

UNPACKED: SDL ULTRA THINS

SEPT/25

INAUGURAL ISSUE

LIGHTING IN A GLOBAL MARKET

ENDURING RELEVANCE IN
THE DIGITAL WORLD

LIGHTING THE WAY

ON THE HORIZON

A photograph of a modern two-story house at dusk. The house features large windows and a stone-textured exterior. Warm interior and exterior lighting is visible, creating a cozy atmosphere. The house is surrounded by trees and a lawn.

NSL

IN FOCUS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNPACKED: SDL ULTRATHINS 06

A look at the new SDL Ultrathins from NSL. Convenience and Value.

LIGHTING IN A GLOBAL MARKET 10

Adapting to an everchanging situation; import tariffs and production overseas

ENDURING RELEVANCE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD 12

As purchasing evolves, NSL stays relevant through design, storytelling, and lasting quality.

TOP 4 LIGHTING TRENDS 14

LIGHTING THE WAY 15

How Energy Star's New Standards Are Driving Innovation and Sustainability

SISTERS SUCCESS 18

Congratulations to our sister company, who's Celebrating 40 years

ON THE HORIZON 20

A sneak peak at what's coming from NSL



MANAGING EDITOR

M.CURTIS

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

TOM PENTON

M. CURTIS



OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MATTHEW CURTIS

The managing editor and a contributor to this magazine. A seasoned product manager in the lighting industry, he brings creativity, curiosity, and a sharp eye for design to every project. Outside of work, he enjoys sailing and volunteers his time coaching and mentoring young biathletes.

TOM PENTON

President of NSL and a veteran of the lighting industry with over 40 years of experience. Known for his storytelling and deep industry knowledge, Tom champions customer service and doing what's right. His leadership continues to shape NSL's commitment to innovation, integrity, and lasting relationships.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first issue of our magazine—a space dedicated to exploring the lighting industry through the eyes of those who work at its core. As product managers, specifiers, contractors, and designers know, lighting is never just a fixture. It's where technology, design, and human experience converge.

This magazine was created to go beyond product sheets and technical data. Here, we'll look at the trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the industry today. From evolving regulations and global supply shifts, to new materials, control systems, and design philosophies, our goal is to share insights that inform, inspire, and spark conversation. Lighting has always been more than illumination. It shapes atmosphere, influences style, and drives innovation. Through these pages, we'll examine where the industry is headed and how thoughtful design continues to redefine the spaces we live and work in.

At NSL, we've been part of this conversation for over 40 years—through revolutions in technology, design, and distribution. Our perspective comes not only from the products we've created, but from the partnerships we've built across the industry.

This publication is for you: the specifiers navigating complex choices, the contractors turning concepts into reality, and the peers and partners shaping what lighting means for the future.

Thank you for joining us at the start of this new journey. We look forward to exploring the industry together—one trend, one project, and one idea at a time.

by M.Curtis



Matthew Curtis
MANAGING EDITOR



Feedback That Fuels Us

A designer recently wrote in to say: "I appreciate that NSL is still listening. Your new multipacks and quality touches really do make a difference on-site." Hearing this inspires us to keep pushing forward. What small change could we make that would make your job easier? We're always listening.

WRITE TO US

Success Should Be Shared

We recently heard from a contractor who used our CCT Streamline Tape Light to create a beautiful floating ceiling effect in their clients bedroom—and the result was nothing short of amazing. It got us thinking: how are you using NSL lighting to transform your living spaces? We'd love to hear your stories, tips, or even see photos. Share your project with us, and it might be featured in an upcoming issue!

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

UNPACKED: SDL ULTRATHINS

Discover how NSL's SDL Ultrathin downlight multipacks deliver convenience, quality, and value—part of our renewed commitment to reclaim leadership in the market we helped create.



SDL Ultrathins deliver seamless, unobtrusive lighting that brightens the space while complementing accent and statement fixtures. The perfect blend of performance and design, they let the room—not the light—take center stage.



