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THE MAGAZINE OF SUSTAINABLE FLOORING & DESIGN



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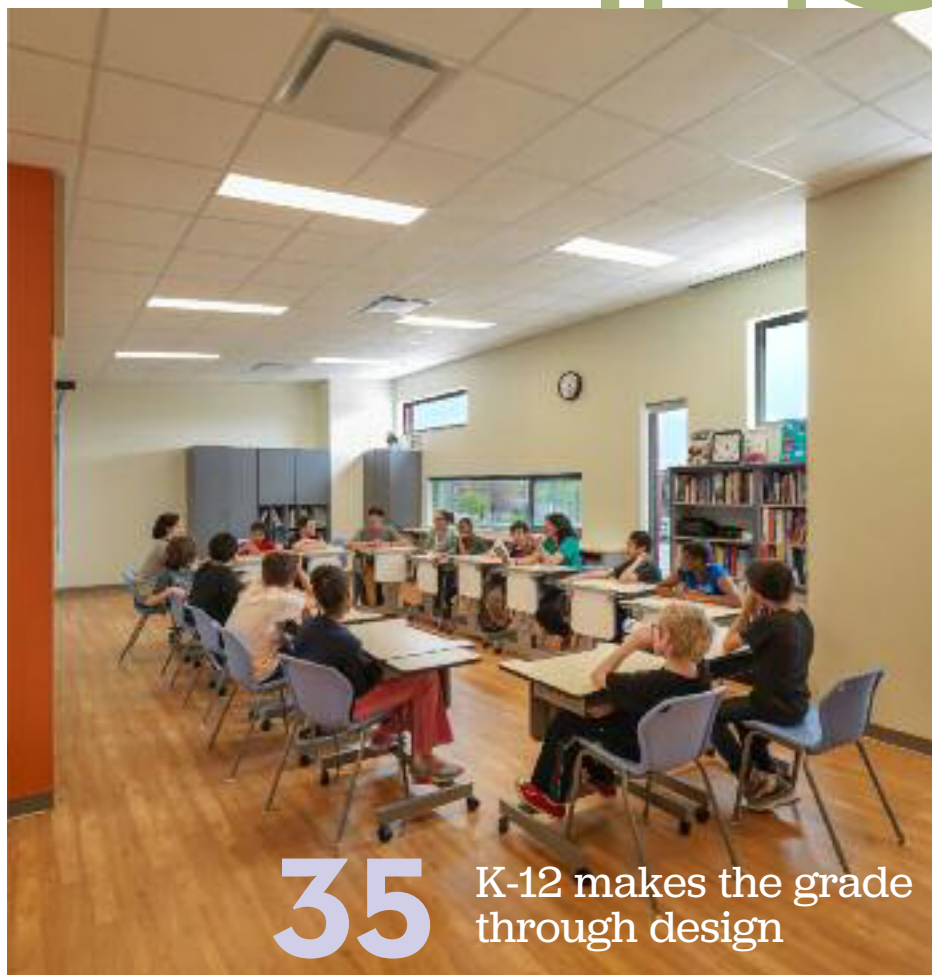


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# Seize the opportunity to be transparent

The importance of transparency – across any industry – stems from our innate desire to acquire information and build trusted relationships. The digital age we live in today has only furthered our global curiosity and expectations. We can travel the world at the click of a button, make purchasing decisions based on other people’s reviews and get answers to nearly any question we have via our cell phones.

Information sharing is at an all-time high, and with this comes an evolution of how we conduct business and who we get into business with. Gone are the days where being green was simply a marketing strategy. Today, the A&D community and consumers alike are seeking out manufacturers’ sustainability stories. We are connecting the dots between materials, health, production levels and personal experiences. And in doing so, we’re shifting the relationships we have with products and places to create a healthier built environment.

As you’ll read in this issue, the demand for sustainable awareness and transparency is coming from every angle of our industry. Education and government are two segments looking at these issues to make massive strides to meet the individual needs of a space. School districts are beginning to shift priorities from upfront cost to long-term sustainable benefits when specifying materials. Designers are also working with elementary, middle and high schools to incorporate products that lend themselves to mixed-use classrooms as teaching methods advance.

Similarly, the U.S. General Services Administration is taking note of changing work environments and moving away from the utilitarian needs of offices from years past. That’s right, the federal government is blazing new trails when it comes to setting product standards for its facilities based on productivity and sustainability.

Looking to provide solutions, many manufacturers are taking a forward-thinking approach to transparency simply by joining in the conversation. Mills are becoming more aware of the processes and materials they are using and recognizing the weight third-party certifications, ingredients lists and their own environmental conscious all hold.

And on a global level, organizations like the U.S Green Building Council are helping all of us ask better questions, find better solutions and really focus on the potential sustainability has to positively impact our communities. As Mahesh Ramanujam, COO of USGBC, shared with *Green Operations* on page 13, transparency can create fear in the market, but it also offers opportunity. We’re siding with the USGBC on this one and embracing the open dialogues and collaboration as opportunities for all of us.

Sarah Bousquet

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# answering the GSA call

BY K.J. QUINN

An unlikely source is emerging as a trendsetter for workplace design. With building interiors long considered ugly ducklings for their mundane looks, one of the nation's largest commercial real estate owners is raising the bar for requirements in performance standards and style.

"GSA has really been a leader in new workplace design, from the standpoint that we were among the first people to say the way to do the best workplace design is understanding the workspace around it," said Kevin Kampschroer, chief sustainability officer at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). "The real strong value to government and any organization is to have people work together from time to time; that's how you build cohesion. So the workplace isn't looking for the same type of utilitarian needs as 40 years ago." The agency manages architects and engineers to provide design for federal clients needing new workspaces.

The federal government is reportedly creating 21st century style workplaces to drive down cost, increase productivity and green office space. Within the past two years, GSA revised its facility standards and set requirements for new or renovated buildings, moving to a performance-based approach. The end result is federal projects are breaking away from institutional-

type looks and creating workspaces which more closely resemble corporate offices.

"What we now see in facility standards are 16 types of flooring listed with levels of performance from minimum 'scrape by' to as good as you can get, measured on scales of durability, maintainability and environmental characteristics," Kampschroer said. "We publish a set of performance standards to give the design team options, and really reinforce the idea we are not actually looking for particular products or solutions but the kinds of performance measured on those scales."

This represents a radical change in philosophy for a sector that has historically specified based on price and functionality rather than floor design. The Design Excellence Program - operated through GSA's Public Buildings Service - stresses creativity and streamlines the way GSA hires architects and engineers, substantially cutting the cost of competing for GSA design contracts. "The whole idea behind Design Excellence is the Federal government should not go the cheapest route possible," Kampschroer explained. "There is value in design."

The Federal government reportedly owns and leases nearly 10,000 properties, although only a percentage of them under-





Senger Design Group specified Shaw's Absorbed Tile, Visible Tile and Colour Plank Tile in its redesign of the Colorado Army National Guard Readiness Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

go remodeling or new construction work during the year. While these projects are not necessarily increasing budgets to accommodate more expensive interior decorating products, designers are making smarter choices. For example, "We are building LEED Silver and Gold buildings at the exact same price as the buildings before," Kampschroer said. "This was the result of [allowing] design teams to use their creativity and imagination, and for GSA project teams to be open minded to new solutions." LEED-certified Federal buildings include approximately 130 owned by GSA and another 400 leased facilities.

One key factor driving change is lead time from when new construction or renovation projects appear on the books until they are shovel ready. In the past it was not uncommon for years to go by before the work was started, so interior design plans became antiquated. "We have told design teams, 'If you can do a better design that achieves a higher level of performance, sustainability and show ideas, we will look at it with an open mind,'" Kampschroer said.

GSA has led the workplace transformation by renovating its own headquarters in Washington, D.C. Workspaces utilize multiple soft and hard surfaces which meet performance, sustainability and aesthetic objectives. "When you walk around our new headquarters, I can show you dozens of ideas that 20 years ago would not have occurred to people, even after Design Excellence, or 10 years ago after adopting sustainability into building design," Kampschroer said.

#### EMPHASIS ON SUSTAINABILITY

There are a myriad of laws and regulatory acts at the federal level that require sustainable design in commercial applications.

One of the most significant changes in floor covering for GSA projects is the advent of environmental standards. The objectives defined in Executive Order 13693 from last year require reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, waste and in water use.

"The objectives also require the use of recycled materials and efforts to recycle materials, as well as enhanced indoor environmental quality," said Scott Landa, a consultant and former VP of business development for Interface. "Additionally, GSA's Public Building Service, in its architectural guide document (P-100), has defined performance and environmental standards for all flooring used in buildings under GSA control."

The standards have reportedly contributed to changes in materials used to produce soft surfaces such as carpet tile. "These standards require that companies provide a selection of its modular products that offer high recycled content levels - both post-industrial and post-consumer - as well as high performing carpet tile," Landa said. "GSA measures performance through extended warranties, requirements for heavy and severe traffic wear, and ANSI NSF140 Gold and Platinum environmental standards."

Concerns over meeting sustainability objectives have been greatly reduced, however, as more flooring manufacturers list environmental and health data for their products. "There's a broad enough selection of products out there that meet sustainability requirements," noted Peter Lepage, vice president, government sales division, CCA Government Floors & Interiors, Alexandria, Va.

