



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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What is the Best Flooring for Your Project

Before we can answer the question we have to know a bit about the project and the expectations of the flooring being anticipated. To start, its best to categorize the type of traffic the space is going to receive such as light, moderate, heavy or extra heavy. Next we'll want to know if the aesthetics are luxury, such as executive offices or super heavy duty such as a mall, for example. In addition we have to know if the flooring is going to be maintained regularly or almost not at all and if the maintenance is to be done by in house or contracted services on some type of routine basis.

It's also important, if this project is a renovation, to decide what was liked about the last flooring and what wasn't, keeping in mind that the renovation would likely be a change in appearance be it subtle or dramatic depending on the extent of the renovation; is it a complete make-over or just a freshening up? And the formula for computing what the investment will be in the product over the expected and anticipated life span whether that is 5, 7 or 10 years or more and, relative to that, are the expectations realistic?



Guidelines for levels of traffic by category

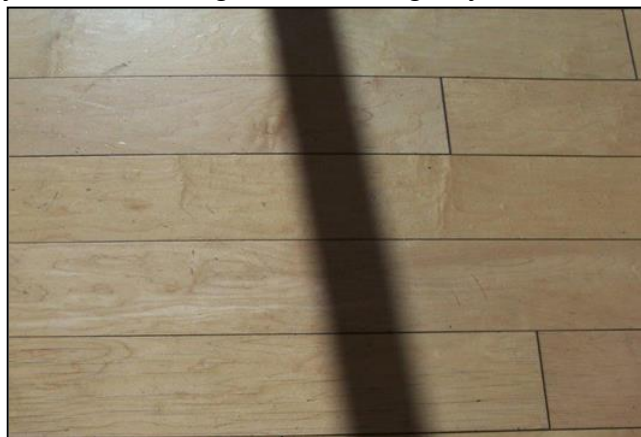
Use this general guideline to help specify the appropriate types of carpet to suit traffic needs in various facility setting. When identifying the location where carpet will be specified, it is also important to define the level of traffic expected. Is it consistent over the whole area, or is it concentrated in one small area? Here are some examples to demonstrate typical levels of traffic by category:

	Extra-heavy traffic	Heavy traffic	Moderate traffic	Light traffic
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency room lobby Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby Commons Corridors Patient rooms Dining area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination room Open office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private office Living unit
Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front desk Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front desk Commons Dining area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting room Guest room (outside entrance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guest room (inside entrance)
Public Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concourse Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional airport terminal Concourse Commons Auditorium Library Museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local library Open office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private office
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside entrance Cashier Checkout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inside entrance Main aisle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales area Dressing room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-sales area Dressing room
Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside entrance High-rise entrance Elevator lobby Fitness area Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fitness area Meeting room Auditorium Inside entrance Food service/ vending Cafeteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper floor reception area Conference room Open office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private office
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fitness area Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditorium Food service / vending Cafeteria Dorm Lecture Hall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Library Open Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private office

This is a lot to comprehend; very simplified and it can't be done just by looking at samples of flooring that a rep may bring in or the architect provided. Many of the answers to these questions will be based on experience and the best place to find that is with established professional flooring contractors who have used the full array of flooring materials on past projects giving them knowledge of what works and what doesn't for your particular project. Furthermore, working with a knowledgeable flooring consultant firm with access to a wealth of information, will insure the right product gets used backed up by testing that confirms this. The testing can be adaptable to the type of traffic the space will receive and maintenance. Also, to the old saying, "Seeing is believing", a site visit to evaluate the space for determining if you're on the right track with your desires and whether any alterations, need to be made. These could be as simple as altering the color shade to hide soil and improve appearance retention, changing the layout, the construction, using a better but similar product or implementing technology to improve performance and longevity. These would not be normal issues a rep would be aware of because they are focused on their companies' products but they would be known by experts in flooring that are aware of what will make a product work and what won't and what and whose product to use and why.



Let's look at some examples. You have a project that is undergoing a complete renovation and the previous flooring was carpet. You're going to change to wood flooring and may think that because it is a hard surface material it will perform better and be easier to maintain. Wood is a completely different animal than carpet and all wood is not the same, in fact you'll be dealing with challenges you didn't have before with carpet. First, consider the sound factor; changing from soft surface to hard surface will make the space louder because the wood will enhance noise and not deaden it unless provisions are made to do so. It will be noisy walking on it if a buffer is installed. If installed in a space where high heels are worn it will be subjected to indentations from the high heels, especially if they are spiked high heels. It can scratch and if exposed to direct sunlight, it can fade.