SDL-5CCT-4-WH-1P
SL-ID-CCT-HP-20-B8

For more than 38 years, NSL has been part of the story of lighting in North America—designing products that bring spaces to life while building lasting relationships along the way. Our journey has always been guided by one thing: listening to the people who use our products. This magazine, and our newest innovations, are both part of that ongoing conversation.

The slim downlight category—one we helped pioneer—has changed dramatically in recent years. What began as an innovation in sleek, efficient design became a commodity market, where price often trumped performance. We heard from contractors, distributors, and designers that while pricing matters, value matters more. People still want a product they can trust: one that installs easily, looks great, and lasts.

That's why we created the SDL Ultrathin Series—a product designed to compete on price without compromising on quality. From its anti-yellowing lens to its galvanized steel backplate, aluminum trim, and larger junction box with extra knockouts, every detail reflects the needs of the people installing and living with these fixtures. The SDL meets the latest Energy Star standards, Title 24 compliance, and is ETL listed for wet locations—features often missing from low-cost alternatives.

Convenience is also key. Our multipack format answers a growing call from contractors for faster installs, reduced waste, and better project value. It's one more way we're helping our customers save time and money while maintaining the high standards they expect. And with FT4 fire-rated cable and 5CCT selectable color, the SDL Ultrathin delivers the flexibility and safety today's market demands.

We also know the risks that come with low-quality lighting: callbacks, failures, frustrated clients. That's why NSL stands firmly behind every product we sell, with industry-leading customer service and a full five-year warranty. As a family-run company, we take pride in doing things the right way—even when it's not the easy way.

The lighting industry will keep changing—but NSL's commitment to innovation, quality, and integrity won't. With the SDL Ultrathin, we're not just back in the game—we're leading the way forward.



SDL-5CCT-4-WH-1P

“VALUE ISN'T JUST ABOUT PRICE—IT'S ABOUT TRUST, SERVICE, AND LASTING PERFORMANCE.”

LIGHTING IN A GLOBAL MARKET: HOW TARIFFS AND SUPPLY CHAINS SHAPE PROJECT COSTS



Overseas production has long been the backbone of the lighting industry. But as tariffs rise and supply chains shift, the ripple effects are reshaping how projects are specified, priced, and delivered.

“WHEN TARIFFS HIT OVERSEAS PRODUCTION, THE COST DOESN'T JUST STAY OVERSEAS—IT SHOWS UP IN EVERY BID, EVERY FIXTURE, AND EVERY PROJECT TIMELINE.”



For decades, the lighting industry has been built on a global foundation. Fixtures, components, and raw materials flow across borders before landing in homes, offices, and job sites. Overseas manufacturing, particularly in Asia, has played a central role in keeping costs competitive, driving innovation, and delivering the scale that the industry depends on. But as recent years have shown, global reliance comes with risks. Trade tariffs, supply chain disruptions, and shifting manufacturing hubs are reshaping the economics of lighting—and the effects are being felt from factory floors to project bids. For specifiers and contractors, understanding how these changes ripple through the industry is critical to staying competitive and keeping projects on track.

Why Overseas Manufacturing Became the Norm

Lighting is uniquely suited to overseas production. High-volume manufacturing, access to specialized components, and cost efficiencies in labor and materials all drew companies abroad. For many years, this global model allowed manufacturers to hold down costs while still pushing forward with product innovation.

The challenge is that overseas reliance also means exposure. Shifts in policy, tariffs, and shipping costs don't stay confined to the factory—they flow straight into the landed cost of fixtures.

“WHEN TARIFFS HIT OVERSEAS PRODUCTION, THE COST DOESN'T JUST STAY OVERSEAS—IT SHOWS UP IN EVERY BID, EVERY FIXTURE, AND EVERY PROJECT TIMELINE.”

