

# floor covering news

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### SPOTLIGHT



**Retailers cite their top**  
waterproof products

FCNews asked flooring dealers across the country for their go-to waterproof brands.

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## DIGITAL ACCESS IS INCLUDED

See our latest issue at  
fcnews.net

### What's new for fall



Mercier's White Oak in Authentic Natural

## LATEST OFFERINGS AIM TO JUMPSTART KEY SELLING SEASON

By Ken Ryan

**D**espite ongoing economic uncertainty, including consumer anxiety over inflation and tariffs, flooring retailers enter the fourth quarter generally optimistic that they will finish a challenging 2025 on a positive note.

That confidence is borne out, in part, by an expected influx of exciting new products—many at the high end—that are entering the market this fall.

The new products—or extending offerings in existing collections—run the gamut from performance-driven carpet styles featuring LCL patterns to waterproof resilient lines as well as new visuals in hardwood and laminate.

Coverage begins on page 10.

### FCNewStyle & Design Awards

## Annual competition recognizes visuals that raise the bar

**F**loor Covering News announced the winners of its second annual FCNewStyle & Design Awards, a program that recognizes outstanding achievement in product visuals across today's most popular flooring segments.

This year's winners, 12 in all, covered the major flooring categories, broken down by subcategories in some segments. The format was updated for this year's contest, which recognizes only one manufacturer per product segment. This year's competition drew scores of entries from across the industry.

And the winners are:

Carpet: Karastan—Black Label  
Area Rugs: Stanton—Tori Rug  
LVT: Karnden—Opus  
SPC: COREtec—COREtec Tile



Sheet: Beauflor—Blacktex HD  
Peel & Stick: IFC/Canopy—Flex  
WPC: HF Design—VersaCore Pure Edge  
Laminate: Stanton Design—Hickory Lake Clove  
Hardwood Residential: Fabrika—Artisan  
Hardwood Commercial: Hallmark—True Collection  
Floor Tile: Del Conca—Horizons  
Wall Tile: Daltile—Golden Angelite

“Winning this award puts manufacturers' products on an elevated platform, gaining them immediate industry recognition,” said Steven Feldman, co-publisher of FCNews. “Taking home an award enhances overall brand image and positions companies as design-oriented.”

Coverage begins on page 16.

### Synergy Convention & Expo

## Collaboration is the name of the game

By Ken Ryan

NASHVILLE, TENN.—As debuts go, the inaugural Synergy Convention & Expo, the uniting of four flooring trade bodies, virtually guaranteed there will be an encore performance, as more than

400 attendees packed into the conference room here at the Sheraton Music City Hotel.

Billed as “one industry, one expo,” Synergy is the outgrowth of the joint CFI + FCICA convention that was expanded to include Flooring Consultants and Inspection Training Services (FCITS) and FCB2B. “This event is about training, trust and transformation,” said Beth Brown Sorrell, executive director of FCITS, the certified flooring inspection group.

For years, Certified Flooring Installers (CFI) and Flooring Contractors Association (FCICA) operated independently, hosting their own trade shows. Seeing a need to collaborate, CFI and FCICA held a com-



WFCA's Scott Humphrey and Carpeting by Mike's Typhannie Harker connect at Synergy.

bined trade show two years ago, with great success. FCITS and FCB2B, both under the auspices of the World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), were added

to the mix this year.

“For too long the industry has operated in silos rather than coming together,” said Scott

Continued on page 5

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## IN THE NEWS

**Shaw elevates Powell to role of VP, residential business**

DALTON—Shaw Industries has elevated Ryan Powell, formerly divisional vice president for the Southeast retail division at Shaw, to vice president of retail, residential business. The new role is designed to unify Shaw's retail strategy, under one leader, with a focus on specialty retail growth.



Ryan Powell

Powell is charged with leading the company's retail business by setting strategy, promoting growth and strengthening partnerships internally and externally.

"With his extensive background at Shaw, a deep understanding of the industry and a real passion for building strong customer relationships, he's a clear choice for the role," said Jon England, SVP, residential sales.

**Tarkett bolsters commercial strategy via new senior directors**

SOLON, Ohio—Tarkett has promoted Antonio Bucca—previously senior director of sales operations, commercial team—to the position of senior director of product management, soft surface. In this role, Bucca, who has been with Tarkett since 2013, will lead product strategy development and execution.



Antonio Bucca

"With Antonio's proven track record of empowering sales teams to operate more efficiently and effectively, we look forward to watching the significance he will bring to his new role," said Michael Mathews, SVP, commercial strategy and development.

Melinda Rutledge, who served the last two years at Tarkett as the senior director of operations excellence, assumes Bucca's former role.

**Saroyan Hardwoods taps Griffin as its new CMO**

Los Angeles—Saroyan Hardwoods has named Kendra Griffin as its new chief marketing officer. In this capacity, she will be responsible for leading all marketing initiatives and driving the progressive rebrand of the company.



Kendra Griffin

Griffin brings more than 15 years of marketing and sales experience in the wood flooring industry. In 2009, Griffin joined AB Media, Inc., and shortly after moved into the role of account executive for what was then *Hardwood Floors Magazine*. In this role, she worked closely with the NWFA, and in 2010, she took on the NWFA Wood Flooring Expo booth and sponsorship sales. In 2018, she was instrumental in rebranding the magazine as *Wood Floor Business*, an independent media brand dedicated to serving the wood flooring industry.

## Countdown to TISE 2026

**Educational opportunities galore**

LAS VEGAS—The International Surface Event (TISE), North America's marketplace for flooring, stone and tile innovation, is scheduled to take place Jan. 27-29, 2026, at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center here. The annual event features an expansive show floor and four days of education sessions for industry professionals.

"Today's flooring, stone and tile industries face unprecedented transformation driven by changing consumer values and technological progress," said Dana Hicks, group event director, TISE. "Professionals must now serve a new generation of buyers, priorities and market demands, from international supply chains and smart products to sustainable and adaptable solutions. We aim to foster a collaborative environment here at TISE 2026 that will allow businesses to grow and confidently navigate these transitions."