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It will also be susceptible to changes in heat and humidity which can cause it to expand and contract, cup, curl, lift, creak, crack and check. Wood can be very temperamental. You may think what you want looks good but looking good doesn't tell you if it's going to perform and you're looking at a completely different type of product that you haven't really taken into consideration all the good and bad features and characteristics. A different product in the same space may very well give you a completely different set of conditions you hadn't planned on. If the maintenance staff isn't educated on how to take care of the new flooring they can destroy the material before it has a chance to deliver at all.


Another example; you want to use carpet on a new project and are debating whether to use broadloom which will afford you much more styling latitude or carpet tile which you think may be more practical because you can change out one tile if it gets damaged. To consider: color, type of dye system, construction, appearance retention and of course and again, maintenance. Broadloom carpet does afford you much more styling options because, in reality, depending on who's making the carpet and what type of equipment they have, virtually any style you can conceive can be achieved. And even if you or the manufacturer thinks it can't be done, it likely can with very few limitations, if you're talking to the right consultant. On a new project you'll have wide open spaces so broadloom would work, understand that if it has a lot of pattern you'll have to have a more experienced installation contractor install it so it goes together correctly. There are installation firms that never met a carpet they couldn't install, even if they gripe a bit and other installation firms that blame everything on the carpet, the floor, the weather that day, and on and on, who couldn't install the material properly if they had a magic wand. As for broadloom carpet (which is any carpet over 6 feet in width or 9, depending on who you talk to) versus carpet tile. Broadloom may take longer to install and require more skill than carpet tile but they can both perform very well. The right broadloom carpet will perform every bit as well as a carpet tile in a corporate setting or even a more demanding application, depending on the material. As for replacing a tile, this is more a marketing and sales concept than a practical one. Have you ever seen a used carpet tile replaced in an airport or anywhere else for that matter?

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A new tile may make the floor look like a patchwork quilt; the new tile sticks out like a red flag. Replacing one or a few carpet tiles in a bed of aged and trafficked carpet tile will never look good or blend in so don't think that it will. That said there are differences enough in both products, aside from their size, that would make a decision to use one or the other a point of thought.

How about hard surface flooring? Do you need something that's waterproof, such as in bathrooms, kitchens or in a hotel for example where the lobby in less than five star facilities is the social gathering place offering food and beverages consumed in that space. It's important the material be functional, appealing in

appearance, safe so that food or beverage spills will not present slip and fall issues, and how can they not under the circumstances. So the coefficient of friction for wet substances would be very important to know and which flooring would be the safest to use. More and more, hard surface flooring is used where carpet formerly was and it presents a different set of concerns as well as circumstances. Shifting from the use of one flooring material to another may not awaken the thought process necessary to comprehend the ramifications of the change. The space may be louder (as mentioned previously), harsher, colder, less comfortable, riskier to wet foot traffic, certainly different to maintain and perform in a manner unlike what you had before.

Often we see problems resulting from the change from one flooring type to another as the end user did not anticipate whatever concern they are experiencing. Or the flooring is doing something totally unfamiliar to them or anyone else looking at it that is raising a concern.

So the answer to the question as to what is the best flooring for your project depends on what the expectations are, the differences from what you have or had or want, to what you have now and what the flooring is or is not doing that was not anticipated. The best way to determine what is best for your flooring is to explore the questions you have with a local professional commercial flooring contractor with a stellar reputation or call us. Better to make a small investment up front to find out what will work best for you than to make a bad decision that may result in a huge mistake. The biggest problem in the flooring industry that we see repeatedly is the wrong product in the wrong place, caused by someone who thought the new product was a good idea and choice only to result in a catastrophic mistake, failure and disappointment.

Think before you act. Find out what the best flooring for your project will be or the best product in the category of flooring you're considering and do your research before you make a commitment. It's a whole lot less expensive and it won't add more stress to your life. Here at LGM we do this daily and we can help you too.

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