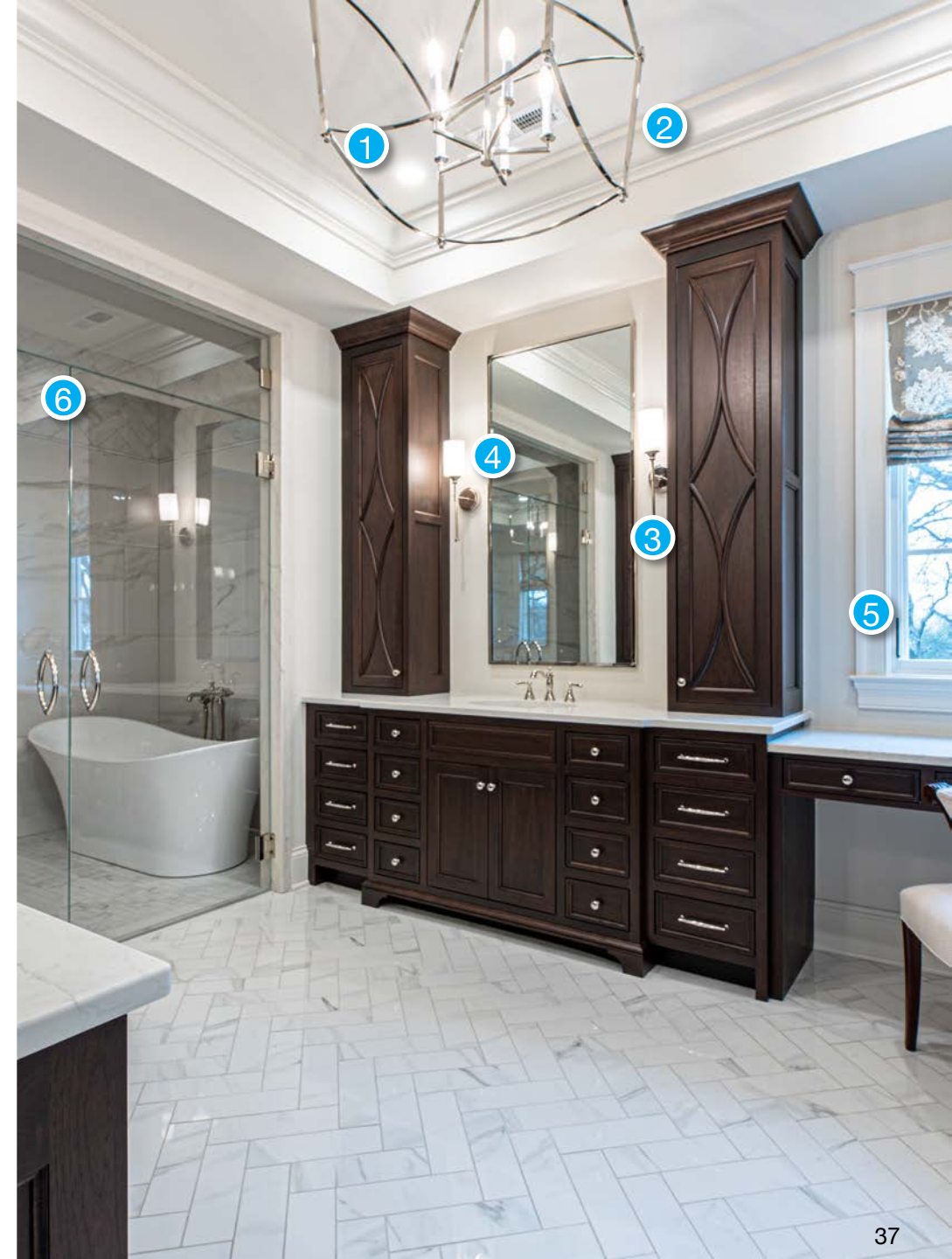
Layered Lighting: Kitchen

1. Skylights are a source of **natural daylight**.
2. LED lighting placed above beams highlights vaulted ceilings with an **ambient glow**.
3. Wood beams are used to direct **task lighting** at proper distances to workspaces below.
4. A **decorative sconce** creates a warm focal point as daylight disappears.
5. Ambient **upper cabinet light** creates **interest** and height to fit the scale of the room.
6. **Under-cabinet lighting** illuminates counter workspaces.
7. **Lighting inside cabinets and drawers** makes it easier to see their contents.
8. **Glass pendants** over the island create interest and warmth, while supporting a multi-functional work surface.