Attendees have the opportunity to transform the knowledge gleaned from participating in the show into real business growth TISE's comprehensive learning ecosystem. This includes:

- Practical education via hands-on workshops, panel discussions and targeted seminars
- Immediate ROI with techniques to boost efficiency, reduce errors and expand market opportunities
- Career advancement through certification pathways and credential enhancement

• Exclusive insights with early access to industry research

- Actionable solutions from collaborative sessions business owners and managers can implement immediately

TISE will feature two vibrant "neighborhoods"—SUR-

FACES and TILE + STONE. Here, professionals discover tomorrow's trends alongside today's innovations—a marketplace where meaningful connections form and inspiration flourishes. Beyond showcasing premium materials and cutting-edge tools, this event delivers the insights and relationships that elevate businesses and transform projects from ordinary to extraordinary.

Interactive programs will include:

- The CAGE by the Stone Fabricator's Alliance, demonstrating fabrication techniques
- TISE Live Demo Stage, showcasing



A popular draw at TISE are the interactive panel discussions covering a host of pertinent topics.

installation practices

- TISE Live Theatre, featuring sessions on sustainability, digital commerce and business strategies
- Natural Stone Theatre by the Natural Stone Institute, highlighting technology, design trends and sourcing
- National Installer of the Year Competition, recognizing installer craftsmanship
- What's Hot at TISE Awards, spotlighting innovative products

Surfaces offers several different registration options, including "Expo only" to "Premier Package."

Visit [intlsurfaceevent.com](http://intlsurfaceevent.com) to register.

**Mannington Mills announces sale of Burke plant**

SALEM, N.J.—Mannington Mills Inc., recently announced the sale of its San Jose, Calif.-based Burke Industries manufacturing operations to Polycorp Ltd., a manufacturer of engineered elastomer solutions and a portfolio company of Arsenal Capital Partners.

According to Mannington executives, the transaction involves only the non-flooring rubber business of Burke Industries in San Jose; it does not affect Mannington's rubber flooring and finishing products. Mannington Mills will continue to manufacture rubber and vinyl flooring products, including tiles, stair



Polycorp will assume operations.

treads, wall base and accessories. Production of assorted rubber and vinyl flooring products will continue without interruption at its Calhoun, Ga., and Eustis, Fla.,

facilities, the company stated.

"This transition offers the opportunity for the Burke Industries custom rubber business to flourish under new ownership and allows Mannington to focus on its core business, which is flooring," said Tom Pendley, president and CEO of Mannington Mills. "With 110 years of flooring leadership, we continue to pursue strategic moves that will secure our future for generations to come."

The San Jose facility will continue to operate with the existing Burke Industries workforce in place. No other Mannington operations are affected by the transaction.

## SNAPSHOT

**Vendors honored at National Floorcovering Alliance fall meeting**

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA—The 40 members of the National Floorcovering Alliance (NFA) along with their core vendor partners converged on Alaska last week for the group's fall meeting. During the event, the group discussed key business issues and initiatives, and NFA dealers joined their vendor partners for a day of activities designed to build new alliances and further existing relationships.

An annual highlight of the meeting is the "round-robin" breakouts, where each supplier secures approximately 20 minutes with each member to discuss business and new products.

This year NFA honored a pair of long-time supporters of the group from the vendor community: Bill Waters (center) of TDG and Shaw's Ann McDermott (right), both of whom are retiring at the end of the year. Lisa Browning, NFA executive director, looks on.

Look for more coverage of the NFA meeting in upcoming issues.





## my take

# Takeaways from Cracker Barrel's failed rebranding

I've been to a Cracker Barrel less than five times in my life, probably all but once for breakfast. Call me a snob, but I just don't think the food is exceptionally good. To me it's a glorified IHOP. But that doesn't mean the 660-store restaurant chain doesn't have its faithful customers. In fact, it is quite popular.

Unless you have no TV or Internet, you are probably already aware of Cracker Barrel's failed attempt to rebrand itself. First, it attempted a new corporate logo. Then it announced a redesigning of its iconic stores. The heritage-rich brand, beloved for its Southern-style hospitality, unveiled plans to make what some claimed would be reminiscent of the inside of a Holiday Inn Express. The idea, executives said, was to appeal to a broader audience. The uproar that came from its loyal customers was fierce. After losing a reported \$400 million, which sent the stock price plummeting, Cracker Barrel backtracked. No new logo; no store refresh.

I thought it was appropriate to talk about this for a few reasons: 1. Flooring manufacturers constantly talk about strategy changes to target Millennials and Gen Y. But the Baby Boomers still control about 70% of disposable income, making them the dominant force in this economy. Second, I often see a lot of companies—retailers and suppliers alike—undertaking some sort of rebranding, whether it be a new logo or something more substantial. My advice: Be careful.

Cracker Barrel has been around since the 1970s. Not all businesses can say they have not only withstood the test of time, but also adhered to the original intent and purpose of when they first started. The differentiator with Cracker Barrel was their unique interiors.

What started as a rebranding effort to update the restaurant chain's identity quickly went off the rails. It exposed

a deep disconnect between corporate leadership and the core brand values embraced by its loyal customer base. The leadership team misread the room when it decided to throw out its down-home appeal in its logo and store environment. The company's CEO said, "Cracker Barrel needs to feel like the Cracker Barrel for today and for tomorrow," when in reality the appeal of Cracker Barrel is and always has been its feel of yesteryear.

Here are some takeaways from Cracker Barrel's failed attempts:

**Lesson #1. Do your homework.** Cracker Barrel apparently did not take into account how and why the company's loyal consumer base would react to the new logo. Or perhaps it thought no one would care? If so, they quickly found out how wrong they were. Companies should pay close attention to what Cracker Barrel got wrong and take steps to ensure they do not make mistakes when rolling out initiatives. That includes not conducting research about the impact of the changes on key audiences, not explaining their reasons and justifications for making the changes and not introducing those changes in such a way as to create a public relations firestorm.

**Lesson #2: Know your audience.** The challenge many legacy brands encounter is how to evolve without alienating the loyal customers who built the business. Cracker Barrel's challenge was expanding its overall appeal without losing core patrons. Advanced segmentation research could have uncovered high-value emerging segments, like tech-savvy Millennials seeking "authentic experiences," and guided a strategy to serve that emerging cohort as well as traditionalists.

**Lesson #3: A brand should never change for the sake of change.** Rather, it should change for the sake of purpose. You take something that's tried and true, withstands the test of time and holds

on to its integrity, and someone comes in and wants to change just for the sake of changing. They think what's going to happen is that they're going to appeal to more people, and all those people who don't want to come to Cracker Barrel will start coming. Here's the truth: Anyone who never set foot in Cracker Barrel before probably isn't going to step foot in Cracker Barrel because of the rebranding. It's not what they want.

