

floor trends

Commercial Color Trends



Pops of color can come from cues in corporate branding while flooring remains more neutral, as seen in this space by GTM Architects.

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In business, image is everything. A facility's color makes a statement about what the business and its brand stand for. We're showered with forecasts each year telling us which color palettes will emerge, so where does the flooring professional turn? This month we talk to design professionals about the color trends in [commercial design](#) and architecture and how they are impacting flooring. "There's an interesting shift that's going on from colder neutrals to slightly warmer—not the crazy beige we used to see but more of a gray beige," said Jess Ultreras, interior designer, Fitzgerald & Associates in Chicago. "Neutral is king and you can't get away from it."

Ultreras says there are two parts to the shift to warmer neutrals. First, there are clients who are looking for a color that will differentiate themselves in the market, and there is a sea of cool grays being used in design now. Second, the choice often depends on the target market the company is pursuing.

Ultreras, who designs multifamily projects, says while residences are typically designed to be neutral, the public spaces in multifamily construction allow for creativity in color. One of the biggest projects she's currently working on in Oak Park, Ill., features two buildings—one that caters to a senior demographic and one for a younger demographic. “Age definitely affects color,” Ultreras said. “The older crowd moves toward a warmer neutral, while the younger demographic is still into cooler neutrals.”

For flooring, Ultreras says she is seeing more natural looks being executed through digital printing. “We’re seeing material choices based on longevity, low-maintenance requirements and ingredient transparency, or a green story,” she said.

The market now offers more realistic interpretations of natural products in a wide range of mass produced flooring materials than ever before, and the technological ability of these manufacturers opens up the spectrum to color choices.

A red arrow points from the 'DMG Interiors' label to the quote box.

Victor Sanz, project architect for DMG Interiors in Reston, Va., is seeing a plethora of neutral colors that evoke earthy, naturalistic and roughhewn landscapes. “Clear, bright colors are appearing as accent splashes in refreshing ways,” Sanz said. “Metallic hints that augment the surface texture are an especially welcome new trend.”

Instead of using the same flooring color throughout a space, designers are contrasting tone and texture to delineate the various areas of a large open space.

“Flooring is becoming a more neutral backdrop that will endure the quick changes of fashion and color preferences.”

– Victor Sanz

“As open-plan environments are becoming the norm, color is becoming a more powerful and interesting tool to add visual interest into wide expansive spaces,” Sanz said.

“Technology companies are embracing bold, bright accent colors, while healthcare clients prefer a more calming relaxed, organic palette.”

The openness of large interior spaces can create hierarchical and functional problems, but a combination of contrasting colors, materials and textures can reconcile the challenge of demising open plan environments. For example, an open elevator lobby with plain white porcelain tile may receive an inset of dark [textured carpet](#) where people are expected to wait for the elevator, or it may define a seating area. “Psychologically, the mix of different flooring types can guide people through the space by creating order and invisible organization,” Sanz noted.

Robin Menge, vice president commercial interiors for GTM Architects in Washington, D.C., is also seeing a lot of neutrals, mostly black and white, with some warm wood tones mixed in. “Pops of color come from corporate branding, most often in the blue ranges,” she said.



Creating a neutral backdrop that can be accessorized with furniture or wall finishes provides accent colors, but the majority of her clients are staying away from trends. “Flooring colors are still staying neutral for the most part, but we’re being given more choice in texture which adds life to a neutral design—more tone-on-tone carpeting, wider variety of wood looks in [LVT](#), porcelain tile textures, et cetera,” Menge said.

For that pop of color, Shaw Floors named “Lush” its 2017 Color of the Year. Described as an array of greens inspired by nature, Lush speaks to today’s desire for health, well-being and renewal.

“From the tallest trees to the deepest valleys, green surrounds us,” said Debbie Houston, creative director, Shaw Floors. “It’s vibrant, but at the same time, soothing. It changes with the seasons without ever getting old or boring. Lush is nature’s neutral.”

The Color, Style and Design team at Shaw Floors researches consumer trends year-round to identify the most current styles that are influencing home design and décor. As Shaw Floors examined the trends rippling across the industry, it saw movement among consumers who have a desire to feel and live better.

“We are seeing people make more conscious decisions on what they bring into the home,” Houston said. “People are focused on creating healthy environments for their family.”

The Shaw team said the green hue is a universally appealing color that is a good companion to hardwood flooring. The color works well for a variety of styles, from glamorous to rustic to contemporary. It can be a statement color, and it plays as well with jewel tones as it does with neutral hues. Lush can also be used as an accent color to pull out subtle hues in a tweed carpet, bold print or throw pillow, Houston said.

“Following the idea of using natural, almost ‘raw’ materials, manufacturers are responding with less patterned and more textured products,” Sanz noted. “When there is pattern, it is small enough to be perceived as a texture in the general picture. More and more, busy patterns are shifting over to furniture upholstery. This allows for less invasive change as patterns trend out. Flooring is becoming a more neutral backdrop that will endure the quick changes of fashion and color preferences. Flooring should function as a neutral canvas, while using tone and texture to create interesting punctuation points inside of a space.”



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Contrasting tone and texture delineate the various areas of a large open space, such as this professional office designed by DMG Interiors.