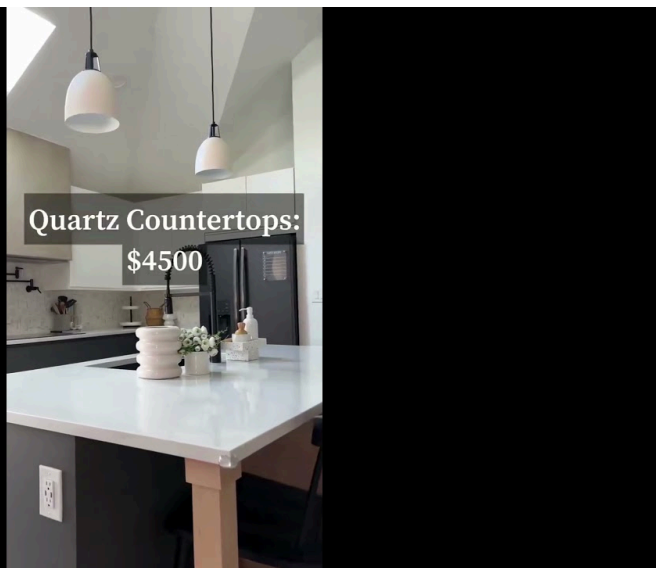


Kitchens in Vancouver work hard. They handle early winter mornings, rainy afternoons, and dinner rushes that stretch into hockey game nights. Good lighting is not a luxury here. It is the difference between a space that drags you down and one that lifts you up and works exactly when and how you need it. I have remodeled enough kitchens across Vancouver to see one pattern repeat: clients often leave lighting decisions until late, then regret it. A thoughtful plan early on, integrated with your layout, cabinets, and appliances, transforms both function and mood. Lighting installation, when done right, makes even a modest kitchen feel generous and sharp.



This guide draws from real Vancouver projects, from compact condo kitchens in Yaletown to heritage homes in Kitsilano and large family spaces in North Vancouver. You will find practical detail, trade-offs, cost context, and the sort of nuance that only appears after wiring a few hundred kitchens. Whether you are planning a complete kitchen remodeling project or a targeted upgrade, treat lighting as a design system, not a shopping list.

Start with tasks, surfaces, and shadows

If you map light to tasks instead of fixtures, everything falls into place. Most kitchens need three types of light working together: task lighting, ambient lighting, and accent lighting. In practice, that means lighting the counters where you chop, the sink where you scrub, the cooktop where you stir, and the island where you do everything from pastry to homework. Then you round it out with general fill light, and add subtle highlights for depth.

Under-cabinet lighting is the backbone of reliable task light. It puts illumination directly on the counter and minimizes shadows your body would cast when the main light is behind you. In older Vancouver homes with tall occupants and deep uppers, I have seen shadows that turn prep into guesswork. LED linear strips with a high color rendering index, ideally 90 or higher, make cilantro look green, not grey, and let you judge doneness accurately. Match temperature to your finishes. Warm woods and brass hardware tend to sing with 2700 to 3000 K. Contemporary quartz counters and matte black fixtures usually look crisper at 3000 to 3500 K.

Over the island, pendants give task light and visual cadence. One mistake I see in modern kitchen remodeling across Vancouver is oversizing pendants in a room with low ceilings. A 9 foot ceiling can carry a 14 to 16 inch diameter pendant over a larger island. An 8 foot ceiling often needs 10 to 12 inches and a cleaner profile. The pendant centerline should sit roughly 30 to 36 inches above the countertop. If you have a cooktop on the island, consider a flush linear fixture instead to keep sightlines open and grease off fabric shades.

At the sink, angle matters. Sconce pairs are beautiful, but in compact kitchen renovations, you may not have the wall space or wire path. A small recessed downlight centered 8 to 12 inches forward of the faucet usually nails it. If you run upper cabinets into that area, integrate a puck or strip under the cabinet lip.

The range or cooktop needs task light that can handle heat, vapor, and cleaning. Range hood lighting has improved, but it often produces a harsh hot spot. I like to supplement with two small recessed fixtures placed slightly behind the front edge of the cooktop, angled to wash the surface. This avoids the tunnel effect and helps when the hood lights fail prematurely, which happens more often than manufacturers admit.