The Tariff Effect on Projects

In recent years, tariffs on Chinese-manufactured goods—ranging from 10 to 30 percent—have had a measurable impact on lighting products. What looks like a modest increase at the import level quickly multiplies once margins, distribution, and retail costs are applied.

For a contractor, that might mean a fixture that once cost \$75 is now closer to \$90. For a specifier, it can mean redesigning around alternative solutions to meet a budget. For developers and owners, entire projects can creep beyond planned costs.

The effects of global trade policy aren't abstract—they land directly on the job site. Specifiers face tough conversations with clients about rising costs compared to earlier projects. Contractors are squeezed between higher material prices and fixed bids, with tighter margins and greater risk. Owners may be forced to scale back scope or reconsider design features to stay on budget.

The industry, however, has not stood still. Many manufacturers have responded with strategies to soften the blow:

- Diversifying production to countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Mexico to reduce tariff exposure.
- Bulk purchasing and raw material stockpiling to lock in costs and buffer against volatility.
- Streamlining product design to reduce complexity by consolidating SKUs or creating multi-use fixtures.
- Investing in North American assembly to bring more stability and shorten lead times.

These efforts don't eliminate the impact of tariffs, but they demonstrate how agile the industry must now be to keep costs under control and projects on track.

“IN TODAY’S MARKET, UNDERSTANDING THE SUPPLY CHAIN IS AS IMPORTANT AS UNDERSTANDING THE SPEC SHEET.”

For those on the front lines of projects, awareness and collaboration are key. Contractors and specifiers can't control tariff policy, but they can control how they respond to it:

- Work closely with manufacturers and reps to understand sourcing and lead times.
- Build flexibility into specifications to adapt if certain SKUs become cost-prohibitive or delayed.
- Factor global trade realities into project budgets—assuming costs will remain flat is a risk.

Looking Ahead

The global nature of lighting isn't going away. Overseas production will remain central to the industry, but diversification, smarter design, and closer collaboration are already helping to create stability.

For specifiers and contractors, the lesson is clear: global shifts eventually become local realities. By paying attention to the bigger picture, the industry can stay resilient—even in the face of change.



Sidebar: Lighting at a Glance

Global Manufacturing & Tariffs – Quick Stats

- 70–80% of lighting sold in North America is still manufactured in Asia (primarily China, Vietnam, and Indonesia).
- Tariffs on Chinese goods range from 10–30%, depending on product category.
- A 10% tariff on a \$50 landed cost fixture can raise the final retail price by 15–20% once distribution and margins are applied.
- Lead times for overseas shipments rose from an average of 30–45 days pre-2020 to 60–90+ days at peak disruption, and remain elevated.
- Production in Indonesia and Vietnam has grown by double digits in the past five years as companies diversify sourcing.



ENDURING RELEVANCE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

In today's fast-moving world of eCommerce, where trends fade overnight and products can be copied in an instant, staying relevant takes more than just innovation. It takes thoughtful thinking, purposeful action, and a willingness to evolve without sacrificing what makes you distinct.

At NSL, we know something about staying power. For over 40 years, we've grown alongside the lighting industry—through technological revolutions, design trends, and seismic shifts in how people buy. And while the marketplace has changed, our commitment to quality, service, and style remains timeless. Relevance today isn't just about offering the right product; it's about building trust, creating lasting relationships, and delivering value that extends far beyond price alone.

The rise of online shopping has created a paradox: more choice than ever, yet less satisfaction. Consumers and distributors alike are overwhelmed by endless options, many of which don't deliver on their promises. At NSL, we've chosen a different path. Instead of flooding the market, we've carefully curated our product lineup to focus on what people actually want and need. This strategy not only reduces inventory but lowers carrying costs—allowing us to operate with lower overhead and pass those savings along to our customers. We've also invested in strong supplier relationships and larger-volume raw material purchases, finding savings through scale without ever compromising on quality. In some cases, we've taken larger risks with bundled systems, requiring deeper investments on our part so that we can deliver true value while preserving the thoughtful design and reliability that define NSL.

