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Condo Refurbishment

# Refurbishing Your Floors?

Here are the Best High-Traffic Options



Your condo building's flooring has a big job to do. It is one of the hardest working materials in lobbies, corridors, party rooms, stairwells, and elevator landings as it withstands daily traffic, delivery carts, and furniture wear and tear. At the same time, the best flooring surfaces manage to look great while they work for residents and guests alike. That's a lot of pressure!

Let's look at some flooring materials that you can consider for your next condo refurbishment that will withstand heavy-traffic in condo common spaces. From durability to cost and luxury factor, there are many factors to consider when making a flooring purchase. And one thing is clear - the market has never offered so many impressive product developments with manufacturers competing to supply the newest technology.

### Hardwood

Some condo party rooms have real wood floors. Whether engineered or traditional hardwood, they exude elegance and warmth. They are also durable and can withstand heavy foot traffic. Engineered wood flooring looks almost identical to traditional hardwood on the surface, but instead of it being a solid wood plank, it is made of a high-quality plywood core

with a thin layer of hardwood on top. Engineered wood flooring is therefore a more affordable option, but it can't be refinished to the same extent as solid hardwood due to its thinness. This is something you should consider if a long lifespan of your flooring is a goal or if a design colour palette change is in your future. Either type of hardwood can be prone to scratches and dents and so it is important to choose one of good quality. Traditional hardwood can be measured with a Janka hardness rating (unfortunately it doesn't work on engineered hardwood). You may want to consider pairing wood flooring with a different material for areas that receive a lot of moisture, such as where the party room transitions to the kitchen or a patio walk-out area. From an environmental standpoint, wood products score well as they continue to capture carbon (like a tree does) as part of the natural cycle.

### Luxury Vinyl

Luxury vinyl plank flooring, also called LVT or luxury vinyl tile, is highly durable and can mimic the look of other materials such as hardwood or tile. Unlike laminate that has a fibreboard core, vinyl is 100% waterproof, making it a great option for areas that may be prone to spills or moisture. Vinyl also has a long lifespan

of up to 25 years - similar to engineered hardwood - and it is about half the cost making it a very affordable option. It can be installed as a direct glue-down material or a tongue-in-groove plank system with an integrated cushioned layer. Plank flooring makes for easy replacement if damage is done (be sure to hang onto some replacement pieces when installed!). Of course refinishing vinyl flooring is not an option which is limiting over time in comparison to wood. When purchasing, be wary of cost, which is usually based on the thickness and composition of the hard-working top layer and can vary a lot in quality. As usual, you do get what you pay for.

### Porcelain Tile

Looking to replace a section of carpet for something that works even harder in your high-traffic areas? Commercial grade porcelain tile is highly durable and resistant to scratches, stains, and moisture. It is easy to clean and comes in a wide variety of styles, colours, and patterns. Thanks to incredible advances in technology, many are indistinguishable from more expensive natural stone tiles or just about any texture from concrete to wood. Many buildings opt for tile in heavy traffic areas such as corridor elevator land-

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ings, even when carpet runs throughout the rest of the corridor. In front of messy refuse rooms, tile makes it easier to clean up those oily spills left by leaking garbage bags. Tiles used on floors in public areas must have a low anti-slip R rating, or low-slip coefficient, to prevent falls on wet tile. Shiny, glossy floors are gorgeous, but will not pass building code if they don't meet the slip-test requirements.

What is popular in tiles now? Larger sizes, regardless of shape, are definitely a safe bet for the next decade. Thinner grout lines are part of a contemporary look and can achieve the effect of large slab tile or stone. Wider grout lines are associated with more rustic looks, which is something we don't see too much in high-rise condo common areas. The minimum grout line for high-rise buildings is typically 1/8 inch and going slimmer is not recommended as grout creates a bond between tiles preventing cracking or shifting over time. Tile manufacturer recommendations should always be followed to prevent issues with expansion and contraction down the line. When it comes to cleaning, more bumps and texture mean more places for dirt to cling and so balancing the smooth slip factor with cleaning concerns is an area where you will want the advice of a professional designer. Grout ideally will match the colour of the tile to "disappear" as much as possible.

Tile also gives the opportunity to make

a custom design with creative inlay patterns or multiple colours working tonally to demarcate specific areas or add a focal point or interesting motif. If you are considering removing an area of carpet to insert tiles, note that the cost is not just the square footage, but also the floor preparation and installation. There will be a leveling change and consideration will be needed for baseboards, which are often tile as well.

### **Commercial Carpet**

Good quality carpet - whether broadloom or tiles - is extremely durable. There are many ways to measure carpet quality, but when it comes to stain resistance and durability, nylon carpet has the most reliable performance. It is easy to clean and it's resilient. Nylon fibers can handle heavy traffic and remain attractive. Low-pile looped or sheared commercial-grade carpet is specifically designed for high-traffic and ease of cleaning. On resident floors, carpet is much quieter than any hard material and the limitless patterns and colours can make an impressive design impact. That doesn't mean the look has to be commercial - broadloom designed for the hospitality sector is luxurious and fashion-forward. In most windowless hallways, carpeting anchors the design so that the walls can be left plain and reflect light. Colour choice is not the key when guarding against staining, rather your best defense is to choose a randomly patterned carpet so that the

stain disappears visually. If your building has a lot of pets, ask about the option of a carpet with an impenetrable moisture barrier backing - there is an added cost, but it may be something you choose to invest in. Commercial carpet manufacturers all come with long warranties and will stand by the product as long as the maintenance guidelines are followed. Carpet companies are also vying to be at the forefront of environmental considerations. Some even brag to be carbon neutral with complex recycling life cycles.

### **Natural Stone**

Natural stone adds a sense of unique interest and luxury to any space. Stone tiles can provide a hard-wearing, durable floor covering, however, each stone type has its quirks and maintenance needs. Rough stone textures and wide grout lines can make for a noisy, bumpy surface for strollers, walkers, luggage, etc. Marble needs to be sealed and can stain and split in veined areas, making a lot of waste. Though very durable, granite is extremely expensive and needs a specialty installer. Even though the initial investment is expensive, most types of stone will last forever. As with look-alike (more affordable) porcelain tiles, slip resistance often guides the final finish choice. If natural stone looks gorgeous but doesn't work from a practicality standpoint, consider using it for walls or features such as a concierge desk, bar, or counters. **CV**