**Fresh Flooring Trends to Improve Investment Properties**

*By Will Hudson, Laminate and Vinyl Plank Flooring Merchant, The Home Depot*

Sleek, stylish flooring is an asset to any investment property. Luckily, recent innovations in flooring materials have increased the possibilities for luxurious yet affordable options. The following five trends are a great place to start when considering new flooring projects.

**LET’S GET DIGITAL**

Due to new digital printing advancements, flooring styles that previously required premium materials or substantial installation costs now are achievable with less effort and investment. These design technologies eliminate boundaries between flooring materials and produce customizable tiles and planks in whatever style, color or finish. This also includes amplifying realism - if you desire a true-to-life appearance, look no further than rich designs ranging from knots and ripples in wood to wavy colors in marble.

Digital printing also delivers variety that your tenants are sure to appreciate. Today’s floor printing machines reduce the number of repeat designs on tiles and planks, ensuring that the same pattern does not appear in multiple spots within a given room. This produces a more natural feel and adds realism that will make it harder for renters to detect a difference in material sourcing.

**LOAD ON LAMINATES**

Much like its wood and tile counterparts, laminate flooring has evolved to a tougher and more attractive form in recent years. Laminate planks now feature a thick, sturdy design and resilient finish that deters scratching, offering a durability advantage for owners looking to rent their properties for years.

As flooring technologies evolve, The Home Depot remains committed to driving innovative new ideas. Our merchants work with leading manufacturers to develop durable and advanced laminate, vinyl and porcelain tile.

We worked closely with Pergo to develop Outlast Plus, a next-level laminate capable of withstanding water for up to 24 hours. This creates new opportunities to bring wood-look flooring into bathrooms, kitchens and other water-centric rooms previously considered off limits. Available exclusively at our stores, this product also includes an attached underlayment that reduces sound and makes installation faster, simpler and more affordable.

**RESURGENCE OF VINYL**

If you haven’t been involved in a flooring remodel for a while, you might be surprised at the evolution of vinyl. Previously considered primarily a low-cost option (think sheet tiles from the 1980s), vinyl floors now come in planks in a variety of trendy printed options, such as wood and stone looks.

Vinyl is 100 percent waterproof, versatile and extremely durable. This makes it a great choice for rental properties that may go through resident transitions from year to year. The vinyl floor will last much longer than a standard carpet and repairs involve swapping out individual planks rather than the whole floor.

Modern vinyl flooring is also easy to apply, with tiles and strips able to go directly over existing surfaces without the need to remove the subfloor. The Home Depot’s exclusive LifeProof luxury vinyl planks uses drop and lock end joints that fall perfectly into place and reduce installation cost and time. Featuring an innovative rigid PVC core that delivers strength while remaining lightweight, LifeProof planks are an excellent choice when you need maximum durability.

**GO BIG WHEN GOING HOME**

With replica wood and stone becoming more popular, more property owners are gravitating towards large-format tiling and planks. Flooring materials have reached unprecedented sizes in recent years – planks now run as long as four feet in length, squares can go as wide as 16 inches, and rectangles now hit sizes of up to 18x36.

While larger flooring materials are bulkier and require more careful planning to install, they do require less time. To ensure a seamless, gap-free design, use a mortar specifically engineered for heavier tiles or planks. Custom Building Products’ Natural Stone and Large Tile mortar, for example, reduces lippage and produces a more level installation.

**ADD LOCAL FLAIR**

Flooring design trends are not universal and vary greatly by location. At The Home Depot, we see preferences for different styles of flooring across the country. Texas and the Southwestern region tend to prefer darker grey and brown flooring with a more distressed tone. Properties in more oceanic regions, such as the East and West coasts, not surprisingly go more for lighter grey, white and cream colors that feel cool and casual. Likewise, areas more susceptible to colder winters, such as the Northeast, feature subtle accents ranging from beiges to tans.

Depending on property dimensions and plans for the property, the exact parameters of any flooring renovation will greatly vary. However, an awareness of the latest trends and a mind for creativity can result in a floor that is brilliant, easy to install and a value driver for any property.

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