**Lesson #4: Every great idea looks different in the market than in the C-suite.** Pre-launch concept testing could have revealed which brand changes Cracker Barrel's audience embraced and which they might reject. This feedback loop protects investments and ensures customer alignment. For other companies, think of this as an insurance policy. Whether you're redesigning your logo, launching a new product or repositioning your brand, test in-market first.

**Lesson #5: Be careful about declaring victory.** Resist any temptation to make premature claims that a new initiative is successful or well received. Cracker Barrel's CEO made that mistake when she told ABC's "Good Morning America" that feedback to the redesigned image had been "overwhelmingly positive." However, social media was quick to respond to the new logo by criticizing it and asking that the old symbol be restored immediately. Eventually, investors said: "We're turning this around."

Remember, a brand is a promise you intend to keep. A reputation is a measure of whether that promise is fulfilled. The poor reaction to the brand's changes highlights a crucial lesson for other companies: brand transformation requires more than good intentions; it requires precision insights.

Steven Feldman

## GETTING SOCIAL WITH fcnews



**WFCA TUESDAY TIPS** with Tom Jennings

Kevin Mark > Flooring Installers USA

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FCNews Exclusive: Ken Walma, president of Mohawk Industries North America

Highlights from the conversation:

- Lessons from leading multi-channel businesses and how they shape his vision at Mohawk
- Why dealer partnerships matter most
- How Mohawk is growing share despite market headwinds
- Why tariffs and an America-first strategy position Mohawk for resilience
- What's happening to improve operations and what's next

Plus, so much more! Full story: <http://bit.ly/42nrWUn>

FCNews exclusive: Mohawk's Ken Walma opens up -

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Fall retail outlook 2025

In a typical year, September through November fuels flooring sales with promos and events. But 2025 is no typical year.

- Dealers weigh tariffs, labor shifts & housing slowdowns
- Optimism grows as the Fed eyes interest-rate cuts
- Retailers adapt with new strategies, inventory & messaging
- Some even see opportunity in luxury and local markets
- Dive into the full story and see how flooring dealers are preparing for the final act of 2025: <http://bit.ly/3JVVlOD>

**Floor Covering News** Published by Lauren Malone 5d · 5d

Floor Covering News

Flooring Installers & Estimators Wanted

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## Synergy

**Continued from page 1**

Humphrey, WFCA CEO.

In recognition of this coming together, Humphrey awarded former FCICA executive director Pat Kelly with the Circle of Excellence "Challenge Coin," an honor bestowed to only a handful of flooring luminaries; the coin recognizes people who have done "unique and special things." Kelly was instrumental in forging the alliance to bring the disparate groups together. The result is a conference that drew a crowd roughly four times the size of previous events. "This is amazing; it's so great to see this turnout," Kelly said.

The general session kicked off with an entertaining keynote address from Dan Thurmon, author and president of Motivation Works Inc., who spoke to attendees about rediscovering their inner greatness, navigating change and taking bold action. "If you limit yourself to what's comfortable you deny yourself what's possible," he said.

**"Help that person get to where they want to be. I believe all of you would love to get involved with students and share what you know."**

**—John Steier**  
CFI installer

Thurmon, who encouraged attendees to "lean into the uncertainty; stay positive and committed to ongoing improvement," illustrated many of his points with stunts—including riding around on a unicycle, juggling several objects and doing a handstand on the lectern, a nod to his prowess as a gymnast at the University of Georgia.

### CFI, FCICA updates

While executives from CFI and FCICA say they are stronger together, both organizations are thriving on their own quite well. Rod Von Busch, CFI advisory board chairman, spoke about the growth of the installation group, which now has 13 chapters across the country (soon to be 14), up from three just a few years ago. "Our membership is what makes this group tick; it's the most unique and respected training group in the industry," Von Busch said.

As for the future, CFI installer and retailer John Steier talk-

ed about the group's legacy and encouraged members to pay it forward. "What is our legacy? It's training, it's lifting our standards across the board."

Steier encouraged every installer in the room to find someone they see potential in, reach out and be a mentor. "Help that person get to where they want to be," Steier said. "If it wasn't for CFI and the people who mentored me here, I wouldn't be standing up here. I believe all of you in CFI would love to get involved with students and share what you know. To that end, I

believe FCEF [Floor Covering Education Foundation] is a great feeder program for our group."

At FCICA, membership is on the rise, with 19 companies joining the group this year, giving them 334 in total. What's more, FCICA's signature Certified Installation Manager (CIM) program—now 10 years old—has certified more than 500 individuals who have become installation managers for commercial flooring projects.

*Look for more on this event in an upcoming edition of FCNews.*



**Former FCICA executive director Pat Kelly was awarded the Circle of Excellence 'Challenge Coin,' an honor bestowed to only a handful of flooring luminaries.**

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Hardwood Floors

Lively Collection  
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## educating the industry

# The hidden ROI of installation training

BY KAYE WHITENER

In the flooring industry, discussions about training often center on solving the installer shortage. While that conversation is critical, there's a deeper reason training should be at the forefront: the protection of brand reputation. For retailers, distributors and manufacturers, properly trained installers are not just a labor solution—they are a safeguard for customer trust, brand credibility and long-term profitability.

Here's why:  
**Installation—The final brand touchpoint.** Every flooring product, no matter how innovative or beautiful, is only as good as the installation. When a customer invests in new flooring, her lasting impression of the brand comes from the person kneeling on their floor with tools in hand. That installer becomes the brand's final ambassador. A skilled installer leaves behind more than a finished floor. They leave behind confidence, loyalty and the likelihood of repeat business.

**The high cost of poor installations.** The flooring industry is no stranger to the costs of callbacks. A poor installation can undo months of marketing, years of product development and thousands of dollars in advertising. Incorrect measurements, subfloor preparation mistakes or improper adhesive use can all lead to product failure—and every callback represents lost revenue. For retailers, it often means eating the cost of replacement materials and labor. For mills and manufacturers, it can mean a damaged reputation and future lost sales.

According to industry estimates, installation-related claims account for a significant portion of customer dissatisfaction in flooring. Each dissatisfaction

fied customer doesn't just hurt one sale. In today's digital-first world, a single bad installation can spread far beyond one household.