Ambient light that breathes with the room

Ambient lighting sets the tone. Vancouver's cloudy months can flatten a room, even with big windows. You want a mix of ceiling illumination that avoids glare yet brightens vertical surfaces so the room feels larger. Recessed lights still earn their keep, but the spacing and beam angle matter. In a 10 by 12 kitchen, four to six 4 inch LED cans, spaced about 4 to 5 feet apart, usually provide even coverage without the runway look. Use 40 to 60 degree beam spreads to avoid scalloping the walls. If your ceiling is only 7 foot 6 in an older house, consider low-profile surface mounts with diffusers to keep the room comfortable.

Cove lighting is underused in Vancouver kitchen renovation. A slim LED channel atop crown molding, aimed at the ceiling, gives soft indirect light that flatters painted surfaces and reduces glare off glossy countertops. It adds cost and planning, yet it is often the element that makes a high-end kitchen renovation feel complete.

Open concept kitchen design means your kitchen light spills into living and dining zones. Tie them together with a consistent color temperature. If your dining pendants are 2700 K, do not set the kitchen cans at 4000 K. The mismatch looks odd, like two different climates [home kitchen renovations vancouver](#) in one room. Tunable white LEDs can adapt across dayparts, but they demand consistent drivers and good programming. If you go smart, spec it deliberately, not as a last minute add-on.

Accent lighting for depth and delight

When clients ask why a showroom kitchen looks better than theirs, it is often because the showroom uses accent light in three or more places. Toe-kick lighting adds a subtle glow at night and doubles as a path light for midnight snack missions. Interior cabinet lighting behind reeded or glass doors turns dishes into decor. A thin LED strip inside a pantry or pull-out creates everyday convenience that costs little compared to the big ticket items.

Backsplash lighting needs restraint. You can integrate a channel at the underside of upper cabinets to graze a stone or handmade tile. Keep the channel shallow and the LED consistent to avoid dotted reflections on glossy [kitchen backsplash installation vancouver](#) tile. In tight condos, I have recessed micro-channels into the underside of floating shelves to get the effect without bulky fixtures.

The Vancouver context: climate, codes, and condos

This city's climate and building stock shape lighting decisions. Short winter daylight hours push your fixtures to work overtime, so pay attention to quality drivers and thermal management. Cheap strips flicker or fail early, especially over warm appliances. Condos often have concrete ceilings that limit recessed fixtures. In those cases, use low-profile surface mounts, suspended tracks, or integrated cabinet lighting. A clean, seamless look is still possible with the right design and careful routing of wire paths during Kitchen demolition and installation.

Electrical kitchen renovation in Vancouver must follow BC Electrical Code and any strata bylaws. Dedicated circuits for lighting, proper junction box access, and correct drivers for low voltage systems are non negotiable. I have walked into renovations where someone buried LED drivers inside a wall cavity with no access. That is a future service nightmare. Plan driver locations inside cabinets, basement mechanical rooms, or accessible valances. If you are working within a heritage home, coordinate early with licensed kitchen renovators who know the quirks of knob and tube remediation and dedicated lighting circuits.

Controls that make the most of your investment

Dimming is the simplest upgrade with the biggest payoff, but it is easy to get wrong. Not all LEDs dim well, and not all dimmers play nicely with every driver. When a client complains that their lights buzz or step down instead of smoothly dimming, mismatched components are usually to blame. If you want 1 percent dimming for evening ambiance, specify drivers rated for it, and match them to compatible dimmers or smart switches from the same ecosystem.

Smart kitchen design can include wireless keypads that trigger scenes: cooking, entertaining, nightlight, cleaning. If you have an open plan, a "dinner" scene can set pendants to 80 percent, cans to 30 percent, toe-kicks to 20 percent, and island task light to 50 percent. That mix flatters faces and food while keeping glare off wine glasses. Do not go overboard with complicated apps. Pick a platform your household can actually use. A balanced approach is a physical dimmer for each zone plus a simple scene controller near the main entry.