Generally speaking, flooring specifications must adhere to all environmental, health and safety requirements of the Federal government. While functionality and sustainability are always high priorities, government specifiers are now focused more on the value of the products they select and less on price points. "Cost is always a consideration but not the driver in all cases," Lepage said. "A lot of times the drivers could be the performance and design requirements for the facility."

Shaw Contract Group's broadloom, carpet tile and hard surface options are rigorously tested to ensure they suit the needs of any Federal government project, according to John Stephens, vice president of marketing. "These products are designed knowing it's not always about the initial cost, but how a product performs over time in the facility."

#### NEW FLOORING CHOICES MEET CHANGING WORKPLACE NEEDS

Flooring manufacturers say they are becoming more innovative in developing solutions for the government sector. More options

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Photo: Photographs © David Wakely



Photo: Judy Davis/HDPhoto

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are popping up, including products made from recycled materials and bio-based content that are low emitting or emissions-free. “The intent of the President’s executive order is to create environments that will first be places where employees can work efficiently and effectively in spaces that do not negatively impact our environment while also eliminating any indoor negative impact from unwanted volatile organic compounds (VOCs),” Landa said. “Soft surfaces provide the greatest coverage area in offices and, therefore, can be looked at to be a major contributor to solving problems.”

Case in point: New soft surfaces which exceed the GSA stain requirement are fiber-based products featuring inherent stain resistance – such as Solution Q Extreme fiber – while maintaining the texture requirements. “In addition to this high-performance option, innovations in primary backing, tufting and secondary backing have allowed soft surface manufacturers the ability to produce high-quality and high-performing products with less fiber,” noted Kieren Corcoran, marketing director, education and government, Patcraft.

The plethora of new commercial floors provides government specifiers with features to weigh and benefits to compare. “Carpet tile is a popular choice for several reasons,” Shaw’s Stephens said, “primarily because the cost of carpet tile has equalized with that of broadloom. Installation is quicker, easier and less costly.”

Government facility managers prefer a more conservative aesthetic and highly durable products due to the long life required, Corcoran pointed out. “In the areas where an open-office format is not possible, facilities are leveraging carpet tile design elements to cost effectively update their appearance.”

While high fashion flooring may appear more expensive on the surface, in many cases, the total cost of ownership is lower than traditional products. For example, industry studies indicate performance-wise, luxury vinyl tile (LVT) can be as cost effective

LEFT: County of Alameda in Oakland, Calif., designed by Noll & Tam Architects, features the timeless patterns from Patcraft’s Enflexion and Enform carpet tiles.

RIGHT: Interface’s Accent Flannel in Gold/Twill is featured in the NASA IESB, a LEED-NC Gold-certified facility.

if not more so, given it will have a payback period of about three years compared to floors maintained with wax or polish. “LVT offers higher aesthetic and better sustainability attributes than VCT,” Shaw’s Stephens said. “There’s also less maintenance with LVT, the aesthetic reads less institutional, and the performance and design features create an atmosphere conducive to attract and retain talent.”

As government agencies strive to be good stewards of the public’s dollars, this can provide impactful savings. “For example, if there is a problem that cannot be resolved, one carpet tile can be replaced via a cost-effective, efficient shuffle strategy rather than cutting out and replacing a piece of broadloom, potentially creating a visual eyesore or larger replacement expense,” Patcraft’s Corcoran said.

Indeed, there is a shift from broadloom carpet and VCT to LVT, especially in elevator lobbies, cafes and kitchens, as these facilities strive to establish a more inviting floor design – such as wood or stone visuals – instead of the traditional institutional feel. This design flexibility coupled with enhanced performance of the product provides excellent value to facility owners. “We’re finding that as every year goes by, we can do more with the same amount of investment,” GSA’s Kampschroer said. “As sustainability standards have gone up, manufacturers and the design and construction industry have responded with more creative ways of achieving performance goals without costing much money.”





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# TRANSPARENCY *today*

BY LIZ SWITZER

**T**ransparency is taking the flooring industry in innovative directions and in the process changing the way business is done. The secretive silos of proprietary information that dominated the manufacturing landscape a decade ago are giving way to practices of inclusivity and integration, built on the foundation of collective awareness around environmental and health impacts.

In the building community, transparency is no longer just a buzzword; it is an evidence-based and successful business practice for products, services and entire building projects that seek to reach new users.





“We’ve changed the ways we manufacture. We have changed the ways we build. And we’ve changed the way we operate,” said John Stephens, vice president of marketing at Shaw Contract. “Today, design professionals and manufacturers are taking ownership of potential impacts by staying informed and creating products or making decisions to benefit the day-to-day users of a space.”

“By demonstrating a willingness to be open and honest about products and practices, green building experts and practitioners gain the trust of investors, tenants, policy makers and others who enter the spaces they design, construct and operate,” said Leticia McCadden, spokesperson for the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). “There is no substitute for trust in the marketplace, and the triple bottom line demands that companies and individuals continue to grow in their capacity to be transparent – from the conception and design phase of a building to the eventual deconstruction and repurposing of its composite materials.”

**THIRD-PARTY PROGRAMS ENCOURAGE TRANSPARENCY**

The materials transparency momentum took its biggest leap forward in 2013 with the development and adoption of LEED v4, the Materials and Resources (MR) Credits 1 and 3. LEED v4 provided added

incentives for manufacturers to become early adopters, encouraging more products to be reviewed according to Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) and the Health Product Declarations (HPD) protocols. The declaration labels have served a dual purpose. First, helping manufacturers better understand their supply chains and make better decisions around sustainability; second, communicating that information to architects and designers. Together, the credits have raised the bar substantially and pushed the \$1 trillion green building industry forward in a way that no previous iteration of LEED ever has.

As a result, transparency is finding its way into corporate sustainability selection criteria by large corporations like Google. New green building codes like IgCC/ASHRAE 189.1 are also drivers as they are adopted jurisdictionally and require much more information than the sourcing of raw materials and percentages of recycled content, noted Cindy Davis, director of the LEED Certification Program and Research & Information Center at global architecture, urban planning and design firm Callison RTKL.

“With most of us spending more than 90% of our time indoors, we are increasing the duration of our exposure to chemicals in products that are part of the building’s shell, interior and furnishings,” said Vickie Breemes, director of the Advanced

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Park from Shaw is designed to redefine boundaries.

ABOVE: Mohawk Group’s True rubber products have received a Declare label, which provides manufacturers and specifiers of building materials with a ‘nutrition label’ that fully discloses all product ingredients.

Building Technologies Team at international architecture and design firm Little Diversified Architectural Consulting. “Having material ingredients disclosed allows designers to make better, informed decisions that impact human health and the environment.”

James Connelly, director of the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) Living Product Challenge, pointed to the fact we’re already seeing the growth of the transparency platform, and it will only continue. “I think it will be very easy for consumers and designers to equally select the right materials, and that’s what we really wanted all along,” he said. “Transparency was the key that allowed all of this to occur and is in part driving why we are going to have healthier buildings in the future.” The ILFI runs the Living Building Challenge, Declare and the Living Product Challenge – which challenges designers and manufacturers to create

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net positive products.

But material transparency is not yet commonplace, though it is now possible to find one or more products in almost every material category that have been evaluated - and this number is constantly increasing, said Sarah Hirsch, associate principal at BNIM, a Kansas City-based architecture firm recognized as an innovative leader in designing high-performance environments. Hirsch leads specifications development at BNIM, which in 2007 designed and built the Omega Center for Sustainable Living in Rhinebeck, N.Y., the first project in the world to achieve both Living Building status and LEED Platinum.

Organizations like the ILFI, Cradle to Cradle Innovation Institute, Health Product Declaration Collaborative, Google, Green Screen and Pharos Project have created additional resources, pushing transparency forward by evaluating product ingredients for their impact on both human and environmental health. However, transparency has meant many different things to many different people. As manufacturers turned their attention to product ingredients, the biggest challenge became finding a common language for this important conversation. So they began to embrace product labeling programs from reliable third-party organizations like the ILFI, albeit slowly.

"These programs have established a common framework and language that Mohawk and other building product manufacturers can use to communicate product ingredients and health information, which ensures accurate and consistent reporting," said George Bandy, the new vice president of sustainability at Mohawk Group, recipient of the ILFI's first ever Manufacturing Visionary award for its commitment to leadership in sustainability.

Mohawk was the first company to have Declare labels across all its product lines. Declare was developed by the ILFI in 2012 as an ingredients initiative and labeling system for building products. Declare



labels effectively function as a materials nutrition label that uses the Red List to classify products. Mohawk currently has 22 Declare labels that cover the majority of its commercial offerings - more than 500 products - the most of any company.

"To have a Fortune 500 company that is conservative in nature be willing to be honest and transparent about its ingredients had a huge ripple effect on the industry," ILFI's Connelly said. "Now all the major flooring companies are participating. Hopefully the smaller ones will come along soon."

Interface has been another catalyst for transformation. In June, the company rolled out its bold new Climate Take Back initiative to "reverse climate change and set new standards for manufacturers to deal responsibly with carbon." The program is the successor to Interface's groundbreaking 1997 Mission Zero vision. Climate Take Back intends to take in waste and convert it into useful purposes, create

High performance design specialist and architecture firm BNIM designed and built the Omega Center for Sustainable Living in Rhinebeck, N.Y., in 2007. It's the first project in the world to achieve both Living Building status and LEED Platinum certification.

supply chains that benefit all life and "make factories that are like forests."