**Training as risk management.** This is where investment in training proves its return. Well-trained installers reduce costly mistakes, protect warranties and minimize claims. Moreover, they enhance the customer experience. For every call a dealer doesn't get about a failed installation, they gain something far more valuable: a satisfied customer who is likely to recommend that dealer to others.

**Manufacturers and distributors benefit, too.** When their products are consistently installed correctly, confidence in product quality rises. The installer becomes a partner in brand reputation management, ensuring that what leaves the mill floor is experienced in the customer's home as intended.

**Building long-term value.** ROI is often measured in dollars, but training produces returns that extend well beyond the balance sheet. Skilled installers bring professionalism, punctuality and pride to the job. That professionalism extends throughout the supply chain: retailers get more referrals; manufacturers see fewer warranty claims; and distributors build stronger relationships with their dealers.

**And customers see value—** not just in their floors, but in the entire experience of working with the flooring industry.

The installer shortage has created urgency, but the real opportunity lies in shifting the narrative. Training isn't just about filling a pipeline; it's about protecting the brands, businesses and legacies that make up the flooring industry.

Kaye Whitener is executive director of the Floor Covering Education Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting recruitment, training and retention of floor covering installers. For more information, email [kwhitener@fce.org](mailto:kwhitener@fce.org).



## RETAILERS REACT



Flooring retailers like Carpet Exchange are optimistic about the fourth quarter.

### What's your outlook for the fall selling season?

We are optimistic about the next quarter, especially with the potential for an interest rate cut this month, which could stimulate renewed activity in the housing market. While Colorado still faces challenges—with 148,000 people unemployed and a 4.5% unemployment rate—we are encouraged by the steady gains.

—Bruce Odette  
Carpet Exchange  
Denver

There is an uptick in overall business but not across all segments. Retail, multifamily and commercial appeared to be all headed in a positive direction and are offsetting weakness in the builder market for us. With elevated mortgage rates, the softness in the builder market is settling in to be a long-term issue.

—Craig Phillips  
The Flooring Edge  
Akron, Ohio

The recent influx of high-end, big-ticket customers wanting flooring for their new homes here in Knoxville and surrounding areas tells me we have a prosperous Q4 ahead. We are 8% up for the year; with our current trajectory, I expect to finish the year up 10%. Customers are willing to pay more for excellent service/reliability.

—Mitchell Parton  
Frazier's Carpet One  
Knoxville, Tenn.

Our showroom traffic has been great. We have our installers scheduled out well into November and have expanded our hardwood offerings to include Vintage Hardwood Flooring. This brand—paired with our success with Mirage—should bring in more sales opportunities.

—Karla Wischmeyer  
Verhey Carpet  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

We are optimistic for the fall selling season. Year-to-date demand has remained relatively strong with our number of transactions slightly ahead of last year. We have noticed consumers are very value oriented, which bodes well for our operation.

—Pete Rubando  
Giant Floor & Carpeting  
Scranton, Pa.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

► **U.S. household wealth rose** to a record \$176.3 trillion on the back of a resurgent stock market and climbing property prices, data from the Federal Reserve showed. Household net worth climbed by more than \$7 trillion in the April-through-June period, thanks mostly to a \$5.5 trillion increase in the value of stock market holdings, the Fed said. The value of real estate holdings increased \$1.2 trillion, the first increase in a year. The Fed's report showed that consumer borrowing rose at a 3.8% annualized pace, the fastest



pace in almost three years.

► **U.S. consumer sentiment fell** to the lowest level since May and long-term inflation expectations rose for the second straight month. This as ongoing concerns about the U.S. labor market and prices weighed on the economic outlook across the country. The preliminary September sentiment index declined to 55.4 from 58.2 in August, according to the University of Michigan. "Consumers' expected probability of personal job loss grew sharply this

year and ticked up in September as well, suggesting consumers are indeed concerned that they may be personally affected by any negative developments in labor markets," said Joanne Hsu, director of the survey, in a statement.

► **A newly released housing report** from Elliot Eisenberg, a.k.a. the Bowtie Economist, showed that the median existing home in July sold for \$422,400 while the median new home sold for \$403,800. Traditionally, he noted, new homes have always been much more expensive than existing homes.

## CALENDAR

**Sept. 25-27**  
FEI Group National Conference  
Marriott Marquis San Diego  
Marina; San Diego  
Contact: Allison Rea,  
404-375-7343  
[area@feigroup.net](mailto:area@feigroup.net)  
feigroup.net

**Oct. 9, Noon EST**  
FCICA Education Webinar:  
Dead Level Floors – Learn How  
to Go From Flat to Smooth to  
Dead Level  
Presented by Seth Pevarnik,  
Ardex Americas  
Contact: [info@fcica.com](mailto:info@fcica.com)  
630.672.3702  
To register: [fcica.com](http://fcica.com)

**Oct. 9-10**  
CFI 2-Day Certification – LVP I  
and Laminate I  
This two-day certification  
provides installers with  
hands-on instruction while  
testing individual skill sets.  
Minimum two years' installation  
experience.  
Location: Hank's Specialties;  
Urbandale, Iowa  
Register: [cfiinstallers.org](http://cfiinstallers.org)  
Contact: John McHale,  
[jmchale@cfiinstallers.org](mailto:jmchale@cfiinstallers.org);  
816.231.4646

**Oct. 13-16**  
FCITS Ceramic Tile, Stone and  
Glass Specialist Class  
For details, call (800) 462-2151,  
or email [beth@fcits.org](mailto:beth@fcits.org).  
Register: [https://www.fcits.org](http://www.fcits.org)

**Oct. 14-17**  
NWFA Basic Installation and  
Sand + Finish  
Introductory-level course.  
Location: RW Supply & Design;  
Kansas City  
Contact: Katie Norton,  
[Katherine.norton@nwfa.org](mailto:Katherine.norton@nwfa.org)  
Register: [https://web.nwfa.org](http://web.nwfa.org)

**Oct. 24-28**  
Starnet Fall Meeting  
Loews Ventana Canyon Resort  
Tucson, Ariz.  
Contact: [Pam@starnetflooring.com](mailto:Pam@starnetflooring.com)  
to register or obtain additional  
information.

# LATEST LOOKBOOK

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CARPET & HARD SURFACE FLOORING

# Mohawk's Ken Walma opens up

By Steve Feldman

**K**en Walma has been president of Mohawk Flooring North America for nearly a year, succeeding Paul De Cock, who was elevated to the role of president and COO of Mohawk Industries. Walma arrived with a varied background that included managing multi-channel businesses for both public companies and

private equity. That, coupled with a customer-first philosophy, positioned him as a most appropriate candidate to lead the flooring division. Coming from outside the industry also allows him to bring a fresh perspective to the company.