Layered Lighting: Bath

1. Flush-mount, recessed cans, in all four corners of this ceiling tray, provide **general lighting to illuminate the entire room**.
2. A **center-fixture light provides up-lighting** that hits the ceiling and bounces back down, brightening the perimeter of the tray.
3. **Sconces** on both vanities are elevated to align with the heights of the homeowners, **directing light straight at their faces**.
4. **Frosted glass on sconces** allows for significantly higher wattages, which provide warm lighting for the face.
5. **Natural light** in the seated makeup area is critically important for applying makeup and styling hair in the daylight hours.
6. **Flush-mount, recessed cans** provide general lighting in the wet room.



Layered Lighting Considerations

- + Several projects examined for this study contained **seven layers of lighting**. Most designers agreed that a minimum of three to four layers of lighting is usually needed to properly light a kitchen or bath.
- + The number of layers needed depends on what the space is, **how it is being used and what the homeowners want it to look like**.
- + **Layered lighting is particularly important in areas of the country that are dark, gray and gloomy** from November to April. Great lighting can eliminate the dreariness outside, creating a sense of light and bright all the time.



Factors Driving K&B Lighting Design Growth



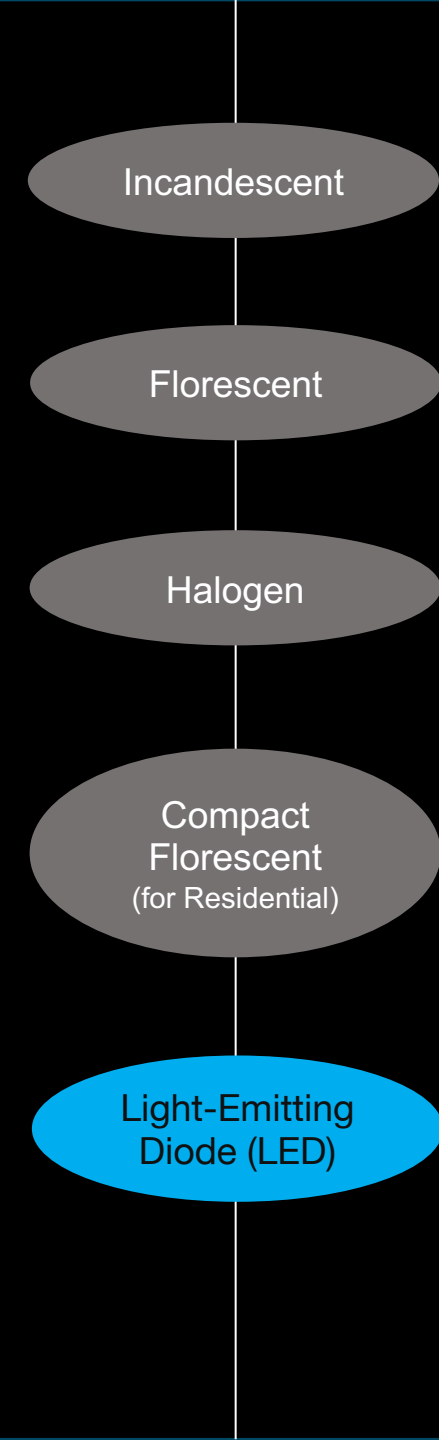
Lighting design has advanced significantly in recent years due to the confluence of technology, innovative products and the artistic use of those products by talented lighting designers.

— Consensus of Designers Participating in NKBA's *Lighting In Kitchen & Bath Design Study*

Technology of Lighting

There has been more progress in the technology of lighting in the past 10 years than in the past 100 years. LEDs have been a revolution!