Motion sensors belong in pantries and toe-kicks, not on primary circuits where they can surprise you. If you cook with kids, a low-level night scene on a schedule beats a sensor that triggers to full brightness at 2 a.m.

Color temperature and rendering, explained without jargon

Color temperature affects mood. A classic kitchen renovation with white shaker cabinets and warm oak floors tends to look best at 2700 to 3000 K. A contemporary kitchen remodel with flat-panel cabinets, concrete accents, and dark metals often feels right at 3000 to 3500 K. The difference sounds small, but your eye notices.

Color rendering is about truthfulness. You want produce to look appetizing, countertops to reveal their pattern, and food to avoid that grey tinge you see under poor LEDs. Aim for CRI 90 plus and R9 above 50 for strong reds. Ask for the datasheets, and do not settle for “good color” as a sales line. In our Vancouver kitchen remodeling projects, pushing for higher CRI makes prep and plating feel professional, even in a small kitchen.

Fixture choices that earn their keep

Recessed downlights: Choose shallow housings for joist-limited ceilings, preferably with airtight and IC ratings. Look for low glare trims and sealed optics if they sit near a range. For a minimalist look in high-end kitchen renovation, consider micro-downlights with 2 inch apertures, but only if your installer is precise. Sloppy layout destroys the effect.

Pendants: Mind weight and mounting in older ceilings. Use blocking, not just toggle bolts. In busy family kitchens, glass pendants smudge constantly. Painted metal or linen shades age better. For kitchens with strong daylight, pendants with diffusers prevent harsh hotspots as the sun moves.

Under-cabinet lights: Hardwired linear channels beat plug-in pucks on quality, consistency, and longevity. If cabinet refacing or cabinet replacement is part of your plan, have the shop rout a shallow channel into the underside for a flush aluminum profile. This hides the fixture and gives a professional finish.

Toe-kick and accent: Aluminum channels with opal lenses give a clean line and protect LEDs from mops and vacuums. If you have kids, mount strips a few millimeters back from the front edge to avoid direct hits from small feet or toy cars.

Layout and spacing: what the tape measure says

For a standard width counter, center under-cabinet strips 2 to 3 inches back from the cabinet face for even coverage. Recessed ceiling lights over the main walkway should sit roughly 24 to 30 inches off the counter edge to avoid casting shadows on your work surface. Over an island, aim for two to three pendants spaced evenly, with at least 30 inches between shades on a 6 foot island, more for longer spans. If you prefer a single linear pendant, size it at roughly two thirds the island length and mount it slightly offset to keep sightlines open to a living area.



When doing Kitchen layout redesign or a Kitchen expansion, sketch cone spreads and shadow lines, not just fixture symbols. Good designers in Vancouver use lighting overlays during Kitchen design and build to catch conflicts early. That soffit box planned for ducting can disrupt the perfect recessed grid. Better to adjust on paper than argue on site.

Wiring, drivers, and the stuff behind the drywall

LEDs bring low voltage and drivers into the conversation. Drivers convert line voltage to the low voltage your tape or modules need. Keep drivers accessible. Group by zone and label them. If we install under-cabinet strips and toe-kicks, we often place the driver on the upper shelf of a base cabinet with a vented cover, or in a pantry with a service panel. Avoid stacking too many loads on one driver. Spread heat to prolong life. Skipping these steps is the reason many DIY lights fail early.

For Kitchen plumbing and electrical to coexist peacefully, coordinate routes. Under-sink areas are hostile: moisture, cleaning chemicals, and movement. Keep connections high and sealed in proper boxes, and never tuck LED tape power supplies behind a garbage pull-out. Appliance installation and lighting share cabinetry space, so involve the cabinetmaker early. A small chase at the back of a pantry or island can save hours of frustration.

Renovation scenarios: from compact to luxury

Compact condo in Fairview: With 7 foot 10 ceilings and a single switched outlet, we used a track rail with three adjustable heads to create ambient light and directional wash, then added hardwired under-cabinet strips for task. A slim, 36 inch linear pendant over a 48 inch peninsula added architectural presence without visual bulk. The whole system dimmed via two smart switches that worked with the existing neutral-less boxes. Result: modern kitchen remodeling on a reasonable budget, bright where it counts, calm at night.