Part of being transparent for Interface is acceptance of the idea that it requires boldness, to be willing to be open about business and processes even when that causes discomfort, said Erin Meezan, vice president of sustainability. "When we set out to prove that a zero footprint company was possible, most people didn't think that was doable at the time. Now that we have taken the leap again on our new mission Climate Take Back, aspiring to reverse climate change, we have some more convincing to do. And, once again, it starts with transparency."



# 5 QUESTIONS FOR... Mahesh Ramanujam

COO, U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and president, Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI); incoming CEO of USGBC

## 1

**HOW HAS THE TERM 'GREEN' EVOLVED IN THE A&D COMMUNITY OVER THE PAST DECADE? DOES THIS TRANSLATE GLOBALLY?**

The idea around making things green started initially as a nice-to-have or a way to differentiate yourself in the marketplace. Today, being green is an absolute requirement – across products, projects, processes and the like. And yes, this evolution is on a worldwide scale. From a global point of view, not being green is simply not a choice because developed and developing countries realize this would be in direct conflict with having a better lifestyle and meaningful economy. Today, it's about people, planet and profit.

## 2

**WHAT IS ONE THING MOST OF THE A&D COMMUNITY PROBABLY DOES NOT KNOW ABOUT USGBC?**

We have a major announcement coming this fall, where we will discuss plans to scale our platform and focus on performance – turning focus from individual buildings to cities, communities, neighborhoods and beyond. We are changing things every single day. Through GBCI, we have multiple new rating systems and programs that complement the LEED green building rating system and address different areas of sustainability, from landscapes to electrical grids to health and wellness and more.

## 3

**WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE CHALLENGES FOR THE COMMERCIAL BUILDING MARKET WITH RESPECT TO SUSTAINABILITY?**

The most pressing opportunity is to show how sustainability connects to the bottom line. Being green is great, but you need to show the cost savings with building sustainable, efficient projects. Next, when you look, there are numerous examples of operational savings on commercial projects, but these are not always classified as sustainability-driven savings. We need to make that connection for people. Finally, most people don't actually know with confidence how sustainable their building is. They simply don't have the right tools. Think of it as having your own credit score, but

nowhere to go measure it against other people's scores. That part is missing, and it's a huge challenge and opportunity that USGBC is addressing head on with our new platforms that improve transparency, data collection and metric tracking.

## 4

**HOW IS THE PUSH FOR TRANSPARENCY AFFECTING THE INDUSTRY?**

Transparency in any industry sometimes creates fear in the market, but it also offers opportunity and at USGBC we are embracing it. Some developers may be nervous that it will challenge their brand or slow investment interest, but most of what they do is already public, and their sustainability efforts should be no different.

## 5

**WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY LOOK LIKE IN 2026?**

It's all about real-time data and metrics when it comes to sustainability measurement, as this will be the most powerful decision-making tool. Developers will be bored with showcasing stagnant environmental scorecards, and they will be more confident and able to easily calibrate data to tell their own sustainability stories and find their own improvement opportunities. We will see a more sustainable built environment that focuses beyond the building, tying in health, wellness, climate change and other environmental issues more than ever before.



# WELLMORE OF TEGA CAY



**Project:** Wellmore of Tega Cay Senior Community, Tega Cay, S.C.

**Flooring manufacturer:** Mohawk Group

**Products used:** Mohawk Group Silk Road Collection, Mohawk Group Residence Collection, Haven Loft (engineered hardwood), Grainiac (glue-down LVT)

**Project lead:** Triad Design Group



## WHY MOHAWK?

**Silk Road:** Timeless looks; high-performance attributes including a moisture barrier backing with cushion; variety of patterns.

**Residence Collection:** Eight styles; superior durability and performance; wide range of options including textures, colors and sustainable attributes.

**Haven Loft:** Durable enhanced urethane finish with aluminum oxide; variety of installation options; sophisticated colors and textural details provide visual interest and disguise wear; range of coordinating moldings and transitions; accentuates a variety of Mohawk carpet and rug collections.

**Grainiac:** Natural hardwood look and feel; traditional to contemporary color lines; easy to install and replace; 12 mil wear layer protected with M-Force enhanced urethane; no-polish maintenance; FloorScore certified.

Wellmore's six-building campus sits on 10 acres and distinguishes itself from similar facilities around the country by emphasizing an award-winning "purpose-based wellness program" that supports the physical, emotional and mental well-being of its residents. This healthy approach to senior living was a key factor in specifying materials for the space. The project specified several Mohawk products in its focus to utilize sustainable flooring with unique styling options to meet the needs of individual areas throughout its 140,000-square-foot footprint.

Gina Gaines, senior interior designer at Maxwell Group, which manages the property, chose Lees Silk Road Collection – a broadloom made of Duracolor nylon – for the common areas and most of the living quarters for its performance and design capabilities.

The color and pattern selection were especially important in the memory care building, Gaines noted. "We use a lot of pattern in the public areas because it is very forgiving and easy to maintain. In memory care, however, we have to be especially careful with visuals. Colors that are too far apart on the color spectrum and some patterns can be confusing for people with dementia."

Starcrest II, a broadloom from the Mohawk Group Residence Collection, was selected for Wellmore's assisted living villas. These upscale apartments required an elegant residential look but also needed to hold up to commercial standards. A moisture barrier backing was also used in the villas.

Haven Loft, an engineered hardwood, was chosen for the bar area and as a border in the main dining room, while Grainiac – a wood-look resilient plank – was used to create a distinctive visual in some of the dining areas and activity rooms, as well as the rooms in skilled nursing and memory care. It was also specified based on its ability to handle beds being moved and spills.

“This senior living community is a contract space, but it's also someone's home. It needs to look like a home: calm, timeless, special. Mohawk helped us achieve that end goal.”

–Gina Gaines, senior interior designer, Maxwell Group



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# 13&9 THE SOUL OF DESIGN

Martin Lesjak and Anastasia Su epitomize curiosity, collaboration and connectivity

BY SARAH BOUSQUET

Based in Graz, Austria, 13&9 was born in 2013 through an interdisciplinary partnership between architect Martin Lesjak and designer Anastasia Su after the pair won an international competition for their conversion and redevelopment of Cannon Hall at The Graz Armory, called Rolling Stones. Now – just three years later – the product design firm has received global acclaim for its eclectic product collections and original design philosophy.



Inspired by collaboration, 13&9 not only designs, produces and sells its own branded products, but it has also entered into several successful partnerships with top international manufacturers. The pair made its flooring debut last year in a joint venture with the Mohawk Group and had its second successful showing

with additional carpet launches at NeoCon 2016. The team's achievements in furniture, lighting, fashion, accessories, art, sound design and now flooring speak to 13&9's inquisitive yet humble nature. *Green Operations* sat down with Lesjak and Su to get a deeper look into what makes 13&9 exceptional.





Photo: ©Paul-Ott



Photo: ©Paul-Ott

LEFT: The Low Collection is a line of entirely outdoor furniture offering a new perspective thanks to its direct relationship with the floor. 13&9 designed the collection for Viteo Outdoors.

RIGHT: Lesjak and Su founded 13&9 after collaborating on the award-winning redesign project Rolling Stones in Graz, Austria.

**Q WHERE DOES THE NAME 13&9 COME FROM?**

**A** Our name came to us one afternoon while we were discussing the future and philosophy of our firm. We discussed combining our names, but realized we needed a brand that was both personal and universal. While we were the founders of this company, its purpose is based in our larger community. I (Anastasia) suggested we use numbers. I have a number - 13 - that has followed me my entire life, from my day of birth to other significant moments. Martin's number is 9. It's his soccer number and very personal for him. We decided these numbers fit very well together as they symbolize partnership and something personal we built together, but are also understandable and memorable to the world.

**Q WHAT IS 13&9'S APPROACH TO DESIGN?**

**A** From the very beginning we made sure to have strong conversations about what we really wanted to do with our partnership. We came up with "The Soul of Design" as our brand statement to represent our philosophy: to have products that are able to tell stories and connect and interact with people. We thought this term would help people see the value in our designs. It's so important to us to find relevance in the



things we do. We don't want to just design another nice thing, but to find meaning and purpose depending on social, ecological, technological or individual relevance. Our projects have to give something away, not just create material objects. We're bringing products to life - giving them a soul - with a multidisciplinary approach. The

members of our team are all from very different backgrounds, which is not common but such a special thing.

**Q WHAT ARE A FEW ADJECTIVES THAT BEST DESCRIBE YOUR PRODUCTS?**

**A** Transformative, soulful, flexible, interactive and playful.

**Q CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR PRODUCT MIX? WHAT DETERMINES THE INDUSTRIES AND SEGMENTS YOU DESIGN FOR?**

**A** Basically we are very curious. We don't think about ourselves as specialists because we are driven by a universal curiosity. So, we see the potential for new products or innovation everywhere. This is why we have such diverse products. It's also something we teach our team - to stay open as much as possible. We like to bring our whole team together

Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17 and try to push boundaries with out-of-the-box thinking. The decision for a design often comes from an individual's background, whether it's fashion, architecture or something else. We also get requests from other companies, and when we feel there is a propensity to develop something we go for it.

