

Service Spotlight

Paint, Flooring and Wallcoverings

Finding the Right Flooring for Your Community

BY LAUREN BOSTON

MAINTAINING and replacing flooring is among the priciest endeavors for apartment owners. Ugly, brown carpet or scratched hardwood floors can turn a prospective resident away from even the most accommodating units.

By considering resident demographics and researching flooring surface and color trends, cost, life expectancy and sustainability, owners and managers can select the product that best suits their community.

One example where appropriate flooring can make a difference is senior housing. Tim Skufca, National Accounts Sales Manager, Floorcovering Sales for Sherwin-Williams, says that residents there would benefit from non-slip and directly adhered flooring product.

Common spaces, such as fitness centers, laundry rooms and roof or pool decks, require flooring that is both durable and aesthetically appealing.

Carpet, vinyl and laminate are the most common types of flooring, and each serves a different purpose. Carpet may help reduce noise and the sound of footsteps while vinyl and laminate are easy to clean—great options for kitchens, bathrooms and units with pets.

For communities aiming to cater to environmentally conscious residents, carpeting that includes PET fibers (a type of polyester) and Type 6 nylon flooring are green-friendly options that can be recycled back into carpet.

Installation time is another consideration. The flooring industry has a 24-hour turn-around standard, but jobs could take two days if ceramic or large amounts of floor preparation are required, Skufca says.

Choosing Colors

The large number of flooring textures, colors and design choices may seem



PRICE IS A CRUCIAL factor when choosing flooring for an apartment. Price ranges for various options can help managers make informed decisions.

Carpet

- 18oz Nylon or PET - \$5.50 – \$6.50 per yard
- 25oz Nylon or PET - \$6.60 – \$7.50 per yard
- Labor varies market to market but the range is \$1.53 - \$3.00 per yard

Vinyl

- Good - \$5.50 – \$6.50 per yard
- Better - \$7.20 – \$9.00 per yard
- Best - \$9.50+ per yard
- Labor varies market to market but the range is \$3.50 – \$8.00 per yard

Laminate/LVT

- Good - \$1.20 – \$1.60 per square foot
- Better - \$1.75 – \$2.25 per square foot
- Best - \$2.35+ per square foot
- Labor varies per market but the ranges is \$.70 – \$1.25 per square foot

Ceramic

- Good - \$1.20 – \$1.60 per square foot
- Better - \$1.75 – \$2.25 per square foot
- Best - \$2.35+ per square foot
- Labor varies per market but the range is \$3.00-\$5.00 per square foot

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overwhelming. Knowing a few basic trends can help with these decisions.

Natural or natural-looking products are always a reliable option, says Jackie Jordan, Director of Color Marketing for Sherwin-Williams. Owners can purchase vinyl, laminate or porcelain products that look very similar to real wood and stone at half the cost. For a balance of textures and materials, many apartments combine hard-surface flooring products in the kitchen, bathroom and family room, and use carpet in the bedrooms, Jordan adds.

Vinyl plank flooring is the newest trend in the multifamily housing industry, Skufca says. The durable, vinyl hard-wood-style flooring is available from most

major flooring manufacturers. It can be installed by the community's maintenance team. Replacing damaged planks can be performed one plank at a time, making it a huge cost-saving alternative to replacing an entire floor.

For areas where a softer surface is appropriate, carpet with PET fibers remains the most popular option. Its natural stain-resistant qualities make the PET carpet an ideal choice for communities with a high turnover or frequent foot traffic in its common areas. Skufca says nylon carpeting now comes with improved cleaning properties and stain guards.

Jordan says residents tend to favor homey earth shades inspired by nature.

Light value to mid-tone chameleon shades—tinted neutrals or natural shades of linen, sand, wheat, beige, canvas, khaki, putty, stucco, taupe, mushroom, warm grays and stone—that work well with a variety of colors and materials are the most popular soft-surface (carpet) colors, she says.

Jordan suggests shying away from white carpet products, which show dirt, stains and traffic patterns. She also suggests avoiding deep neutral or bold colors because they can make a room feel smaller.

Maintenance Makes It Last

In today's tough economy, it's tempting for owners to pick the least expensive flooring available, but they should strongly consider life expectancy before investing in flooring that won't stand the test of time.

Skufca says carpet products typically last three to five years; and longer with the recent introduction of solution-dyed carpet. Vinyl flooring has a longer life span, lasting five to 10 years, depending on how well it's maintained.

It's no surprise that well-maintained carpeting, vinyl or laminate will outlive neglected flooring. Skufca says high-traffic carpet areas should be vacuumed no less than two times a week, with other areas vacuumed once a week. A professional cleaning job is recommended every 12 to 18 months.

He recommends cleaning vinyl, laminate, plank or ceramic flooring two times a week with a vacuum and Swiffer dry cloth, as large amounts of water can damage laminate flooring. After floor coverings are installed, Skufca suggests including provisions in a resident's lease related to the care and maintenance of the floor. **NA**

For a list of National Suppliers Council members who provide flooring, see page 81.