Family home in East Van: During a full kitchen renovation, we ran cove lighting around the room, 2 inch low-glare downlights on a 5 foot grid, and lit the pantry with door-activated strips. The island got two 14 inch linen shades, dimmable to 1 percent. With quartz countertops at 3000 K lighting, the space feels warm without drifting yellow. Cabinets included interior lighting in a glass-front hutch that doubles as a bar. It is a luxury kitchen remodel that still invites daily mess.

Commercial kitchen remodeling in a café: Code requires robust, easily cleanable fixtures. We used sealed linear LEDs with high CRI along the cookline and prep areas, added redundancy over the dish pit, and provided a simple control scheme. No moody dimming here, but the work surfaces glow evenly, and staff fatigue dropped, which owners reported within weeks.

Small kitchen remodel in a heritage house: No recessed allowed due to structural constraints. We layered a central semi-flush fixture, two adjustable picture lights aimed at upper shelves for both accent and fill, and under-cabinet strips. The effect feels deliberate rather than compromised.

Cost and value: where to spend, where to save

Lighting installation can range widely. For Affordable kitchen renovations Vancouver, a thoughtful package of surface-mount ambient fixtures, quality under-cabinet strips, and a pair of pendants can fit within a few thousand dollars, installed by Kitchen remodeling contractors familiar with Vancouver code. For High-end kitchen renovation Vancouver projects, integrated channels, cove lighting, micro-downlights, and smart scene control can easily climb into five figures, depending on scale.

Spend on the elements that touch daily life: under-cabinet lighting, reliable dimming, and pendants that do not glare. Save by simplifying controls and using fewer, better fixtures rather than scattering many cheap ones. Quartz countertops Vancouver deserve high-CRI light. If you invested in Marble countertops or a Stone backsplash, invest again to show them accurately. The same goes for Custom kitchen cabinets Vancouver and Custom millwork Vancouver. Poor light flattens expensive craftsmanship.

Coordination with cabinetry, counters, and backsplashes

Lighting and cabinetry should be designed together. During Kitchen cabinet installation, route for channels and drivers, drill clean pass-throughs, and pre-finish valances that hide strips. For Kitchen cabinet refacing, plan adhesive-backed channels that can be mechanically secured so they do not peel over time. When replacing counters, leave slack and protection for under-cabinet leads, and avoid silicone entombments that make future service impossible.

Backsplash tile, whether Tile backsplash, Stone backsplash, or Glass backsplash, reflects light differently. Gloss tile will show hotspots. Matte tile forgives. Heavily textured stone loves a gentle graze, not a harsh beam. If you plan a full-height slab, test your LED against a sample, especially with dramatic veining. We once adjusted from 3500 K to 3000 K after a client saw how the cooler tone turned a warm quartzite chilly at night.

Safety, permitting, and hiring the right people

Electrical work is not the place to wing it. Use a Professional kitchen renovation company Vancouver or a Kitchen contractor Vancouver with licensed electricians who can pull permits, load-balance your panel, and ensure proper junction boxes and wire methods. If your project includes Kitchen wall removal or Kitchen expansion, you may need coordination among structural, electrical, and mechanical trades to avoid conflicts. A good Kitchen project management approach keeps the lighting plan intact through the chaos of drywall schedules and cabinet deliveries.

Ask your Kitchen remodel specialists Vancouver for mockups. A temporary strip taped under a cabinet for a night can settle questions about color temperature and brightness better than any spec sheet. Visit a Kitchen design showroom Vancouver that demonstrates lighting options. Hold samples under different fixtures to see how finishes change.

Energy use and sustainability without compromise

Sustainable kitchen renovation is not just about bamboo flooring and recycled countertops. Modern LEDs, properly specified, cut power draw dramatically. Dimming reduces energy and extends life. Occupancy sensors in pantries prevent wasted hours of light. Choose fixtures with replaceable light engines and drivers when possible, not sealed disposables. Energy-efficient kitchen remodeling should still respect color quality. You can have both.