**Q DOES SUSTAINABILITY PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR PRODUCT OR PARTNERSHIP DECISIONS?**

*&* Yes, it's one of the main columns of our corporate strategy. On one hand there's relevance and soul, but on the other hand it's how we deal with our environment. Looking to see if something can be part of a circle economy, use sustainable materials or be multifunctional is at our core. For example, when we collaborate with someone we want to know everything about their production process and materials so we can learn from each other and maybe even offer different sustainable options.

**Q ON THE COMMERCIAL BUILDING SIDE, HAVE YOU SEEN A DEMAND FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS?**

*&* It's funny, but we like to say the millennials will save the world. The upcoming generations have grown up in a digital world where information is at their fingertips. They need

transparency and genuinely want to know the stories and approaches behind the products they purchase. With that, sustainability is not just a marketing idea anymore, it needs to be the true essence of a project. So, the answer is yes. There is movement in the millennial generation to push for even more transparency and environmental responsibility.

**Q WHAT ELSE ARE YOU FINDING THE COMMERCIAL END USER IS LOOKING FOR TODAY?**

*&* Transparency is very important as we mentioned, but commercial end users also really want to

have an experience. They're looking for products they can interact with. This experiential part of product design is very fruitful today. The idea of expanding boundaries and crossing borders is also growing. We are seeing a bond happening between working and living. Multitalented products that can be used in both residential and commercial are becoming very interesting.

**Q TELL US ABOUT YOUR ENTRANCE INTO FLOORING VIA YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MOHAWK GROUP IN 2015 AND 2016. HOW DID THIS UNFOLD?**

*&* I (Martin) have always been interested in flooring from my architecture background. Some firms don't give flooring the same weight as other aspects of a project, but we've always seen flooring as one of the major surfaces in a space. So, we've played a lot with flooring, but as a product designer this was a new opportunity for us. When Mohawk came to us, we were very interested in the individualization of flooring. We wanted to push boundaries and know how we could create a floor that offers endless design options and interacts with people. Mohawk was very open to our ideas, and we all saw this unconventional approach as an opportunity.

**Q WHAT WAS THE DESIGN PROCESS WITH MOHAWK LIKE?**

*&* We always start any project with this question: What is the idea and relevance? We had a lot of conversations with our team around what flooring we would want for our own interior design use. We came up with a concept and brought it to Mohawk's team. Then the real collaboration started. It's important to not be superficial, but to allow ourselves to go further with our partners and understand them. We really wanted to be involved in every part of the process and know Mohawk's design DNA, vision, production process and materials. They brought their experience and expertise, and we always tried to push them as far as possible. A big push is usually good!



Photo: ©Paul-Ott



Photo: ©Paul-Ott





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 13&9's Hex-o series for XAL features a hexagonal shape unique to lighting that touts sound-absorbing design elements great for commercial spaces with high noise levels; Mohawk Group partnered with 13&9 to unveil two new collections focused on individuality at NeoCon 2016: Topography, a modular carpet collection with five tiles varying in size, geometry and texture, and Moonscapes (inset), a broadloom carpet inspired by the abstract patterns of the moon's landscape, and can be cut and reconfigured into larger floorscapes; and Wood Light is a 13&9 design inspired by nature. Its design highlights the texture, scent and structure of a piece of wood.

Photo: Mohawk Group



**Q YOU ALSO DESIGNED THE MOHAWK GROUP'S SHOWROOM AT THIS YEAR'S NEOCON. WHAT WAS THE CONCEPT THERE?**

*A* After the success of our Moving Floors collaboration in 2015, this year's partnership with Mohawk was not just about a product design. Instead we worked together to enhance Mohawk's design awareness and strategy, which came with the opportunity to deconstruct and recreate its NeoCon showroom. The concept was a stage for flooring, and we wanted to create the maximum open space that showcased the floors at every angle. What I (Anastasia) really loved about this project was the transformative atmosphere Martin was able to make. Using mirrored walls at a slight angle made the floors look like they were on the ground, walls and ceiling. It's a very sustainable space and doesn't feel like a showroom but a multidimensional room. It was also fun to look at the atmosphere during NeoCon and see how people were interacting within the space.

**Q DO YOU FIND THAT YOU APPROACH FLOORING DESIGN DIFFERENTLY THAN OTHER PRODUCTS?**

*A* Our approach is always similar. Start with good questions. But, we've learned a lot launching Moving Floors, Topography and Moonscapes with Mohawk. We've explored the process for more than two years now and have truly fallen in love with flooring. It's definitely something we would love to continue and look at taking on again.

**Q HOW HAS 13&9 EVOLVED SINCE ITS INCEPTION?**

*A* We've developed a lot both personally and professionally. We have a great team that we continue to grow consciously, and we've had the chance to work internationally in many different fields on products that have created relevance. When you imagine we just started three-and-a-half years ago, and today people know who we are it's much more than we expected at our first meeting. But we didn't really have any expectations, just vision.

**Q WHAT'S BEEN YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE AS A DESIGN TEAM?**

*A* Every day has some kind of challenge, but we can't see any great challenge because we are very solutions oriented. Challenges are often a positive for us. They are like some kind of playground. Challenges are opportunities, and opportunities are challenges. We also balance each other very well and come from different points of view, which helps.

**Q WHAT'S NEXT FOR 13&9?**

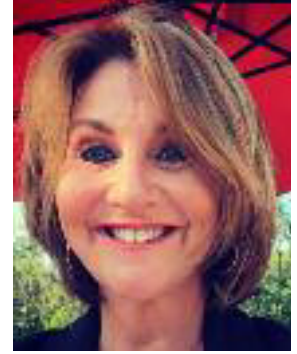
*A* Our collaborators BuzziSpace, Lande and Quinze & Milan will introduce several of our products and office furniture collections at this year's Orgatec in Cologne, Germany. Then in November we are going to introduce our collaboration with Mohawk's hospitality brand Durkan at BDNY in New York. There will be additional product launches in the upcoming year at Salone del Mobile in Milan, Italy. We are also excited to have been invited to lecture at the University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum in Graz, Austria, and Martin will be giving a guest lecture at Savannah College of Art and Design.

**Q WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE DESIGNERS TODAY?**

*A* Stay curious, cultivate your passion and be collaborative!

# Goodbye office cubical hello third space

BY NANCY JACKSON  
PRESIDENT, ARCHITECTURAL SYSTEMS



It was evident that after attending this year's NeoCon that collaborative work environments and the creation of social spaces are a definite design trend. This means the lines are blurring between workspaces, and the decrease of the cubicle enhances interactions and invites connective experiences among employees. Today's companies desire offices that will foster creativity, and the bar is being raised to design comfortable areas to work in. To meet these demands, influences from the hospitality industry are driving corporate design today. Flexible hotel



office furniture line. This starts the dialog for designers to rethink traditional flooring choices and be more in line with selecting materials they would choose for branded environments, such as hospitality properties.

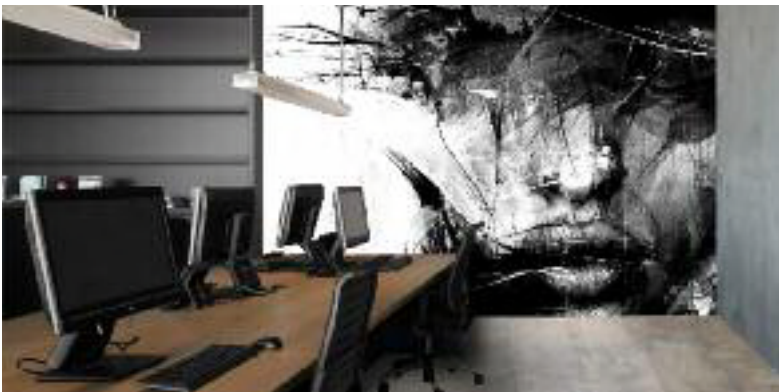
Popular choices making the move from hospitality and retail to the modern workplace include resilient, hardwood and

porcelain. On the resilient side, luxury vinyl simulating wood grains, concrete and natural stone offer sound absorbing qualities, a fresh aesthetic, ease of maintenance and a longer life cycle than carpet or carpet tile. Another benefit with luxury vinyl that incorporates state of the art technology in its construction is the ability to install over existing hard surfaces without removing the flooring, making it less labor intensive while contributing to sustainability.

Hardwoods also support the trend of making a bold statement in corporate design with improved UV urethane coatings and engineered construction. Contemporary color palettes that include ultra-matte and metallic finishes on a range of exotic and domestic species translate this idea seamlessly.

And porcelains are quickly becoming a go-to corporate flooring option, providing a high-performing product solution for any third space design. Whether it's a minimalist, monolithic effort or capturing the veining inherently found in natural stone for an emotive appeal, porcelain is pushing creativity in all new workspaces.

Regardless of the type of floor being specified, taking the best from hotel lobbies is the evident trend spotted in corporate design today. After all, every office has a grab-and-go coffee station. We can expect to see more hospitality influences to pop up as the workplace continues to evolve into a space where we live, work and play.



lobby inspired social areas - or as it is now popularly coined "the third space" - encourage teamwork, strategizing and even relaxation.