—Doug Walter, CMKBD



Innovative Lighting Products

- + Brands have capitalized on the **technology** that is now available to provide designers with a wide variety of **innovative lighting products** that they can use to improve the functionality and aesthetics of their K&B designs.
 - + **LED strip/tape lighting** which can be used in decorative ceilings, under cabinets, in drawer and cabinet interiors, and on the top and bottom of shelves to create up and down lighting.
 - + **Motion-activated LED lighting in shower niches** to provide illumination only when needed.
 - + **Tubular skylights** to collect and magnify natural light and to provide more light than a traditional skylight.
 - + **Circadian lighting** to support human circadian cycles by providing the appropriate intensity and spectrum of light throughout different points of the day.



Lighting Controls

- + **Lighting controls** are essential to **creating the desired ambiance, functionality and energy efficiency** of a space.
- + **To efficiently control multiple layers of lighting in kitchens and baths**, standard lighting controls on walls can now be replaced with:
 - + Modern Scene Lighting Controls
 - + Touch Panels (mounted on or flush-mounted into walls)
 - + Connected Apps (on smartphones, tablets or devices)
 - + Smart Remote Controls (similar in shape/size to TV remotes)
 - + Voice Assistants
- + **The type, technology and placement of lighting controls should make operation simple and intuitive** for homeowners and should be planned well in advance.



Lighting Systems and Whole Home Integrated Systems

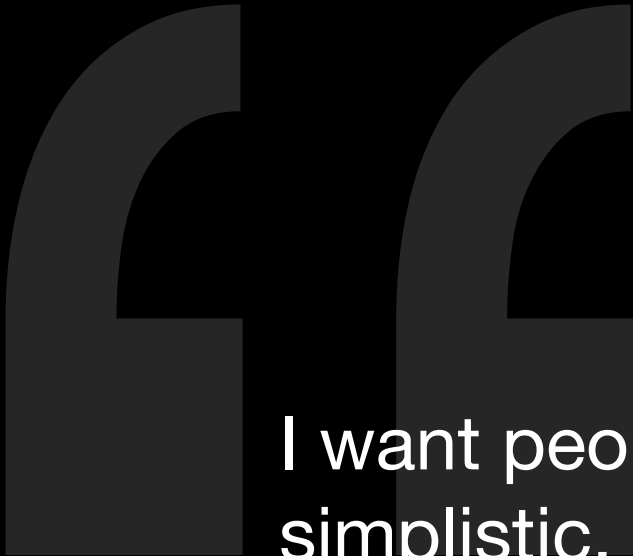
- + Lighting is just one part of an overall integrated space. Clients want the control and convenience of **integrated lights, motorized shades, music, audio/video, doors and security to be in sync with typical daily activities**, like cooking, arriving home, hosting a dinner party or locking up for the night.
- + Smart switches, dimmers, timers, motion sensors, voice-activated and remote control **make life easier for homeowners**.
- + Technology integration helps homeowners:
 - + **Remotely control lighting** in second homes to mimic occupancy.
 - + Illuminate the home's interior and exterior **before arrival**.
 - + Cater to **multigenerational needs**, from task lighting appropriate for homework to reducing eye strain or glare for older users.



Designer Creativity

- + **Designers are using existing lighting products in creative and innovative ways.**
 - + Using decorative lighting fixtures as works of art.
 - + Moving chandeliers out of dining rooms and making them focal points in kitchens and baths.
 - + Using ambient lighting in kitchens with open floor plans to create a cozy, 'room within a room' feel.
- + **Lighting designers are demonstrating their skills and protecting their revenue streams by:**
 - + Working with manufacturers of custom decorative lighting to create one-of-a-kind fixtures for luxury kitchens or baths.
 - + Mixing and matching lighting product brands to create something unique that is difficult to copy or cost shop.
 - + Sourcing products from small, boutique lighting brands which are difficult for clients to find elsewhere.





I want people to stop playing it safe, boring and simplistic, and start incorporating more fun, pizzazz and art into their spaces. Art is so important. Why wouldn't you want your light fixtures to be small pieces of art?

