

What's Underfoot Will Floor Residents

Selecting The Right Flooring For Your Properties

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Although often overlooked, flooring for multifamily communities is one of the most important aspects for community owners/managers to consider. In some cases, it can set the first impression and even make or break a lease. That being said, flooring maintenance and replacement is also one of the highest expenses incurred, which is why there is tendency to select the most inexpensive option or to stretch the life cycle as long as possible.

Because new flooring comes with such a hefty price tag, it pays to do your research into the types of floorcoverings available. But your research shouldn't stop there. In fact, it should start with an understanding of the expectations of your residents. After all, the choices you specify may directly impact your Net Operating Income.

Know Your Residents

As a community owner/manager, it's imperative to know who is living under the roof to determine the products that will best suit their needs and your budget. For instance, is your community dedicated to senior living? Do you lease to families with children or pets? Do young professionals make up the majority of your community? The flooring needs will greatly vary depending on the residents, especially as it relates to wear and tear and the features they look for in an apartment home. For example, seniors may require non-slip and directly adhered products, while stain-resistant flooring may be best for families with kids and pets.

When considering an apartment home, most potential residents have high expectations. Companies across many industries are touting "affordable luxury" these days. And for good reason; potential residents expect more for less. When evaluating comps (comparative communities), one little extra, such as flooring, may be all it takes to close the deal. As an owner/manager, you should do frequent walk-throughs of your communities to see it through your potential residents' eyes. Inspect the community from floor to ceiling, taking special notice of floor damage or stains.

After you evaluate the demographics of your residents, think about spaces beyond the private apartments you're responsible for. Specifically, consider common living areas—such as fitness centers, laundry rooms, roof or pool decks and more—and the ages and abilities of the renters who will traffic them. The aesthetics and durability of these areas is just as important as the individual units.

Factors For Flooring

Flooring options abound, so it may seem daunting to determine which type fits the bill, both literally and figuratively. Whether replacing a bedroom, tiling a kitchen floor or updating an entire apartment home with beautiful hardwood floors, there are flooring options at every price point. In most cases, you get what you pay for and the least expensive option is not always the best solution. For this reason, it's critical to think about the life expectancy you have for the flooring as well as the frequency in which your tenants will have the floor cleaned.

Beyond costs and life cycle, some of the first considerations will naturally be stain resistance and foot traffic, but you should also think about color trends, installation time and sustainability. For example, the growing demand for sustainable building products has led flooring manufacturers to introduce more ecologically friendly floorcovering options. These materials are made from recycled or low-emitting materials and can help meet high environmental standards and stringent LEED qualification requirements.

Out With The Old, In With The New

Specifying flooring doesn't have to be an overwhelming or expensive process. Beyond the technicalities of material, some vendors offer services to help select the right flooring to tie it all together with paint, wall coverings and window treatments. It pays to work with a supplier who knows your budget, your unique needs as a community manager and your local marketplace. If the vendor can help you throughout the process and can coordinate everything from aesthetics to timely delivery and installation, it will make your job easier by saving time, effort and money.

Once you've selected product for your building's updates, time is of the essence to have old flooring removed and the new surface laid down. The experts you've purchased the new flooring from should properly dispose of your old flooring (and, where applicable, recycle) and install the new floorcoverings quickly and reliably.

After your floorcoverings are installed, be sure to include provisions related to the care and maintenance of your floors in future leases, so you and your residents can enjoy the flooring as long as possible.

Here are some of the most common floorcoverings:

Carpet: A soft surface underfoot, rich fibrous carpet imparts comfort in a space and may help deafen noise and the sound of footsteps. Many forms and textures are available, but Berbers (short-pile carpeting offered in cost-efficient nylons); level loop piles (a durable, track-resistant iteration well-suited for high-traffic areas); and friezes (carpet with short fibers that curl in all directions to hide footprints) are well-worth considering.

Look for carpet that features the latest in stain-resistant technologies and innovative fiber types that contribute to product durability and increased life cycle.

Vinyl/Laminate: Offered in everything from natural stone to ceramic and wood looks, moisture-resistant vinyl flooring comes in plank, sheet and easy-to-install single peel-and-stick tile formats. Hard surface flooring comes in a variety of gloss and finish offerings and across the board is easy to clean, making it the perfect option for kitchens and bathrooms or properties where pets are allowed.

Wood: Gleaming hardwood floors add warmth and elegance and are sure to attract residents. Durable across species, the appearance of wood remains consistent over the years and repairs, rather than replacement, may be in order, making wood floors a solid, long-term investment. Offerings span the board from traditional pine and oak to modern bamboo.

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