To support this new direction in corporate design, distinctive, innovative and sustainable materials are installed to encourage optimum workplace engagement. Offering a variety of unassigned places to support teamwork on diverse projects calls for impressive interior finishes complementing the "fun" lounge-like furniture selected. At the Knoll NeoCon showroom, renowned hospitality design firm Rockwell Group created Rockwell Unscripted, a new





# SCHÖNOX

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Schönox produces primers, repair products, moisture mitigation systems, floor leveling compounds, adhesives, and waterproofing materials that can successfully take damaged, uneven subfloors through to finished floors ready for use. We work daily to develop solutions that are innovative with regard to performance as well as environmental stewardship.

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*shed some light*  
**ON THE SUBJECT**

Tandus Centiva offers innovative solution  
with Luminous Carpets





OPPOSITE PAGE: Using Luminous Carpets' web-based content management system, end users can customize messages for specific visitors or events.

LEFT: Luminous Carpets is manufactured with a unique backing that allows LED light to pass through the carpet.

Luminous Carpets has created quite a buzz in the commercial sector as a high-quality flooring option that interacts with people via its use of Philips LED technology. The winning partnership has led to a durable, stylish flooring solution that can be used to greet and interact with people in the built environment through light-up shapes, words and messages.

Originally developed by Desso in conjunction with electronics manufacturer Philips, Luminous Carpets was introduced to the U.S. market last year under the Tandus Centvia brand.

In developing the product, Geert Snaphaan, Luminous Carpets' product manager, said, "Desso is constantly looking for new added values for its products, and Philips was working on the integration of LED lighting in different materials." Thanks to previous collaborations between the two companies, "a natural connection was made."

The unique light-transmissive carpet tile has an exclusive backing that allows LED light to pass through. "The construction of the carpet was completely adapted [for this product] – yarn, carrier, pre-coat and certainly the backing are developed especially to let light through," Snaphaan said. "We have the best results on loop pile products."

Four carpet textures are currently

available in Luminous Carpets in 14 neutral colors that range from white and creams to mochas and grays. Lighter colors are used because the darker the carpet, the more light is absorbed into it.

The carpet is installed on top of the LED units so it remains flush with the non-lit areas of the floor. Keeping the lights separate from and below the carpet gives designers more flexibility and helps with ease of maintenance and replacement.

In terms of the lighting used, developers kept in mind they had to manage the heat emitted from the light. "Heat coming off of light could have an impact on the durability of carpet," noted Roy Scheepens, business development manager, North America, Philips. "LED lighting is relatively cool. We performed extensive tests for things like heat management for carpet and also found clever ways of trying to avoid seams. We came to find Desso and Tandus Centiva can produce special carpet tiles for installation over light. They made sure the adhesive used did not affect the light either."

#### INDIVIDUALIZED INSTALLATIONS

There are three different installation options for Luminous Carpets, which makes it a solution for various types of applications. It is easily installed in raised access floors commonly found in offices,

on top of a floor (with the light source in the subfloor), or can be recessed or routed into floors.

"Beyond the fact we can shine light through carpet, end users can use their mobile devices to actually personalize and change designs in the floor," Scheepens added. "You can create a welcome message or run the company's Twitter feed, for example – which is what a lot of our clients like about this."

The LC Grid option for Luminous Carpets – which includes a 12mm thin LED panel that displays dynamic text and images in 20cm x 80cm or 20cm x 20cm – can be controlled by a web-based content management system that allows users to create and schedule content.

According to Snaphaan, the company has plans to expand the carpet portfolio and explore hard surface in addition to further developing LED units by adding colors, controls and sensors. Target segments include front offices in corporate and hospitality, welcoming guests and illustrating branding along with wayfinding and safety. Branding at trade shows is also a popular application.

In terms of competition, Snaphaan said, "The solution is patented so there is no direct competition. The feedback has been very positive and we are currently doing projects around the world."

# MHOUSE



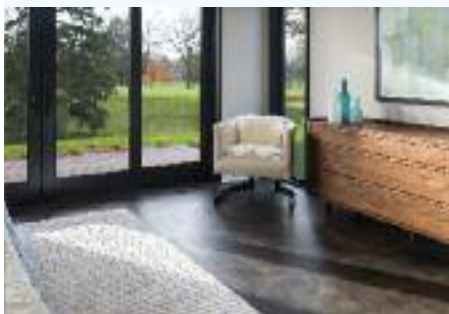
**Project:** The mHouse, Watertown, Wis.  
**Contractor:** John Aufderhaar, Bedford Falls Communications, Watertown, Wis.  
**Installer:** Ben Naleid, Naleid Interiors, Watertown, Wis.  
**Architect/specifier:** John Vetter, Vetter Denk, Milwaukee, Wis.  
**Interior designer:** Amy Carman, Amy Carman Design, Elm Grove, Wis.  
**Distributor:** Herregan  
**Flooring used:** 3,500 square feet of Aspecta Five Washed Concrete Carbon #5968111



Photo: Ryan Hainey Photography

## THE ASPECTA ADVANTAGE

- Style:** Aspecta Five in Washed Concrete - Carbon provides a smooth, neutral yet striking foundation.
- Comfort:** Warm and comfortable underfoot.
- Care & Maintenance:** No-wax floor is easy to clean. Tiles can be replaced if need be.
- Durability & Performance:** 100 % virgin vinyl; 28 mil wear layer and 3.2mm gauge thickness; ceramic bead finish; commercial 25-year non-prorated wear warranty and 10-year labor warranty.
- Sustainability:** Non-phthalate plasticizers. First resilient flooring to achieve NSF/ANSI 332 Platinum certification. The Aspecta Revise program takes back jobsite scraps to be recycled into other vinyl products.



In an economy that makes it necessary to do more with less, harnessing the creative energies of an entrepreneurial culture is becoming a way of doing business. And with that, The mHouse, a concept environment showcasing all-manmade materials, revealed the world's most innovative and compelling decorative surfaces in unique and creative ways. A research lab for tomorrow's modern environment, The mHouse project is all about what's possible. The organizers looked to Aspecta for covering 3,500 square feet of flooring because it evoked the smooth surface of well-layered, stained concrete without its downside: hard and unforgiving, susceptibility to moisture/mold, and mildew and cracking. Aspecta provided the expansive look of concrete with all the positive attributes of LVT: warmth and comfort underfoot; moisture resistance and durability – enough to be warranted for 25 years commercially. Aspecta LVT flooring set the bar high at mHouse.

“With The mHouse, we wanted to create a material-driven universe that evokes a sense of balance, beauty and brilliance to showcase the most technologically evolved manmade materials. We are grateful to Metroflor for installing its contract brand Aspecta LVT throughout the space. It's a fantastic floor in every way and exactly what the interior designer was looking for. Aspecta is simply perfect for this setting.”  
 –John Aufderhaar, contractor

“We were fortunate to be part of a project showcasing the best manmade surfaces for interiors that are appropriate and authentic for this setting. We hope The mHouse has a transformative effect to inspire interior designers and architects with ideas about how to use Aspecta and the other manmade products in innovative ways.”  
 –Russ Rogg, president & CEO, Metroflor Corp.



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SUSTAINABILITY



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To learn more and order your samples visit: [www.aspecta flooring.com](http://www.aspecta flooring.com)  
Or call us now at **855-400-7732 Ext 2070**.



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## How LVT manufacturers are helping the A&D community navigate a crowded sea of product

There is no question luxury vinyl tile (LVT) has revolutionized the flooring industry. While the commercial vinyl market had once pledged its allegiance to VCT and sheet, the hottest resilient offering available today has gobbled up market share from seemingly every other flooring category, including its closely related predecessors. With that, top LVT manufacturers take every opportunity to share their latest innovations to help differentiate from the pack.

When it comes to design options, flooring companies that produce LVT have continued to go above and beyond since the product made its biggest splash yet around 2012. For example, EarthWerks' Cocktail collection is a line geared toward the commercial market with a 22 mil wear layer and 30-year warranty. But what sets Cocktail apart is its color palette, which includes bold blues and greens in addition to grays, browns and beiges. The varied options allow for unique custom installations. "You can get abstract with fun colors," said Lindsey Nisbet, head of product development and marketing strategy.

"And on top of that, all our other products come with the same warranty so you can mix and match. We offer flexibility with LVT in the commercial market so you can provide the best of both worlds."

For the contract space EarthWerks also touts its relationship with Enzo to create customized designs for any of its products using water-jet cutting technology. EarthWerks can add logos, patterns, pictures, designs and way-finding elements to provide one-of-a-kind installations. "The program [to create a design] is easy to use and removes the guess work from the process," Nisbet said. "It is very cost effective and easy for designers to work with." With proper labels and a floor plan summary, she added, a custom water jet installation can be installed in less than a day.

To help appeal to varied environments and applications, Metroflor products are offered in an array of platforms to meet the needs of any specifier. "We do not rely on a singular installation methodology," said Paul Eanes, senior vice president, Metroflor. "We offer the correct platform to address jobsite requirements,

OPPOSITE PAGE: Uncommon tile shapes from Kardean Designflooring create unusual yet attractive geometric designs like a Cubix installation.

ABOVE: Metroflor's Aspecta Ten is a locking floor with Isocore technology, making it ideal for spaces with imperfect subfloors that also want a quick installation with minimal downtime.

whether they be poor subfloor conditions, noise abatement concerns or even where moisture is the primary issue. Not all subfloors are created equal, and dry-back or glue-down products may not be the most cost-effective answer. Metroflor can resolve the technical problem without sacrificing design or color while meeting virtually any flooring budget."