— Lauren Schulte

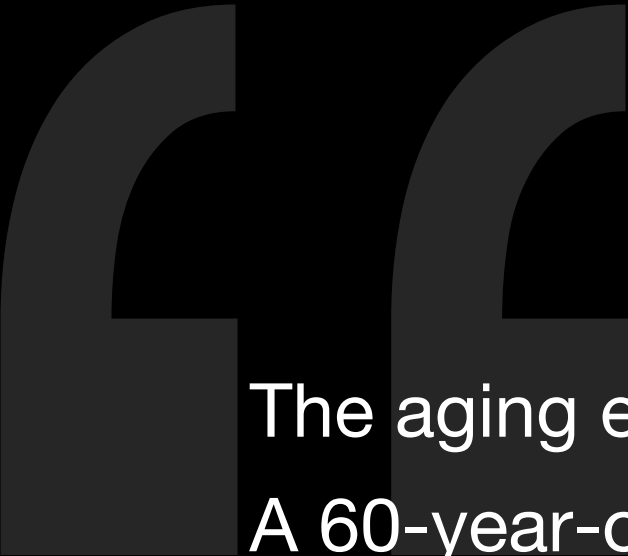
Designer Tips for K&B Lighting

K&B Lighting Tips

- + **Get the right light in the right place.**

- + The “**right light**” is one that **provides at least 50 footcandles on the work surface** (rely on manufacturers’ photometric data to select the right light).
- + The “**right place**” is **directly above the work surface**, so that homeowners are **not working in their own shadow**.
- + Most smartphones offer free or affordable **light meter apps that can be easily downloaded and used to measure footcandles**.

- + Every homeowner is different in their needs and preferences when it comes to lighting. To provide clients with the ability to control their own lighting, supply **dimmer switches on almost every circuit**.
 - + **As people age, they need more light and less glare** to see clearly. If a **25-year-old needs 50 footcandles** to see what they’re doing in the kitchen, a **65-year-old needs 100 footcandles or more**.
 - + **Control or eliminate glare by never using naked light bulbs**, like the candelabra in a chandelier. Try to put shades or lenses on everything.



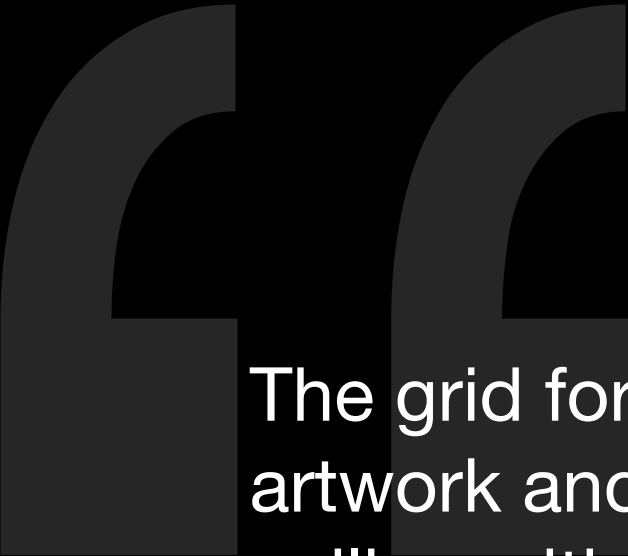
The aging eye is not as efficient as the younger eye.
A 60-year-old sees 1/3 as well as a 20-year-old.

Bring up a senior's acuity with light intensity. Design ahead for the client for their vision in 20 years!

—Doug Walter, CMKBD

K&B Lighting Tips

- + **Reduce the number and size of recessed cans where possible.**
 - + **Replace large cans** with 2”-3” integrated LEDs with strong lumens that are easy to focus and have great color temperature.
 - + **Avoid the “recessed can grid” layout** for general lighting in a residence. This is more appropriate for office settings.
 - + **For islands, utilize pendants with effective beam spreads** to reduce the number of recessed overhead lights.
 - + In baths, **recessed lights over a bathroom sink cast unflattering** shadows on homeowners’ faces and are not adequate for tasks like shaving or applying makeup.
- + **Use light fixtures as artistic elements**, creating “floating islands” or showcasing “jewels” in the room (e.g., mesh in a cabinet door, a gorgeous hood, backlighting a glass backsplash).
- + **Place decorative sconces near windows** to compensate for loss of natural light at night.