Walma recently sat down with *FCNews* publisher Steven Feldman for his first wide-ranging interview.

**You come from Big Ass Fans, which commanded a 70% market share. What attracted you to flooring, where nobody has a dominant share? And specifically, why Mohawk?**

I am a continuous learner and love the art of the business, how commercial enterprise works and how you create value and serve customers, then applying what I have learned to make a business better. My career has been a journey across a number of industries and a number of businesses, though I haven't necessarily moved around companies as much. I've been fortunate to be a part of large and small companies and do many things, but Big Ass Fans was different because it was a direct-to-consumer business. Prior to Big Ass Fans, I spent 15 years at Eaton, which was a very large, diversified industrial company.

A big reason I went to Big Ass Fans was because I wanted something truly different. I had never experienced a direct-to-consumer business or a strong brand that had the flair of Big Ass Fans. I had never experienced a mid-size business that had that type of intensity. It was also a private equity opportunity, which brought an additional level of focus and intensity whereas my entire career had been with large public or large private companies. So it was "Hey, let's go see what this is like, let's have some fun and let's learn a bunch."

We had tremendous success, but after a few years I started to

get the sense that I could take what I learned back to a large company and do something special. I got a call from Mohawk—I knew Paul De Cock and half a dozen or so of my peer group that worked here. I kept in touch and heard great things about Mohawk, and between the industry, the environment where we are in the cycle and the people and the opportunity to make an impact, I wanted to join the team.

I think the flooring industry has tremendous opportunity to take credit for the positive impact we make on consumers and the planet, yet create even more value in the future.

**Give me the similarities and differences between Big Ass Fans and Mohawk.**

I've been fortunate to experience many companies, and company cultures are like families. They all have their unique intricacies that are important to understand and value. Big Ass Fans and Mohawk are different except one thing: the passion and conviction of the employee base are very similar. "BAFers" are some of the most passionate you've ever seen. People wear the clothing every day, whether they're at work or at home, they love the company, they hang out together, they work together. It's cultish in a fun and positive way. And I would say that sort of fervor, although different to some degree, is present at Mohawk with a focus on supporting each other, our customers and the company.

**A lot of people come into this industry and think they can make a company a consumer brand overnight, and every single one of them has failed. How do you increase sales and market share in this environment?**

I think every manufacturer with a recognizable consumer brand has attempted in some way, shape or form to go to the consumer direct—and most fail. There are a couple of things here. First, consumers, how they buy and what's important, continually evolves. The next two generations, meaning the Millennials and the Gen Ys, the power of brand and resulting reputation is becoming more important. These are people who have grown up buying on eBay, Amazon or online. They've been disappointed many times by companies they had never heard of. Companies that live up to their brand promise and communicate it well are going to be favored. To some degree, flooring manufacturers in the past may have tried too early and the consumers simply weren't there, or they didn't live up to their promise. Second, while the power of the brand is going to continue to become more important in the flooring industry, the more critical piece is to do this in concert with how we get our products to the consumer, which is with the brand of our dealer customers. Mohawk and the other well-known manufacturers that work in concert with dealers will be favored

in that kind of environment.

Your second question, how do you grow share? The market is between \$20 billion and \$23 billion, and we're a good piece of that. There's plenty of opportunity for us to be better at articulating our products to help our dealer customers grow their share and our resulting share with them. We have been on a good share growth path in North America and have grown more than the market in the last couple quarters, even with some of our systems challenges. We just need to continue to service customers better, provide more innovative products and keep getting better at that irrespective of what the end market does.

**You've been at Mohawk for 10 months. Tell me one thing that you may have thought when you walked in the door that today you may have walked back on.**

The thought that the market and the economy was ready for a bounce back has changed. I don't think that's the case anymore. Whereas we were expecting a post-COVID-19 rebound or a post-financial-crisis rebound or post-September-11 rebound, we've all been trained that, on the residential side, as the market drops, it'll come back roaring. I think that's changed. The macro economic environment is different, and I am expecting a more moderate recovery. So we've pivoted our thinking away from "Let's just get ready for a comeback." That's not going to be the case.

**What have you identified as Mohawk's strengths? Tell me the areas where your expertise and expertise can align to make Mohawk better and increase value for the consumer.**

Mohawk has the ability to be agile and a firefighter unlike any company I've ever seen. Our ability to fix a problem is as formidable as any company I've been a part of in my 25 years of professional experience. The counter to that is the opportunity to be more longer term and externally focused.

Mohawk's been through a period of restructuring, particularly the residential business, over the last couple of years as the market has come down. We've spent a lot of time improving quality, service and thinking about the things that make our manufacturing and service value streams effective. That's what you have to do in a large company in a down market. But the balance of how much time we spend with our retail customers suffers when you do that. Building that same capability and thinking and muscle with the external thinking is our opportunity.

During my 10 months here, I have been focused on understanding how the total machine is running—starting and ending with the customer. How well do we understand how it's running, how well are we thinking about it? Then what I love to do is get that machine running better and faster.



## How is the machine running today?

Good, and getting better. If you would use the metric of share growth, we've outperformed the flooring industry for the last couple quarters. Even with our challenges, there are areas where we're doing extremely well. Parts of the hard surface business have been a challenge for Mohawk historically, but we are continuing to accelerate in hard surface and are catching up to where we should be. There's still plenty of opportunity for us. We have green shoots of opportunity all over the business, and whether the market starts to return or not, our prospects are good.

## What else have you learned about the industry, about this company? What are customers telling you?

One, in my private equity days you would label industries, and the flooring industry is labeled as an industry that "eats itself." What does that mean? The industry, specifically the manufacturers, have largely increased and decreased in total aligned with GDP, versus finding a way to create more value from adjacent markets and create growth for industry in total. So that's an opportunity for the manufacturers as a whole, and we need to be key lead in this activity. We need to challenge ourselves to demonstrate the power and the delivery of the total experience we create and think about how we can enhance that for the end consumer. That's one of the reasons I'm here.

Two, I think the dynamic with the retailers is awesome. In many cases, I've found industries where the relationship between the manufacturer and the channel partner customers can sometimes be less partner-based. It's more transactional. Here you see true partners; we are in it to win together.