Metroflor's Aspecta is its brand of LVT that is specifically tailored for the contract market with three collections: Aspecta One, Aspecta Five and Aspecta Ten. Aspecta One is the company's latest introduction that, like Aspecta Five, is a glue-down option. It is available in plank and tile looks, offering a high-performing but value-priced alternative to Aspecta Five. Aspecta Five's 1/8-gauge thickness perfectly aligns with VCT without the need for

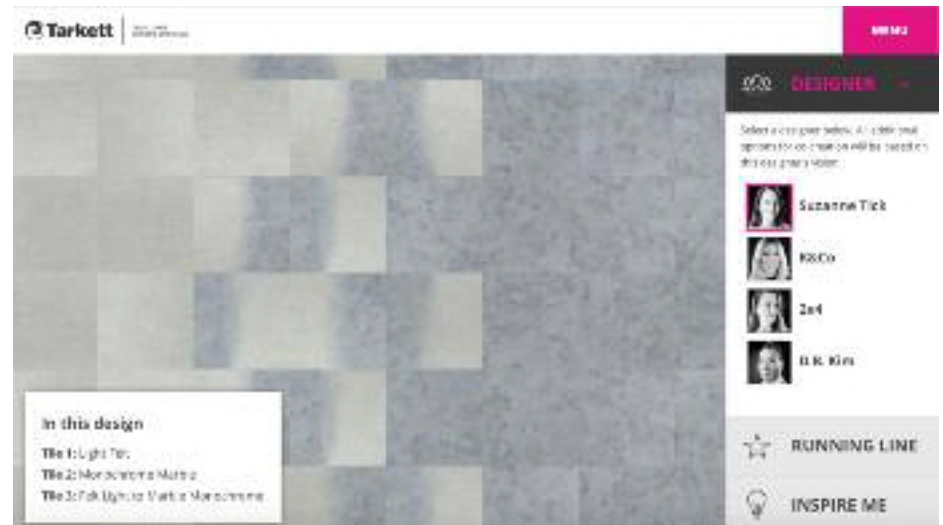
Continued on page 28

Continued from page 27

transitions. Further, this thickness helps mitigate subfloor telegraphing. Aspectra Ten is a locking floor with Metroflor's new Isocore patent-pending technology and an attached pad for noise reduction and enhanced comfort underfoot. "It is the ideal product where subfloor conditions are undesirable and speed of installation is important to minimize downtime, such as hotel rooms, condominiums, select retail shops and medical office buildings," Eanes explained. "It is also 100% waterproof and is treated with UltraFresh, which helps retard bacterial growth, mold and mildew."

Armstrong's new Diamond10 technology uses the hardness of diamonds to keep its Natural Creations floors looking new through heavy traffic. By repelling dirt and stain-causing agents, the diamond-infused coating means Natural Creations floors are easier to clean, therefore requiring less maintenance. According to the company, the new collection with 135 designs was created "in direct response to commercial interior performance needs, and emerging and future interior design trends," answering the call of architects, designers and facility managers in various sectors for a number of reasons. For instance, Diamond10 technology also provides protection from alcohol-based hand sanitizers, making it a preferred choice in healthcare facilities.

For Karndean Designflooring, its Kaleidoscope collection is a "home run" in the commercial market thanks to its different design features. Six atypical tile shapes are included in the line, including diamond, hexagon and rhombus, among others. "It's a custom program that allows end users to design floors that fit their particular needs within a space," said Emil Mellow, vice president, marketing. "It is very simple to select. Just pick the shape, pick a color out of almost 200 SKUs we have available and put in the design you want. It really creates focal points." With a commercial grade rating standard to



Karndean's LVT, Kaleidoscope stands up to heavy traffic like that typical in restaurants or corporate environments.

In working with the A&D community, Mellow said Karndean's linchpin in communication is its Product Selector, a three-inch-thick coffee table book with a complete product catalog featuring large-plan view swatches and angled laid-floor images for every offering, along with a synopsis. "It's part of our go-to-market strategy to get this resource in the hands of every designer or architect in a firm. We want it to be the go-to book on their desks. It is electronically linked on our website, but we understand these are visual people and they like having something in their hands." The Product Selector - which is consistently updated in its digital form through its app and on the Karndean website - is now in its third generation and is available in addition to Karndean's architect folders and its Commercial Sector Portfolio, which comes with educational materials to provide information on not only product but the company itself.

Tarkett has developed a unique new resource to specifiers with what it calls a "co-creation" tool that allows for the customization of product from the company's Collections Infinies line, which includes a sampling from four renowned designers. After conceptualizing a custom-made LVT

Tarkett's Collections Infinies line allows specifiers to 'co-create' tailored product using selections from world-renowned designers through a unique online visualization tool.

product from Collections Infinies, the specifier can then use the online visualizer to see the flooring in the actual space. "It enables [users] to get some background about the product designers themselves and their inspiration," explained Jonathan Klinger, chief marketing officer, Tarkett. "One of the things we hear time and again is the romance and narrative around designs are key parts of the selling process. This tool really helps bring that inspiration to life for any designer who chooses to work with our partners. It also provides the actual functional tool that allows designers to design their personalized LVT products."

While Klinger said Collections Infinies stands out on its own with digital printing for expanded design capabilities and enhanced realism, along with some top names in design tied to the line, the online tool helps product stand out "by changing the colorways from a curated palette to create the absolutely right designs for that client. Co-creation allows the client to partner with the designer and personalize the product."





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# DINP plasticizer gets safe designation from Prop 65 agency

BY DEAN THOMPSON,  
PRESIDENT, RESILIENT FLOOR COVERING INSTITUTE



**D**iisononyl Phthalate (DINP) is a general plasticizer used in many products, including some vinyl flooring and carpet backings, as well as roofing, wire, cable and automotive parts. In December 2013, DINP was added as a reproductive hazard to a list of almost 900 chemicals established under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, commonly referred to as Prop 65. Manufacturers using DINP were given a one-year period to determine whether warnings needed to be displayed on their products containing DINP.

Based on DINP's long history of safe use in flooring and other building products, the Resilient Floor Covering Institute asked that this decision be reviewed. The request, filed in November 2014, was the first Safe Use Determination sought since late 2007. This past June, the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA),

determined that DINP exposure from vinyl flooring containing 18.9% of DINP or less does not exceed the safe harbor level and issued a Safe Use Determination on June 21, 2016. Therefore, a Prop 65 consumer warning for qualifying products is not required.

The resilient flooring industry is pleased that OEHHA has reviewed exposure levels of DINP in both virgin and recycled vinyl flooring and found that qualifying products do not require a Prop 65 warning. OEHHA's decision confirms that DINP in vinyl flooring not exceeding the 18.9% threshold is safe and appropriate for homes and commercial buildings. DINP is a thoroughly studied compound that enhances the flexibility, resiliency and long-lasting performance of many vinyl products.

This year, the California Court of Appeals will consider an appeal filed by the American Chemistry Council in May 2015 to remove DINP from the Prop 65 list.

## ABOUT RFCI

The Resilient Floor Covering Institute is a nonprofit industry trade association that represents the major manufacturers of resilient flooring and associated materials marketed throughout North America. RFCI has led the resilient flooring industry to the forefront of sustainability with the development of four environmental tools for purchasers and specifiers: the FloorScore independent certification program for indoor air emissions; Environmental Product Declarations that disclose industry averages for environmental impacts over a product's lifecycle; Product Transparency Declarations that provide information on flooring product ingredients; and ANSI/NSF 332 Sustainability Assessment for Resilient Floor Coverings that provides a third-party product sustainability certification.

For more information about RFCI and resilient flooring, visit [rfci.com](http://rfci.com).

“OEHHA's decision confirms that DINP in vinyl flooring not exceeding the 18.9% threshold is safe.”

which works under Prop 65 to evaluate environmental and safety risks, issued a Safe Use Determination for DINP in vinyl flooring products.

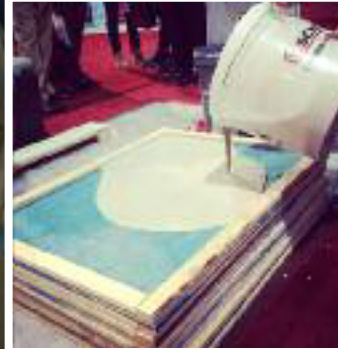
Acting under the authority of Prop 65, exposure experts at OEHHA reviewed DINP documentation for four types of vinyl flooring - heterogeneous, homogeneous, vinyl tile and vinyl composition tile. They studied a variety of exposures, including skin absorption, inhalation and ingestion. The agency





LEFT: Schönox gave Herregan Distributors a demo of its self-leveling products, touting easy installation and reduced air quality issues as two differentiators.

BELOW: Schönox AP is a synthetic gypsum based fiber reinforced, self-leveling compound especially suited for wood subfloors.



# SCHÖNOX'S subfloor products emphasize ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY

BY KEN RYAN

In business for more than 120 years, HPS Schönox manufactures its products in Germany under ISO 9001 and 14001 – two of the most stringent quality and environmental management standards. Schönox's research and development division works continuously on creating solutions that are innovative with regard to performance while being environmentally responsible and safe for installers.