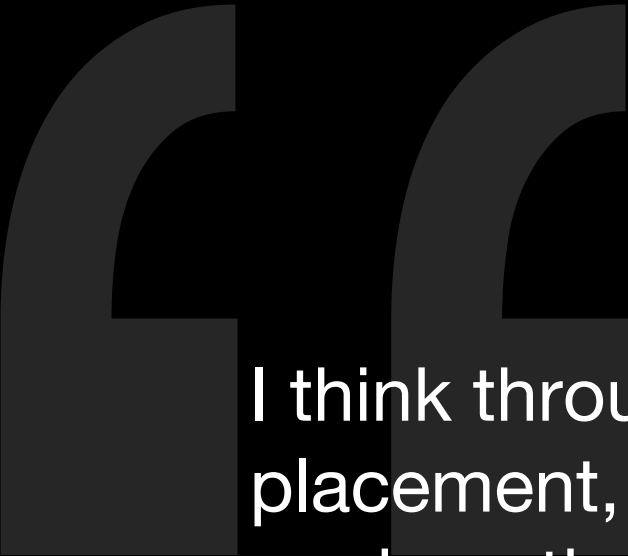


The grid format of recessed lights is dead. I'll light the artwork and seating areas and leave a vast area of ceiling with no lights. Using recessed cans as ambient light is a misuse of the technology and a waste of money.

— Doug Walter, CMKBD

K&B Lighting Tips

- + Select **island pendants** accounting for **size, scale, finish and material** to bring a cozy feel to a large space.
- + Consider wall washing: **uplighting and downlighting to provide an indirect glow** and the illusion of space.
- + **Coordinate the finishes of light fixtures with plumbing hardware and textural accents to create a cohesive design and sense of serenity.**
- + **Future proof your lighting plan** because clients worry about obsolescence.
 - + Account for the future in the electrical plan — not just for lighting, but for induction, ventilation, motorized drapes, security and other interior/exterior controls.
 - + Design for the future at the rough-in stage. Anticipate client needs for adding interior cabinet, drawer or toe-kick lighting at a later phase.
 - + Consult with a technology integrator. Prewire for products and technologies the client hasn't selected yet.
 - + Run conduit everywhere with a lighting control to anticipate future cables and controls and make installation easier.



I think through the layout, all the way through switch placement, considering room by room where switches go, how they look, how to turn off basement lights from upstairs, how lights might play with each other, for example, creating a morning winter scene for 6 am coffee that you do not need in the summer.

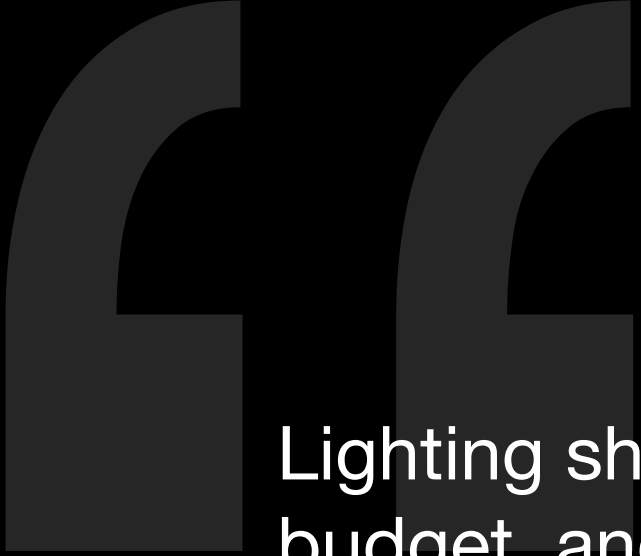
— Elizabeth P. Lord-Levitt, CMKBD, Kitchen

Budgeting Lessons From the Field

**Lighting does not
get the budget or
planning it requires**

Advocate Early

- + **Architects and builders consider the base layer, not the nuance.** Specifying quick grids and generic recessed lights doesn't allow for decorative fixtures or sconces.
- + **Applying commercial lighting principles to residential loses a lot in translation.** Specifying is fast, using economies of scale, but can be careless in terms of quantity, quality, intensity, color, product and material.
- + **Task lighting is rarely optimized.** Ensure that proper light illuminates the area where work happens.
- + **Other investments fight for homeowner attention and budget:** Kitchen appliances, stone, cabinetry, marble, tile, luxury steam showers and more. Lighting deserves the same consideration!