## What are customers telling you that they want to see more of from Mohawk?

I think Mohawk needs to tighten up a little bit. We have diversified our offering so quickly. We have a number of brands that we offer across hard surface, soft surface and accessories. I think we've become so broad and so big that it's a little confusing. I think our opportunity is to be leaner and more aggressive and

point about places where retailers can make the most money with our products, where we can help them close the most opportunities. Sometimes you go to a restaurant that has a giant menu. Does it mean everything's going to taste perfect? Usually not. At some point we have to get really good at the things that create the most value to make that experience better for the retailer and, ultimately, the consumer experience.

## Do you expect the industry will turn around once mortgage rates come back down? And is Mohawk better prepared than others to handle that?

There's no question we're positioned well if there is a 30% return, and it will likely return that amount—it is just a question of how long it will take to get there. We have more hard surface assets in North America than any other manufacturer. An America-first trade strategy is going to favor Mohawk. There's plenty of capacity in the carpet industry to service strong industry growth. Additionally, our service and network infrastructure and our dealer base of 18,000 customers is ready to go.

To answer the first part of the question, I don't know that rates are going to make their way back down. If you look over the last 40 years, 6% is a very good rate. We've all been trained that 2%, 3%, 4% should be an achievable rate when really it's almost impossible to hold inflation with a rate like that. While I would expect them to come down a bit, and I'm not an economist, I don't think they are going to get back anywhere near there and we're not depending on it.

## I feel like 6% is the magic number.

And again, if the rate is coming down, this is because other factors are not good as in employment's going down or the GDP is going down and we're in recession. Maybe the rates get better, but now the consumer isn't wanting to buy because they're worried about the economy. So I think there's balance here.

Now, the COVID-19 piece. People forget there was \$3 trillion that was forced back in the economy, so there was a strong investment period and desire to spend it. That had never happened and probably will never happen again. So whether the rate moves around and any other

factors, I just don't think there's this big pop.

So the reality is two things: 1. There's a \$23 billion industry for us to demonstrate our capabilities and show we can help our retailers make more money and that the consumers will be more satisfied with our products; and 2. If the market bounces, which it will, is it going to come back 10% or 30%? I have no concerns on our ability to service that market.

## How do we get carpet to come back?

Retailers are loving carpet again because when people walk in and ask, "What's the cheapest thing you have?" it's not carpet. That consumer has been moved to a hard surface product. People who come in and want carpet want valuable carpet; they want more colors, more patterns. It's an upgrade now and they want it for their bedroom, and they're debating on what rug they would want in their hard surface area. It's become fun to sell carpet again—and it's to a consumer who wants it. So carpet can make a comeback on the value. It just may be at different price points than it was in the past.

## Could the future of carpet, rather than being installed wall to wall, be something that takes up almost an entire room, call it a rug, call it bound carpet?

It could, there's no question, but I think at some point it gets bigger, and then people say, "Why am I putting a nice floor underneath it? I'll just cover the whole floor and save money." So I think it's an evolution.

## Retailers care about one thing: How will Mohawk help them make money



Feldman and Walma met recently in Georgia to discuss Walma's future plans for Mohawk.

## going forward?

The first thing we do is continue to develop our Edge program, which is designed to be a rewards program that offers not only better placement on our website to drive leads back to the retailer, but we can help them with marketing, we can help them with training, we can make them more successful. We are trying to be their go-to partner through that program. We're going to continue to make enhancements there and demonstrate the value. We have the data that shows Edge partners are winning in the marketplace because of the tools and capabilities we provide to them. We are probably going to double the number of Edge Aligned Stores this year, which is a testament to the program and the incentives we put in place to help them.

No. 2 goes back to this question around thinking. We have to better match our products and services under the precipice of making the retailer more successful and closing the opportunity faster. While we've built great products and services, we've not matched them specifically to "This is what a consumer's asking for. Here's our evidence that we deliver that. We're helping you close the sale." So we've got some work to do in our materials and tools and offering on top of Edge across our broader retailers.

## How have tariffs impacted this company, and with so much domestic production, are tariffs almost a competitive advantage for Mohawk?

First, there's no question, a tariff or America-first strategy is going to favor Mohawk. However these land, we are better positioned than those that have a smaller domestic footprint than we do. Now, here's the trick. Everybody expected that tariffs would

be passed on to the consumer very quickly and easily like they were in 2018 when we were in a deflationary environment. That has not been the case. Where this favors us now is we've already seen arguably a number of smaller hard surface companies declare bankruptcy in the last few months, and tariffs have been a part of this. This will be a financially challenging environment for a number of companies, manufacturers specifically. But Mohawk is positioned, as some of the larger competitors are, to weather that storm. I think there will be less price to get with the consumer. The strategy of this tariff round is that the Trump administration wants the manufacturers and suppliers to eat it. There's not a lot of margin in the flooring industry for manufacturers. So that's a tough one. That second piece that favors Mohawk is our capability to leverage our supplier relationships, our cost out programs and try to minimize how much has to be passed onto our retailers and consumers.

**I'm putting 13,000 retailers in this space right now. I'm giving you five minutes. What are you going to say to them?**

Mohawk wants to be a better partner than we've ever been. We want to increase our ability to listen. We want to increase our ability to respond to you, and we want to make you more successful. There has been great effort and progress here in Mohawk, but now that is priority No. 1, we are going to be the best partner you have. We may not be today, but that is what we will be. When we have this interview again next year, ask me how much progress we've made. And I intend for it to be very good.

**I'll see you right here in a year.**



## Anderson Tuftex

Provincial, a new addition to Anderson Tuftex's hardwood portfolio, is crafted from white oak and features three styles—plank, herringbone and parquet—in a cohesive palette of five colors. It comes in widths of 7 1/2 inches and random lengths up to 75 inches and features a UV aluminum-oxide finish.



## i4F

The patented SilentTouch from i4F enhances laminate surfaces to look, feel and sound like natural wood, offering a durable, noise-reducing and sustainable alternative for flooring and furniture. Its elastic-treated papers keep HDF panels stress-free and up to 50% thinner while absorbing sound energy that traditional melamine laminates amplify by 10 decibels.



## COREtec

The Originals collection is the brand's go-to waterproof solution for quiet comfort. This 9 x 72 plank provides homeowners peace of mind and retailers the confidence and quality that COREtec WPC is known for. Originals is 100% waterproof, with a cork underlayment for enhanced warmth.