Thomas Trissl, principal, said the company's commitment to the environment is as unyielding as its subfloor materials. Its array of floor leveling products allows installers to leave subfloors in place rather than being sent to a landfill. Rough, damaged and uneven floors can be covered with Schönox products, resulting in smooth, sound subfloors ready for covering.

## AIR QUALITY ISSUES

Schönox has invested heavily in air quality R&D for many years. Every Schönox

primer, moisture mitigation product, self-leveling compound and adhesive qualifies for contribution to the Low-Emitting Materials LEED credits given their low or no VOC characteristics. Schönox products contribute to many LEED credits, including Material and Resource. "If you are specifying materials for a project to be LEED accredited or simply appreciate knowing your specs are strong environmental choices, we have the products for your needs," Trissl said.

This concern for air quality extends to installers. Schönox has products in each of the floor leveling, patching and waterproofing categories with dust-reducing properties. The company's Roll and Go and Multifix adhesives are applied from a standing position, and its iFix waterproofing system is also applied with rollers in a smooth, efficient manner. But perhaps the most significant contribution to the health and safety of installers is its series of prod-

ucts that allow teams to renovate rather than demolish subfloors – eliminating the dust and debris from that process and not disturbing the materials embedded in subfloors.

## SYNTHETIC GYPSUM

Schönox has two self-leveling products and a patching compound manufactured using synthetic gypsum that is made from a by-product of the process used to purify emissions from power plants. Trissl said Schönox is proud of this environmental success story in which the by-product is enhanced and fortified in its conversion processes and used to make subfloor products that include up to 52% pre-consumer material. The resulting Schönox products achieve durability with compressive strength of at least 5,800 PSI.

"There is no compromise between product performance and environmental stewardship with Schönox products," Trissl said. "Our extensive research and development efforts have produced dual benefits in both areas, and we don't have a separate set of green products. We stand behind the attributes of all our products."

In particular, AP and APF are synthetic gypsum-based, fiber-reinforced, self-leveling compounds suitable for wood floors as well as other critical substrates designed for refurbishment work in interior areas.

## GULF COAST REGIONAL BLOOD CENTER AND BILL T. TEAGUE NEIGHBORHOOD DONOR CENTER



**Project:** Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center – Bill T. Teague Neighborhood Donor Center, Houston

**Flooring manufacturer:** Roppe

**Products used:** Stairwells, Fiesta rubber treads; corridors, SafeTcork solid vinyl tile; ramps, Recoil fitness flooring; donor area, Northern Timbers/Northern Leathers premium vinyl



### WHY ROPPE?

**Fiesta rubber treads:** PVC free, contains 10% post-industrial waste and meets FloorScore and CHPS criteria; colors coordinate with other Roppe products; all colors available at a single price point.

**SafeTcork:** Contains 10% post-industrial waste and meets FloorScore and CHPS criteria; cork content improves slip resistance; built-in anti-microbial agents; 2000 PSI withstands heavy loads without permanent indentation.

**Recoil fitness flooring:** Enhanced walking comfort and slip resistance; PVC free; contains post-industrial and post-consumer waste, increased sound and shock absorption.

**Norther Timbers/Norther Leathers premium vinyl:** 10-year limited warranty; 28 mil wear layer; UV-cured ceramic bead finish adds durability while revisiting scratching and wear; two products can be installed together seamlessly.

The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center began operations in 1975 with a mission to partner with the community to help save and sustain lives by providing a safe supply of blood, blood components and relative services. Today, the independent, non-profit has grown to more than 650 employees and collects nearly 1,000 donations each day to serve more than 170 health care institutions across Texas. When the opportunity to renovate the facility was presented, several key factors played a role in floor covering decisions: durability, funding and budget, sustainability, maintenance and the ability to create an integrated design using different types of flooring specific to the needs of individual spaces.

For instance, the existing VCT flooring in the corridors had noticeable indentations from employees and guests wearing high-heel shoes. Sheri Burmaster, project manager for the blood center, immediately started looking at resilient options with a higher PSI (pounds per square inch) rating to prevent the same unsightly marks on the new floor that had occurred over time with the previous product selection. She specified Roppe's SafeTcork vinyl tile as the solution for its 2,000 psi rating and complimentary color options.

When the design was completed, several solutions were selected from the Roppe product line which allowed the flooring to follow similar palettes within the facility while meeting the varied expectations of different spaces. Burmaster noted the mixed but unified design combined with the variety of flooring options utilized in the blood center, help the buildings feel new again. Aside from the individual advantages each Roppe product carries, the ability to obtain many types of flooring through one distributor facilitated a smoother installation and vendor relationship. The atmosphere is now updated and welcoming to the many donors that share the staff's mission to serve the community's blood needs.

“The majority of the flooring replaced was original to the two buildings built in 1980 and 1991. I am confident the new products will remain for a similar time frame and will look as great as they do today.”

- Sheri Burmaster, project manager,  
Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center





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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Mannington Commercial's Teles is a high resiliency rubber floor featuring indentation resistance of 1,500 PSI – said to be six times higher than the standard specification for rubber tile – acoustic benefits, comfort underfoot and a self-migrating wax finish. The line, available in square tiles and planks, sports a sophisticated aesthetic inspired by natural earth scapes; Perkins+Will's design team specified materials with an inherent finish – such as linoleum – to meet the performance and design needs of Pitt River Middle School in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada; CannonDesign chose vinyl tiles that look like stone in Leslie Shankman School Corp.'s Hyde Park Day School's circulation spaces, where high-traffic areas are aesthetically pleasing and offer greater slip resistance; Tarkett's Aria is a vinyl floor with accent granules and 24 colors that add depth and dimension to any interior space. Homogeneous construction and tough UV-cured polyurethane also means more durability and easier maintenance.







# K-12: Making the grade through *design*

BY K.J. QUINN

When it comes to flooring choices, public school systems have been creatures of habit specifying products based on immediate cost and function. But, times are changing and so are the interior design needs of today's K-12 education sector as aging buildings undergo makeovers nationwide.

"Needs have changed over the years as clients are now looking for flooring products that encompass ease of maintenance, acoustical properties, durability and innovative design elements collectively," noted Melissa Kelly, NCIDQ, CID, interior designer at KZF Design, Cincinnati. "And today, many budgets are prepared to include the upfront costs to get the long-term results."

K-12 is in the midst of a remodeling boom, fueled by the rising number of students and older school buildings. Local and state governments have reportedly loosened their purse strings to fund capital improvement projects at elementary, middle and high schools. It isn't that money is no object for school districts anymore. Rather, purchasing influencers - ranging from school boards to administrators to local community members - are spending more wisely. While performance, health and safety requirements remain important criteria, school districts are now looking beyond installed costs and factoring in the long-term maintenance expenses for flooring. It is, however, a work in progress.

"The greatest challenge that remains are opposing budget constraints, where it is difficult to increase the capital budget in order to reduce the maintenance budget," said Kieren Corcoran, marketing director, education and government at Patcraft.

Colored zones and low walls identify class-specific eating areas at The Friendship School in Waterford, Conn. JCJ Architecture specified sheet vinyl in a playful pattern for the Pre-K through Kindergarten school, creating a dynamic atmosphere for its young attendees.

These life-cycle costing issues carry greater weight than ever for budget-conscious school districts nationwide, which is a major reason for increased interest in luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and carpet tile in the education space. This growth in low-maintenance soft and hard surfaces comes at the expense of vinyl composition tile (VCT), a low-priced workhorse product requiring chemical applications that far exceed the original installation cost over time. Generally speaking, VCT often requires re-waxing due to major scuffing issues. By comparison, a product such as rubber flooring features a low-maintenance cleaning system and is known for "healing" itself when faced with punctures. "This means going to no-wax hard surface floors and better quality carpets," noted Julie Tinning, district manager, Mannington Commercial.

"We will not recommend VCT for any schools because it requires heightened maintenance, adding overall cost," said Raquel Morales, senior associate at CannonDesign, New York. "Whereas with an alternate product such as rubber, it's installed once; no wax or top coat is needed."

While new solutions continue to move design and sustainability in the education segment forward, some members of the

Continued on page 36

Continued from page 35

A&D community are still reluctant to break away from VCT as a preferred product. “For some public school districts, this may be because VCT has a lower first cost, and maintenance staff tend to see it as a ‘tried and true’ product they know how to work with,” said Emily Czarniecki, NCIDQ, senior interior designer at JCJ Architecture, New York. “However, new education-specific needs are helping to drive innovation in the segment.”

### LEARNING INNOVATION FROM THE GROUND UP

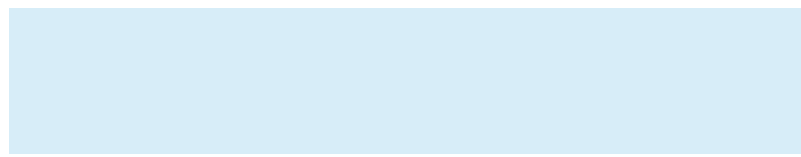
Flooring needs are changing, in part, to adapt to the new design of school learning environments. As classrooms evolve with the growing needs for each generation, designers report seeing more open environments that require different acoustic qualities, easy maintenance and flexibility for multiple types of activities. “You need to be more versatile as more areas in the school have become flexible and are used for different types of learning,” said Aimee Eckmann, AIA, ALEP, LEED AP BD+C, senior project architect, associate principal at Perkins+Will, New York. “School layouts are defined less by walls; flooring can now be used to differentiate space.”