Lighting should be 10% to 15% of the kitchen project budget, and up to 20% for luxury lighting. It will flex according to how important it is to the client.

— Lauren Schulte

Layer in a lighting budget on the builder plans

Estimate to Avoid Surprises

- + Start estimating **early in the process**.
- + Develop initial rough estimation systems to help set and **manage client expectations** early.
- + Account for hidden and not-so-hidden **cost drivers**. Budget issues frequently arise:
 - + Incomplete electrical plans (for example, those without AV, powered window shades or surround sound)
 - + Less experienced electricians
 - + Inadequate task lighting
 - + Not accounting for expensive finishes (like unlacquered brass that patinas)
 - + Last-minute switch selections or placement and home automation.

Seeing is believing

Educate Clients and Demonstrate the Difference

- + Design meaningful “**show and tell**” experiences that help clients see value worth paying for:
 - + Find **before and after** project photos that reveal dark spots and problems lighting can solve.
 - + Design **lighting lab** experiences. Take a favorite piece of art to view under different colors/temperatures.
 - + Demonstrate the effect of Color Rendering Index (CRI) and **color temperature** on the color of surfaces or cabinetry selections.
 - + Use a free smartphone app to measure the **footcandles** of different lights on a workspace.

**Save and splurge
where necessary**

Design for Value and Prioritize the Spend

- + **Prioritize lighting** in kitchen, primary bath and powder room, and save in other rooms.
- + **Prioritize task lighting**, then ambient over decorative lighting.
- + **Skimp on the number, not quality, of recessed cans.**
Quality LED recessed lights with higher footcandles allow designers to use fewer fixtures and space them farther apart.
- + **Find good quality for the price.** For example, 90 CRI is more affordable than 95.
- + Cut custom lighting and **take advantage of the wide selection of stock fixture brands.**
- + Develop your line of **good, better, best** light fixture options.

Last minute changes can have risky consequences

Expect and Manage Changes

- + Lighting is **vulnerable to ad hoc modification**, long past the **approval of the lighting plan**.
- + Builders and GCs can have **favorite vendors and brands**, and/or **push certain products and fixtures to preserve markups**.
- + Electricians can make **late-breaking field decisions based on “what’s in the truck”** or an aversion to stacked switches, for example.
- + **Homeowners can make knee-jerk reactions**, for example letting an electrician swap in cheaper “pancake lights” with hotspots, low CRI or fixtures insufficient for task lighting.
- + **Homeowners find copycat fixtures** on the Internet that lack a quality finish, workmanship or recourse if they arrive broken.

**Collaboration is a
win-win for all**

Build Partnerships

- + **Builders, architects and electricians** should not always be considered adversaries. They **can be fantastic partners**.
- + Build **relationships to learn** from each other.
- + **Follow/shadow on a job** to understand the technical considerations and their experience.
- + **Learn together** — share ideas and knowledge.
- + Coordinate a **joint walk-through** onsite for alignment on projects.
- + Support them and **cross-refer to lift the project** and all players.



Designers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and fabricators are all working as a team, not as siloed professionals, to create these beautiful spaces. Since the goal is the same for all members of the team, no one should be working against each other or feel like they only have certain responsibilities on a job site.

— Elizabeth P. Lord-Levitt, CMKBD

How to Build Lighting Skills

1

Enhance Product Knowledge and Education

- + **Books, Classes, Certifications**

- + NKBA Lighting Specialty Badge, NKBA Kitchen & Bath Lighting book
- + Lighting Institute for Residential Lighting; American Lighting Association
- + Chief Architect software for lighting plans

- + **Light Labs, Manufacturer Showrooms:** Seek classes, demonstrations and sales reps as project partners.

- + Lutron, Crestron, Ferguson, local light labs (e.g., Professional Light Services in Indiana)
- + Kichler, Häfele, Visual Comfort, Schonbek, Nicor

- + **Webinars, influencers:** David Warfel, Randall Whitehead, Robin Rigby Fisher, CMKBD, Patricia Davis Brown, CMKBD, Doug Walter, CMKBD, Sean Lowe (Business of Home).