If you aim for eco-friendly kitchen remodeling, verify certifications and look for fixtures with good thermal design. Cheap LEDs running hot will fail early, which is wasteful and frustrating. Thoughtful selection keeps your system serviceable for a decade or more.

A practical lighting blueprint for a Vancouver kitchen

- Define zones: prep counters, sink, range, island, ambient ceiling, accents. Give each a switch or dimmer.
- Choose color temperature: 2700 to 3000 K for warm, 3000 to 3500 K for contemporary. Keep it consistent across zones.
- Specify quality: CRI 90 plus, quiet dimming to at least 10 percent, ideally 1 percent for pendants and accents.
- Plan wiring early: accessible drivers, dedicated circuits where needed, labeled zones, and coordination with cabinetry.
- Test and tune: mock up key areas, adjust dimming curves, and program scenes that suit how you actually live.

Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

Do not overuse recessed lights. Too many create glare and dead zones on walls. Balance with pendants, cove, or wall washing. Avoid mixing color temperatures within sight lines unless you aim for a specific effect. Keep cables and drivers serviceable. I cannot stress this enough: nothing ruins a kitchen faster than cutting into finished panels to replace a failed driver hidden behind them.

If you are tempted by bargain kit lighting, look at the driver specs, dimmer compatibility list, and warranty. Saving a few hundred dollars sometimes costs you years of buzzing dimmers and flickering evenings. For Complete home kitchen remodeling Vancouver or Full kitchen renovation Vancouver BC, set aside 5 to 10 percent of your budget for lighting and controls. It is the fraction that makes the rest of your investment show.

When your kitchen doubles as an office, studio, or homework zone

Post-dinner, many Vancouver [high-end kitchen renovations vancouver](#) kitchens become multi-use spaces. Add a high-CRI task zone near a seating spot with a small sconce or directed under-shelf light. It beats working under an overhead glare. For video calls, a soft fill aimed at a nearby wall produces a flattering bounce. Smart scenes let you move from cooking to laptop mode without rethinking switches.

Service, maintenance, and small upgrades

Clean lenses and shades twice a year. Dust degrades light output noticeably, especially on textured pendants. Check dimmer responsiveness after firmware updates if you use smart systems. For older kitchens not ready for a full remodel, retrofit under-cabinet strips and a new pair of pendants can deliver an outsized improvement at a modest cost,

particularly in Affordable kitchen remodel Vancouver BC projects. If you need Cabinet hardware installation or Cabinet repair at the same time, bundle the work to reduce labor duplication.

Who to call, and what to ask

When evaluating Kitchen remodeling contractors Vancouver or Kitchen remodelers Vancouver BC, ask to see before and after photos where lighting made the difference. Request a fixture schedule and a control riser in the proposal. See if the team coordinates Lighting installation Vancouver with Kitchen countertop installation and Backsplash tile installation timelines. Good coordination reduces rework and damage. For Kitchen remodeling estimates Vancouver, insist that lighting zones, component brands, and control logic appear in writing. If you receive Free kitchen renovation quotes Vancouver, compare more than the bottom line. Clarity on specs and installation details is worth real money.

Final thought from the job site

The kitchen is where life happens, and in Vancouver, life often happens under artificial light for half the year. When we finish a project and the client walks in at dusk, the smile arrives not because the cabinets are new or the counters gleam. It is because the room feels right. Their shoulders drop. The island glows without glare. The backsplash has quiet depth. The sink is bright but soft. They can see what they are doing, and the space flatters the moment. That is the payoff for treating lighting as integral to Custom kitchen design Vancouver, not as an afterthought. It is achievable in a small reno or a Luxury kitchen remodel Vancouver. Plan early, choose carefully, and work with Kitchen renovation experts Vancouver BC who understand both the craft and the codes.



When you get lighting right, your kitchen stops fighting you and starts working with you. That is the real upgrade.

Kitchen Renovations Vancouver – Custom Kitchen Design & Remodeling Experts 1763 Comox St, Vancouver, BC V6G 1P5 +1 778-655-8371