For instance, Perkins+Will’s design team specified materials with an inherent finish to meet performance and design needs at Pitt River Middle School, Port Coquitlam, BC. “The district was apprehensive about using polished concrete floors in classrooms due to union grievances,” said Alex Minard, architect AIBC, MRAIC, LEED AP BD+C, CPHD and senior associate. “We therefore used a gray resilient flooring in classrooms and polished concrete in the halls. We left the concrete exposed in two classrooms as a test for the district to gauge their comfort with that material.”

Similarly, many elementary classrooms feature multiple settings within one space, so it is almost routine to specify a mixture of soft and hard surfaces. JCJ, for example, created L-shaped classrooms at the Northeast Academy and Kolnaski Elementary Schools in Groton, Conn. “Two-thirds of the classroom is carpeted for class work and reading areas, while the other third has resilient flooring where more activity-based centers and ‘wet’ areas are located,” JCJ’s Czarniecki explained. “We always try to promote a mixture of textures and surfaces that best meet the building’s needs and suit how its spaces will be used.”

Although designers report that hard surfaces are being specified predominantly in classrooms and soft surfaces in spaces such as media centers and common areas, each district has different requirements. This in tandem with the rise of open-concept, multi-use spaces has led to the recurring design theme of coordinating soft and hard surfaces in similar looks.

This theme often carries throughout an entire building, noted Jeff Krejsa, senior vice president of marketing for Tarkett. “A designer working within a school environment can easily go







OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Classrooms at the Hyde Park Day School in Chicago feature vinyl wood plank flooring specified by CannonDesign as a low-cost solution in place of a wood floor.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: Marine Science Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut worked with JCJ Architecture to create variety and interest between classrooms and its home base using contrasting carpet tile patterns throughout.

ABOVE: KZF Design helped Elder High School show appreciation for its graduates by transforming a former study hall into the new Alumni Development Center.

RIGHT: Architects put their trust in the multi-room versatility, cost-saving durability and unique maintenance properties of Tarkett's iQ Granit to satisfy the requirements of schools and hospitals worldwide.

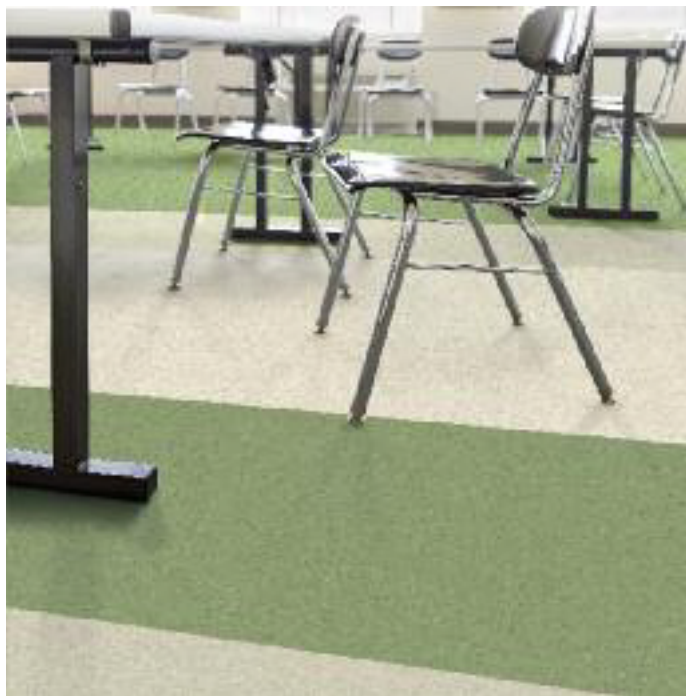
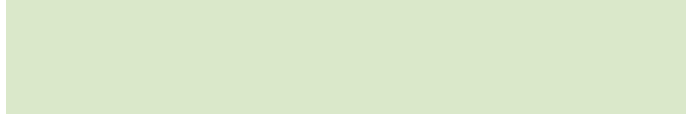
from a rubber material that may be inside a cafeteria, gym or multi-purpose room to a VCT or LVT material in the hallways.”

### CREATIVE PRODUCTS SPARK FRESH DESIGN

LVT and carpet tile are also coveted in the K-12 segment today for their color and design flexibility, enabling specifiers to move away from the mundane looks of the past. “There is a strong trend to move from VCT to LVT, as the LVT aesthetics continue to improve,” Patcraft’s Corcoran said.

The striking realism of LVT and its strong resemblance to natural materials is a major draw for designers. CannonDesign’s Morales noted the great variety of stone and wood replicas – both texture and color – today as an example. “These are great for spaces with high-traffic areas where, aesthetically, you still want a natural look,” she said, “plus the greater slip resistance of an LVT.” For these very reasons, CannonDesign specified a vinyl wood plank in classrooms and a vinyl tile that resembles stone in all the circulation spaces at the Hyde Park Day School in Chicago.

While LVT is a rising star within the education segment, other resilient floors – including linoleum and rubber – continue to retain a small niche as they provide warm and sophisticated aesthetics that appeal to staff, students and parents. “We’re seeing resilient as the primary material used in K-12,” Krejsa



said. “Its popularity is even beginning to move it into areas that may have traditionally used soft surfaces like offices and administration spaces.”

On the soft surface side, carpet tile is growing the fastest, in part, for its creative application options with an assortment of sizes, colors and textures. The product’s sustainability factors – easier to take up and recycle than broadloom – also has modular carpet gaining traction in education.

“Carpet tile can be especially effective in assisting with acoustics within classrooms and corridors,” JCJ’s Czarnecki said. “We have seen a tremendous change in the engineering of carpet over the years, and with the addition of vinyl backing, antimicrobial and stain-resistant nylons, it has become a very durable and versatile product that actually promotes a healthier environment.”

Carpet tile’s flexibility also allows the creation of multiple patterns to designate areas, zones or boundaries in open spaces, CannonDesign’s Morales noted. “Patterning or change of color can also help with wayfinding as well.”

### KEEPING THE LEARNING CURVE

Whether specifying hard or soft surface, the biggest takeaway for designers in the K-12 segment might actually just be the importance of education and evolution. Looking ahead the A&D community needs to help school districts remain knowledgeable about flooring choices. Not all products are alike or applicable for every situation, but innovative solutions are blurring historical boundaries to meet the modern classroom’s needs.

“While districts want to make sure there is a respect for public funds being used,” JCJ’s Czarnecki said, “the trend toward blending the fit and finish of flooring materials to create a more welcoming and elevated environment is real and growing.”

# The benefits of wood flooring: More than meets the eye

BY MICHAEL MARTIN,  
PRESIDENT & CEO, NWFA



There is a peculiar trend evolving in the flooring industry lately: It seems everywhere I turn, there are flooring products that look like wood but are not wood at all. Seemingly every flooring type – tile, carpet, laminate, LVT/resilient – is being made to duplicate wood’s unique aesthetic. So, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, what does this tell us?

To me, it clearly demonstrates the strong desire for wood flooring among today’s commercial consumers. And if consumers want wood, why not get the real thing as opposed to imitations?

There are many more advantages to choosing wood over imitation flooring products than simply its design elements. The most obvious is that wood is a natural product. It is produced in a factory called a forest using a renewable source of energy called the sun and requires nothing more than water and soil provided by Mother Nature to grow. In addition,

for every hardwood tree harvested, 1.66 trees are replanted in its place, which is increasing standing volume by more than 50%. The result: Total standing hardwood volume has grown in to more than 328 billion cubic feet in the United States.

Trees are a carbon neutral product. During their growth cycle, they take in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. At the end of a tree’s life cycle, the reverse is true – the tree will stop producing oxygen and will instead produce carbon dioxide. At this point, the tree is no longer beneficial to the environment, so it is therefore more advantageous to harvest a tree at maturity. When a tree is harvested and becomes a product like wood flooring, its carbon is sequestered for its useful life and not released back into the atmosphere. So as you look around your office right now – at your desk, wood flooring or even the picture frame hanging on your wall – each of those items is sequestering carbon dioxide and will continue to do so until it’s recycled into another form such as mulch, plywood or fuel.

Additionally, wood floors have the added benefit of improving indoor air quality. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, wood floors do not harbor allergens, microorganisms or harmful pesticides that can be tracked in from the outdoors. This is a significant advantage for the 50 million Americans who suffer from allergies because wood floors help to eliminate the triggers that can cause them.

With all of the advances in sustainable forest management, wood manufacturing and finish technology, it’s no wonder wood has never been a more desirable flooring material for much more than its looks. It offers tremendous insulation properties, adds warmth to any room, is cost efficient and sustainable, and has timeless beauty. Your clients may be enticed by faux wood aesthetics, but the additional benefits found in real wood floors cannot be simulated. It is a win-win-win for your customers, the environment and you.

“While your clients may be enticed by faux wood aesthetics, the additional benefits found in real wood floors cannot be simulated.”

when trees are harvested, they can be replanted, which makes them a renewable resource.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service supports this claim. It reports that average annual net hardwood growth for the entire eastern United States – where domestic hardwood is primarily grown – is greater than average annual removals. Furthermore,



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