- + **Trade Shows:** KBIS, IBIS, Illuminating and Engineering Society of America (IESA), LightFair, Lightovation (Dallas); in Europe: Salone del Mobile (Milan) and Maison & Objet (Paris).

- + **Integrators:** Network with integrators to share projects with edgy and exciting new light designs and elements.

2

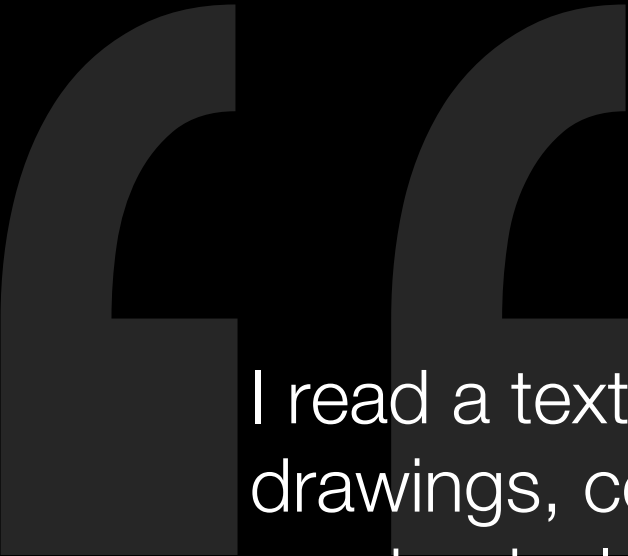
Build Your Team and Field Experience

+ Broaden Your Bench of Partners

- + **Architects, Builders and GCs:** Find partners who share your values, and part ways with people who are not on board with your vision and passion for lighting.
- + **Electricians:** A trade crisis makes good electricians even more valuable. Treat them as partners, build trust in budgeting and in front of clients, cross-refer.
- + **Tech Integrators:** GCs may bring their own integrators, but these partners see across more projects, enriching your ideas with inspiration from other jobs.
- + **Lighting Vendors:** Vendors such as Visual Comfort and Nicor offer lighting design services and technical support.

+ Invest Time In the Field

- + Shadow electricians/builders to gain understanding of their contexts and needs.
- + Meet onsite during the rough-in stage with clients for an electrical walk-through.
- + Experiment on your own kitchen and bath to gain experience.



I read a textbook cover to cover that changed my drawings, construction plans, electrical plans and mechanical drawings for contractors. It made me better; it made me more professional. And now, when I hand a drawing to a contractor, they're like 'Wow, you really know what you're talking about.'

— Gina D'Amore Bauerle

3

Take Control

- + **Designers must drive the lighting and electrical conversation. No one else is thinking it through on their own.**
 - + Lighting practices came out of hospitality, education, office/commercial. No one translated the practices particularly well to residential.
 - + Homeowners generally lack knowledge and focus more on aesthetics.
 - + Builders and architects consider the base lighting layer, but they allocate energy and budget to other architectural details. Plans rarely include task lighting.
 - + Some GCs and electricians can have entrenched habits and favorites, deciding on substitutions based on mark-ups and availability.
 - + Governments set codes and mandates (pay attention to lumens for LED) but are far removed from the end-user experience with lighting final work surfaces.
- + **Lighting design can be a money-maker and differentiator for designers, as they becomes more proficient in:**
 - + Demonstrating differences worth the investment, thereby increasing scope and budget.
 - + Delivering fool-proof plans that reduce mistakes in the field and save both time and money.
 - + Building a resource portfolio of good/better/best brands and unique products that cover the value chain, to minimize price shopping vulnerability.
 - + Partnering with lines and brands that allow designer markup.