This philosophy of doing more with less extends to product development as well. Our SL/ST Tape Series was specifically designed to replace multiple SKUs from earlier generations, offering greater flexibility and usability in a streamlined package. Paired with simplified controllers and remotes, this system allows customers to create more while we manage fewer moving parts behind the scenes. The same thinking inspired the evolution of our SDL downlights. By optimizing input costs, purchasing materials in larger lots, and carefully selecting countries of origin for components and materials, we've reduced landed costs without cutting corners on performance or style.

“IN A WORLD OF ENDLESS OPTIONS, TRUE RELEVANCE COMES FROM THOUGHTFUL DESIGN, TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE COURAGE TO EVOLVE WITHOUT LOSING WHO YOU ARE.”

Of course, products alone aren't enough in the digital age. Building trust and loyalty means creating genuine connections with customers. That's why we're investing in more personalized, thoughtful communications—like this magazine—to give our customers a deeper look into the people, values, and stories behind NSL. We're working closely with our reps to foster a sense of community—a family feel—that so many businesses have lost in the shift to online shopping. Legacy, for us, is not a weight—it's a launchpad. Our history proves that we have the ability to adapt, and we've done it time and again. From early leadership in fiber optic lighting, to embracing LEDs, to making LED tape and downlights the core of our offering, evolution has always been part of who we are. We stay fresh by updating our designs, materials, and even our brand image to reflect the times—while ensuring that every customer experience is seamless, responsive, and fast. Because speed is the currency of the digital era, and we believe that great service should move at the same pace as great ideas. In the end, relevance is not about chasing every trend—it's about knowing who you are, understanding what your customers value, and having the courage to evolve with purpose. At NSL, we continue to prove that enduring relevance is not only possible—it's our way forward.

A linear light installation integrated into a unique architectural feature.



ST-ID-30K-HP-20-B10
LEDMD-WW-SS

TOP 4 LIGHTING TRENDS DESIGNERS LOVE RIGHT NOW



LTSPRO-SW-24-WH

Lighting does more than brighten a room—it creates atmosphere, defines style, and shapes how we experience a space. The right lighting can turn something ordinary into something unforgettable.

Designers know that lighting is one of the most powerful tools in their arsenal, and today's trends reflect a perfect balance of beauty, function, and innovation. Here are four lighting looks that are making waves right now.

1 Linear Lighting & Floating Ceilings

Sleek, continuous lines of light are transforming ceilings, walls, and architectural features. Designers love the minimalism and drama of linear fixtures, especially when used to create floating ceiling effects or soft perimeter glows.

2 Tunable White & Human-Centric Lighting

Lighting that shifts from warm to cool tones throughout the day isn't just a luxury—it's becoming the new standard. Tunable white systems support wellness, enhance productivity, and let users tailor spaces to any mood or task.

3 Sleek Minimalist Downlights

Clean lines, ultra-thin profiles, and trimless options are dominating the ceiling. Minimalist downlights blend seamlessly into interiors while still delivering powerful, precise illumination—proof that less really can be more.

4 Integrated Outdoor & Landscape Lighting

Outdoor spaces are getting the same design attention as interiors. From pathway and garden lighting to elegant wall washes, integrated exterior lighting creates atmosphere, safety, and curb appeal that lasts well into the night.

LIGHTING THE WAY



As new Energy Star guidelines raise the bar for efficiency and sustainability, the lighting industry is responding with innovation that benefits homeowners, builders, and the planet. Here's how smarter standards are shaping a brighter future.

SMALL CHANGES IN LIGHTING CAN LEAD TO MASSIVE ENERGY SAVINGS—AND A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON THE PLANET.



In the world of lighting, even the smallest change can spark big results. The latest ENERGY STAR® guidelines for residential downlights, finalized in late 2023 and taking effect in January 2025, have raised the bar on efficiency, performance, and sustainability—pushing manufacturers to rethink what “good enough” really means.