# What's new for FALL

By Ken Ryan

**A**s we near the fourth quarter of 2025, flooring retailers say they are eager to maximize every opportunity in hopes of building momentum in the final months. Having quality products at their disposal is a good way to fuel that rally. Fortunately for them, their supplier partners are doing their part with a bevy of introductions and promotions designed to close the year on a positive note. Here's a sampling of what's new in the fall.



## Europa

Crafted in Italy, Turin Chevron Corta is a new 5/8-inch engineered hardwood with a 4mm veneer that includes a chevron pattern designed to add sophistication and visual interest to any room. A matte polyurethane coating enhances the wood's natural tone while providing long-lasting protection.

## Hallmark

Hallmark Home's Crescendo collection gives retailers a premium waterproof laminate designed to sell. With TrueTouch Texture and 3D graining, it delivers realistic oak visuals backed by AC5 commercial durability that ensures long-term satisfaction. The fade-free finish and waterproof locking system reduces callbacks while its pet-friendly, scratch- and stain-resistant surface broadens appeal. FloorScore and TSCA compliance add eco confidence, and extended warranties give dealers a strong story for both residential and commercial projects.



## Johnson Hardwood

Johnson Hardwood has introduced Norden Home, a 12mm premium WPC flooring line designed with precision engineering and Scandinavian-inspired aesthetics. The 12-color collection features 8.85 x 72-inch planks with embossed-in-register texture and a ceramic bead finish for enhanced realism and surface protection. With a 30-mil wear layer for superior durability, a 1.5mm IXPE underlayment for comfort and sound abatement and the Välinge 5G locking system for fast, reliable installation, Norden Home is built to perform.



## Karastan

Karastan's Born Again is a 55-ounce LCL pattern in SmartStrand Silk that captures modern texture and dimension. Its geometric grid creates a play of light and shadow, designed to add sophistication. Born Again offers a luxurious, plush floor with a soft hand and lasting performance, ideal for design-forward homes.

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## Karndean

With the introduction of 10 new wood- and stone-inspired luxury vinyl designs, the Opus collection has gotten a significant refresh. Long distinguished for its cool gray tones and modern aesthetics, the new wood and stone designs bring warmth to Opus, broadening the collection's appeal.



## Mercier

Mercier Wood Flooring recently released the latest in Origins, which is manufactured in the company's Drummondville, Quebec, sawmill. Origins features a 7 1/2-inch width—in red oak, white oak and hard maple—in both engineered 1/2-inch and 3/4-inch platforms. The planks feature advanced finishes for increased scratch resistance while retaining the floor's luster.



## Philadelphia Commercial

Parquet Plank reinterprets the classic appeal of a parquet visual in a high-performance, easy-to-install and maintain luxury vinyl format. The intentional design of the woven diagonal pattern within each plank allows for a herringbone-like visual without the need to side match the planks together, creating an upscale flooring design with the ease of a standard LVT installation. Available in a 9 x 60 format, Parquet Plank is 5mm with a 20-mil wear layer and achieves ExoGuard+ performance allowing it to withstand high-traffic commercial spaces.



## TotalWorx

TotalWorx Accessories is expanding its robust PrepWorx catalog with the addition of 16 new prep products, giving installers even more reliable tools to get the job done right. This expanded lineup strengthens solutions for patching, moisture mitigation and self-levelers, ensuring a smoother and more efficient installation process from the ground up.

## Mirage Promo

Mirage announced the return of the Mirage Rebate sale. This hardwood flooring sale is taking place across the United States at all participating Mirage dealers from Sept. 25 to Nov. 8. Consumers receive a \$0.50/sq. ft. rebate on Mirage flooring for the duration of the special event. This exclusive offer is valid on all Mirage brand hardwood flooring, regardless of species, color, width or collection.



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# Soft surface banks on affluent customers

By Ken Ryan

In soft surface, high-end decorative has been a bright spot for the residential segment in recent years. Affluent consumers who are willing to spend more on carpet to make a statement have greatly enhanced the decorative/better goods movement.

Mills are following this trend and developing luxury products that prioritize quality, comfort and style. An example is Masland's Wyndemere, a luxurious flooring solution inspired by the allure of the world's most refined destinations. Crafted with Envision Nylon, Wyndemere features a sophisticated cut/loop design and offers a palette of 28 rich colors.

Stanton is another player in the decorative segment that continues to impress with offerings like Fort William, a thick, masterfully crafted wool. With Fort William robust neutrals blend with daring pops of color, creating a striking contrast meant to draw the eye. The intricate weave and bold pattern are designed to evoke a sense of refined heritage, transforming rooms into cozy retreats.



Stanton Fort William



Masland Wyndemere

## Solution-dyed

Solution-dyed carpet has been the go-to for mills, prized for its impressive resistance to fading and staining as well as its durability in high-traffic homes with pets.

Perhaps no company has dominated the solution-dyed space more than Engineered Floors. Using its PureColor fiber system, Engineered Floors' technology ensures that the color is embedded throughout the fiber, making it resistant to fading, wear and stains. This innovative approach provides outstanding stain resistance and vibrant, long-lasting

color. An example is Newport, which features a sophisticated modern sisal loop pattern that is designed with PureColor twistX technology. The result is a carpet that mimics the rich texture and luxurious feel of fine wool while offering the enhanced durability and stain resistance of synthetic fibers. Tarkett Home's residential carpets all fall under the Cloud 9 solution-dyed fiber banner. Cloud 9 boasts a natural resistance to staining and fading, suitable for any room in the home. For example, new offering Icon

demonstrates that carpet can make a visual statement. With its large-scale overall carpet pattern, Icon is a dramatic visual, designed to feel both modern and timeless. Featuring a dimensional surface enhanced by soft stria highlights, this style delivers a rich, tactile experience meant to add depth and visual interest. Crafted from durable 100% solution-dyed PET Cloud 9 fiber, Icon combines high-end style with the everyday practicality that today's busy families need.

## Patterns

Patterned carpet is a popular choice these days, providing both visual interest and practical benefits like concealing dirt and

wear, which makes it particularly well-suited for active households. While patterned carpets check two of the most important boxes for homeowners—durability and stain resistance—consumers often demand that it be stylish as well.

A case in point is Autograph from Anderson Tuftex. Autograph is designed to capture the essence of nature with the sophistication of modern design. Inspired by the tropical palm leaf, its intricate metallic accents and shadow effects create a striking aesthetic. As an added value Autograph is a pattern carpet that meets Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) standards for sustainability.

