

DESIGN TO LIGHT: AN **INTENTIONAL APPROACH** TO LANDSCAPE LIGHTING DESIGN

By Taylor Miliken

Don't you love that feeling after the project is complete that you poured your heart and soul into? I know I do. Have you ever had a client that says, "my favorite part about the whole project is the lighting!?" I have, and I must admit, this is at the top of my list too.

I have been known to tell a client to cut out other scopes of work before they cut out or phase out their lighting. Why? Because it can transform the way a home or landscape looks. It provokes emotions and feelings that very few other details can. It creates a sense of illusion, even magic.

A great author, Stephen Covey, is famous for his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. One of the main points he refers to often is to start with the end in mind. His intention is to teach you about having a clear destination in mind so that you can create a path to get there. I take this same principle when it comes to designing for our clients.

Custom design is exactly what it says – it's custom. There is no "package" that each client gets. At Milosi, we like to look at lighting from a comprehensive approach. This wasn't always true. When we first got started in lighting in the early 2000s, I would put the standard up-lights on the corners of the house and multi-trunk trees and put a few path lights along the walkway. I was excited to get that project. There is nothing wrong with doing that. As I performed a night lighting adjustment or rode past that house I was left wanting more. I knew that we could do better. At the time, I sold our lighting by the fixture. That was before I realized my costs. Since then, we have learned that clients aren't just paying for the labor and material. They are also paying for the design. To put it into perspective, an artist like Pablo Picasso yields a much higher sale price than other artists. But he may have used the same type of canvas and the same type of brushes and the same type of paint. It was art and that's how I feel about landscape and lighting design.

Starting with the end in mind starts with a thorough consultation. The great John Maxwell wrote a book called *Good Leaders Ask Great Questions*. I would agree and proclaim that good designers ask great questions. Once you have completed your thorough consultation you want to think about creative ways that light can be used to enhance the client's spaces. Here are a few ways that Milosi thinks about lighting:

- ✓ Wayfinding and Safety
- ✓ Focal Points
- ✓ Year-Round Enjoyment

Wayfinding and Safety

The safety aspects are an obvious feature of lighting. It allows your client to feel more at ease as they are outside after dark. Use lighting to help your clients navigate their property safely. This can be determined by understanding the spaces they use most after dark. The wayfinding is about helping your clients navigate throughout their property efficiently. Most of this starts with a good hardscapes plan and understanding the circulation and flow then complimenting it with the right lighting.



Focal Points

When it comes to focal points, there are a lots of options: statues, specimen trees, etc. When we are designing a landscape we want to take our clients on a journey and provide them with a experience. When they are sitting on their back patio or in their pool, where will they be looking and how can we create a breathtaking focal point. Perhaps it's a simple bench with a few containers on each side with a specimen tree behind it. Perhaps it's a narrow corridor with a trellis and climbing rose.



Find a way to pull your client's eyes to a place, then find that perfect lighting element that will mesmerize your client and the guests who visit. When we are designing these focal

points, we want to think about how we want to light it and what will look the best before committing to any one element. That's the key to designing to light.

Year-Round Enjoyment

Sure, during the summer months when it doesn't get dark until 8:30, you get to enjoy the prolific flowers budding on your hydrangeas or the hummingbirds enjoying one of your favorite perennials. But lighting can be enjoyed year-round. During those spring, summer, and fall months where you're spending more time outside you get to stay outside longer with the right lighting. But another big advantage is that you get to enjoy the landscape year-round with a great custom design.

When it comes to lighting, don't let it become an afterthought. Push yourself to think about the entire property -- the second story, trees in the lawn and those within the foundation beds, focal points, etc. There are many custom ways to light your client's property so think outside of the box and always start with the end in mind.



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Taylor and his team have been designing and installing residential lighting systems using Unique Lighting Systems products. For more information about Milosi visit <https://milosilandscape.com>. To learn about Unique Lighting Products available to accomplish Taylor's above tips, please visit <https://www.uniqueighting.com/>.