This shift is more than a compliance requirement—it’s an opportunity. It challenges the industry to view downlights not just as isolated products, but as part of something larger: How can we help homes and businesses shine brighter while consuming less? How can we ensure lighting isn’t just beautiful, but also responsible?

The new standards introduce stricter technical requirements, calling for higher efficacy—at least 90 lumens per watt. They also tighten rules around color quality, longevity, and consistency. Every downlight must now deliver crisp, accurate light with a CRI above 80, maintain uniform color, and last for at least 25,000 hours.

While these may sound like small adjustments, they translate into real-world benefits: lighting that’s more efficient, longer lasting, and better for both people and the planet.

Crucially, these tougher standards are acting as a catalyst for innovation across the industry. They are pushing manufacturers to develop smarter, more efficient technologies and rethink design from the ground up. The result? New materials, more advanced drivers, and lighting solutions that not only meet higher performance targets but also reduce waste and environmental impact. By raising the baseline, ENERGY STAR is ensuring that sustainability isn’t just an option—it’s the starting point.

At the same time, ENERGY STAR has stepped back from most other residential lighting categories—ceiling fixtures, pendants, sconces, and desk lamps. Beginning in 2025, those products will no longer carry the familiar blue label. This change reflects the reality that many lighting technologies have matured: efficiency is now a given in most categories. But recessed downlights remain an area where raising the bar can still unlock significant energy savings across millions of homes.



DL-FR-5CCT-6-WH
SL-ID-30K-HP-20-A8

And those savings are not small. If all residential downlights met the new efficiency levels, homeowners across North America could collectively save over a billion dollars in energy costs each year. More importantly, the environmental impact is profound: slashing greenhouse gas emissions by over 13 billion pounds annually—the equivalent of taking more than a million cars off the road.

For builders and homeowners alike, these new standards offer tangible benefits. More efficient lighting lowers monthly energy bills, reduces environmental impact, and increases the long-term value of a home or building. For manufacturers, it's a call to action—a chance to not only meet the standards but to shape the next generation of lighting.

This isn't just about ticking boxes or chasing certifications. It's about an industry coming together to do better. By creating higher expectations, ENERGY STAR is encouraging every lighting company to innovate, push technology forward, and make choices that help protect the planet for future generations. When every manufacturer raises the bar, the result is more than just better lighting—it's lower energy use, reduced emissions, and a brighter, more sustainable future for everyone.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS!



40 YEARS OF BRIGHT IDEAS: THE MAGIC LITE STORY

This year marks a major milestone for Magic Lite—celebrating 40 years of lighting innovation, creativity, and customer dedication. Long before LEDs became the standard, Magic Lite was already shaping the lighting landscape, introducing the North American market to 120V rope light back in the 1980s and playing a key role in the fiber optics movement that defined an era of architectural lighting.

As technology evolved, so did Magic Lite. The company became an early leader in LED tape lighting and slim recessed downlights, always pushing boundaries to deliver efficient, stylish, and accessible solutions for homes and businesses alike.

What many may not know is that Magic Lite shares a deep connection with NSL. Founded just one year earlier, Magic Lite later acquired NSL, its American sister company, strengthening both brands through shared expertise and a commitment to customer-first innovation.

For 40 years, Magic Lite has remained true to its core: offering thoughtfully designed products that stand the test of time, while embracing change to meet the needs of an ever-evolving industry. Here's to four decades of lighting the way—and to the bright future ahead.