4

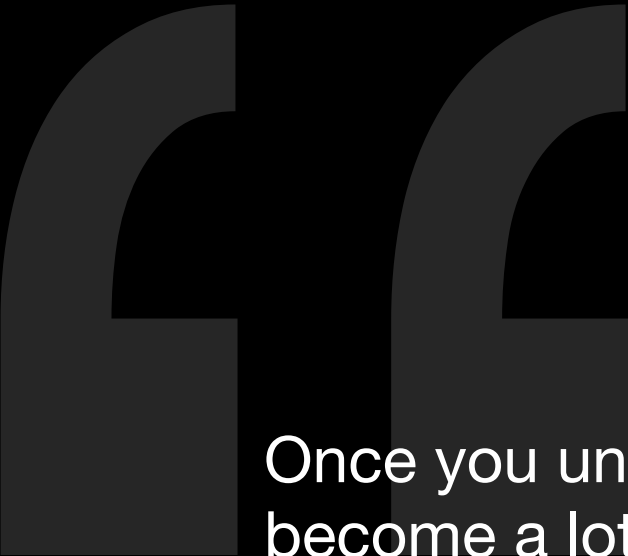
Follow the Rules

- + **Do the Math.** Some designers may be unaware or intimidated, but a little math makes all the difference. Obtain photometric charts, consider parabolic curves, footcandles, lumens, temperature, height off the counter or floor, beam spreads and intersections. Build your own cheat sheets to optimize the equation for different sizes and heights of kitchens or the age of your clients (under/over 45).
- + **Commit to Plans.** Designer plans align and commit the full team to success, with specified elevations, as well as clear mechanical and electrical plans to reduce mistake time and money wasted in the field. Some designers require permission for any field changes or substitutions, with proof that specifications are being met.
- + **Learn and Leverage Industry Best Practices.** Associations currently offer classes (Certified Living In Place Professional) and specialty badges (e.g., NKBA's Lighting Specialist) to share guidelines and industry best practices for residential lighting design.
- + **Leverage Expertise.** Share your plans in advance with integrators, vendors and electricians in the spirit of transparency, continuous learning and optimization.

5

Break the Rules

- + **Consider REDUCING natural light.** It may be contrary to the norm, but there could be compelling trade-offs. **Don't be afraid to take out windows and doors!** Especially when removing walls to create an open plan, light will flow through the space. Create the optimal layout and plan the space first. Lighting design can always compensate for natural light.
- + **Go big or go home.** Fill spaces with large fixtures and make a statement. It can be easily changed down the road. More options are coming over 36" wide. Put in all the layers you can and put them on dimmers to tone down the lighting when needed.
- + **Mix and match with intention.** Anyone can choose fixtures from the same collection but mixing metals and finding connections and stories for merging faucet, hardware and light fixtures across brands and textures can create something new that is difficult to copy or cost shop.



Once you understand the basics of lighting, it is going to become a lot easier and you will have your toolkit of favorite lighting products that you are going to use over and over again.

— Doug Walter, CMKBD

Designer Toolkit: Favorite Lighting Products

ALL LIGHTING PRODUCTS*

- + Allegri
- + Alora
- + Arteriors
- + Capital Lighting
- + Chameleon
- + Corbett
- + Craftmade
- + Crystorama
- + Eurofase
- + Fine Art
- + Generation Lighting
- + Hafele
- + Hammerton Studio
- + Hinkley
- + Hubbardton Forge
- + Hudson Valley Lighting
- + Kalco
- + Kichler
- + Kuzco Lighting
- + Leviton
- + Lutron
- + Matteo
- + Mitzi
- + Modern Forms
- + NICOR
- + Nina Magon
- + Nora
- + Oxygen
- + Quoizel
- + Quorum
- + Regina Andrew Hardware
- + Restoration Hardware
- + Robern
- + Robert Abbey
- + Savoy House
- + Schonbek
- + Sidler
- + Solatube
- + Studio M
- + Troy Lighting
- + Urban Electric
- + Vaughan
- + Visual Comfort
- + WAC Lighting

BULBS

- + Cooper Lighting Solutions
- + Cree Lighting
- + Green Creative
- + Philips
- + Sora

CUSTOM

- + Hammerton Studio
- + Hubbardton Forge

Lighting in Kitchen & Bath Design

All NKBA market research reports are available at [nkba.org/research](https://www.nkba.org/research).

The 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 design and remodeling industry, the NKBA has educated and led the industry since the association's founding in 1963.

The NKBA's mission is to inspire, lead and empower the kitchen and bath industry through the creations of certifications, specialty badges, events and summits, research and community. The NKBA envisions a world where everyone enjoys safe, beautiful and functional kitchen and bath spaces.

For more information, visit [nkba.org](https://www.nkba.org) or email us at info@nkba.org.



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