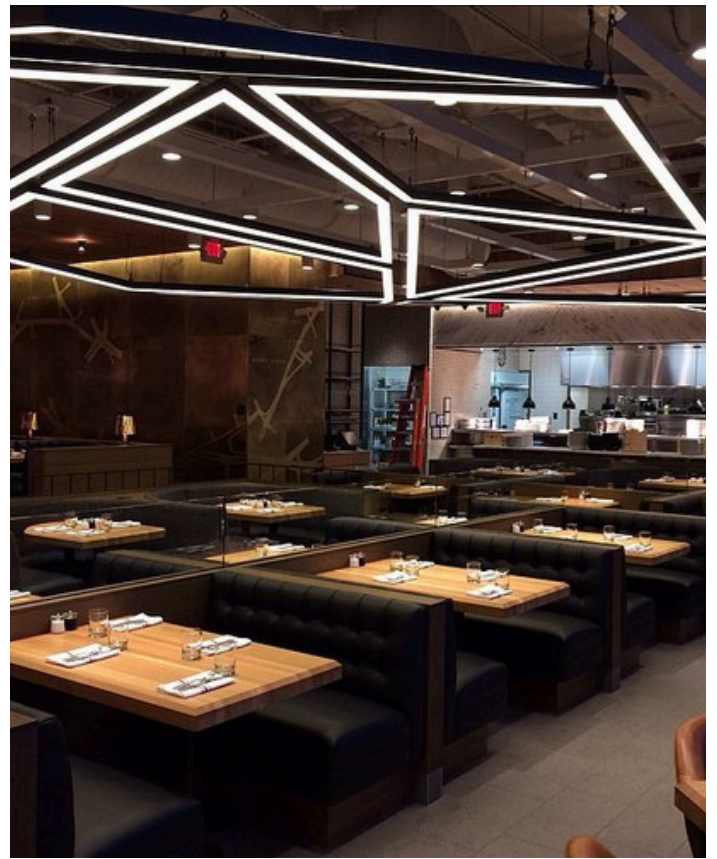


2013

Magic Lite - Images from the Past



2007



2016



ON THE HORIZON

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S NEXT FOR NSL

At NSL, we believe lighting should never stand still. It should evolve, adapt, and bring something new to every space it touches. That's why we're always looking ahead—pushing boundaries, listening to real-world feedback, and developing solutions that make life brighter, smarter, and more beautiful. Here's a peek at three exciting innovations on the horizon.

Infini Drive: One Driver. Limitless Possibility: In low-voltage lighting, the driver is the heart of every system—and our new Infini Drive Series is designed to set a new standard. Built for flexibility, reliability, and simplicity, Infini Drive streamlines installations while supporting a wide range of applications, from residential to commercial.

The first product in the series will launch in Q4 2025, marking the beginning of a driver platform built to grow with the needs of today's market. With a focus on performance and ease of use, this next-generation solution is engineered to adapt—making it a future-ready choice for projects of every scale. And this is just the start. The next evolution, Infini Drive Plus, is already on the horizon. While we can't share details just yet, it's designed to complement our upcoming CCT tape offerings, expanding the series into even greater possibilities. The future of low-voltage power is here—and it starts with Infini Drive.

Dim Drive & Dim Drive Plus: Smarter Control Built Right In Lighting control doesn't have to be complicated. With Dim Drive, NSL is making things simple—a sleek, compact solution that combines a driver and dimmer in one easy-to-install unit. Need a little more? Step up to Dim Drive Plus, which takes it further by adding color temperature control alongside dimming, giving you total command of light output and ambience from a single device. Whether you want warm, cozy lighting or bright task illumination, these all-in-one solutions put control directly in your hands—no extra wiring, no extra fuss. Dim Drive is on the way, with Dim Drive+ still in the works – stay tuned.

KEEP IN TOUCH



QUESTIONS?

- Are you interested in advertising?
- Need more copies?
- Contact us here!

DO YOU WANT TO SUBMIT PHOTOS OR CORRESPONDANCE?

- Get rewarded for your submissions
- We are looking HQ images to use in the next issue
- Your successful, we know it. Tell us all about it

WWW.NSLUSA.COM
NSLSALES@NSLUSA.COM



WF-01-12V-BLK



NATIONAL SPECIALTY LIGHTING
YOUR TRUSTED LIGHTING PARTNER