# Turin Chevron Corta

## Classic Pattern, Contemporary Charm

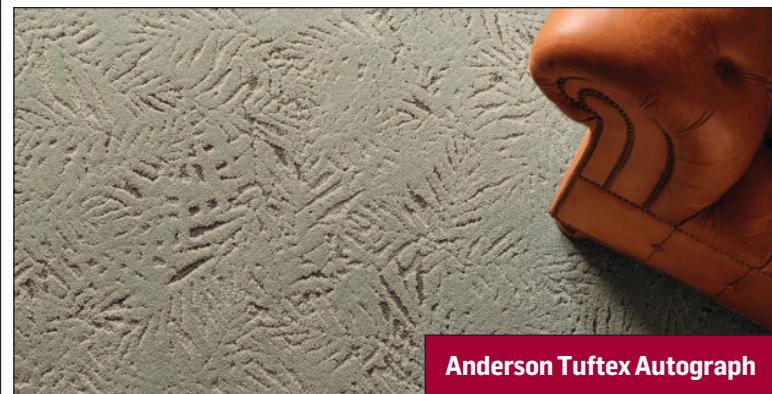
BERGAMO FLOORS



Engineered Floors' Newport



Tarkett Home's Icon



Anderson Tuftex Autograph



## HALLMARK HOME IS FRENCH WHITE OAK

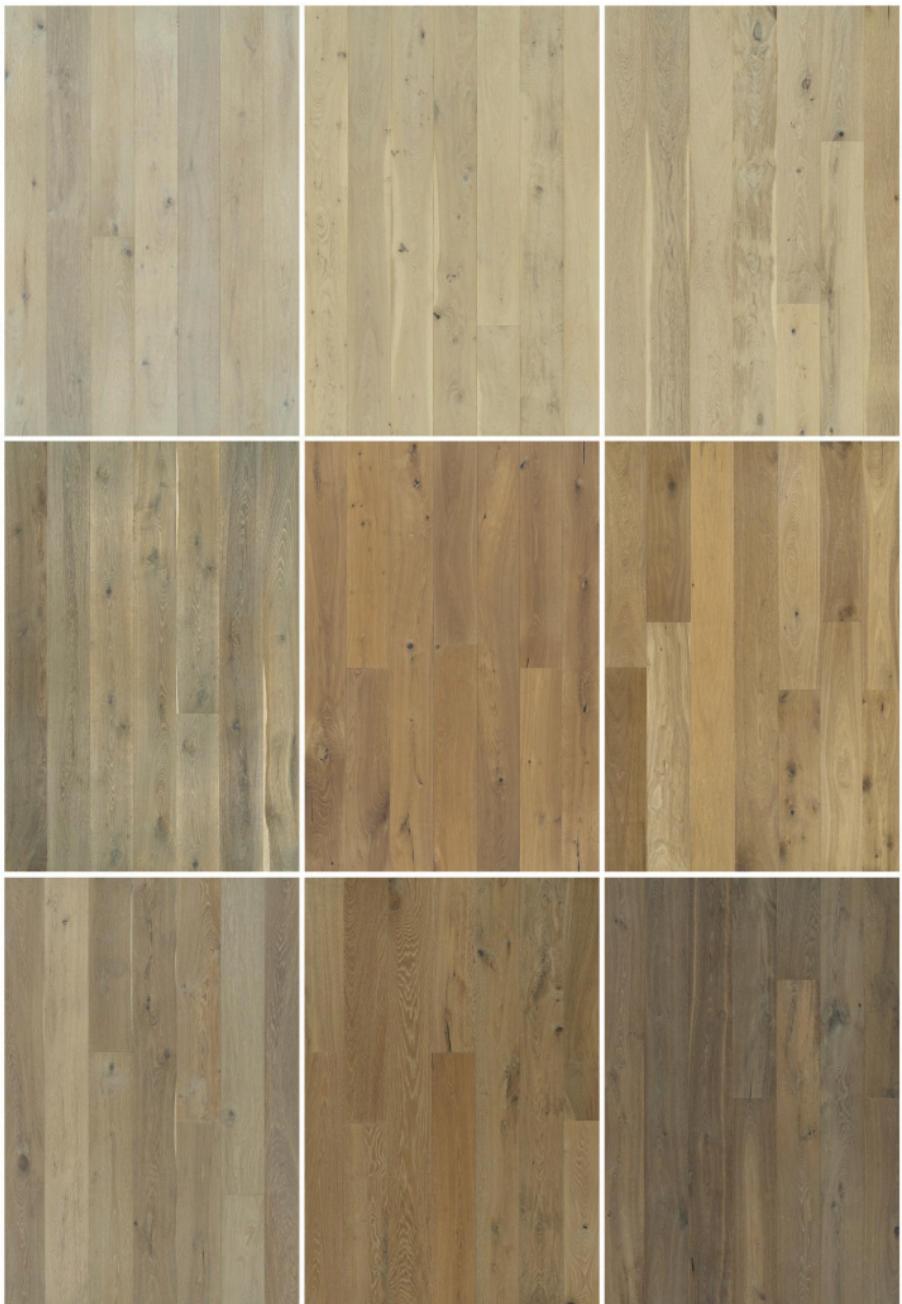
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In addition, Hallmark Home continues to expand its cabinetry line, including elevated French White Oak options, giving you even more opportunities to present cohesive, whole-home design solutions.

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# Dealers tout their top waterproof brands

By Megan Salzano-Birch

In 2025, waterproof flooring remains one of the most dynamic growth engines in the hard surface category, offering retailers a dependable revenue driver even in a choppy housing market. Independent dealers

continue to lean on leading top brands for waterproof innovations that merge style, performance and versatility.

For retailers, these products aren't just about durability—they're tools to differentiate their businesses, address

consumer demand for low-maintenance living and keep flooring sales resilient against broader market challenges. Following are those waterproof brands and collections touted by retailers across the country.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

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### 1> TrueTouch

"Many flooring shoppers struggle to find a balance between durability, water resistance and natural beauty, and TrueTouch has solved that problem. A large portion of our selling footprint is along the East Coast, so we feel like this product perfectly meets the needs of our customer base; providing waterproof solutions and partnering with environmental programs related to the ocean. We believe the flooring market in general is also ready for a new technology that checks all the boxes that matter most to flooring shoppers today."

**Daniel Wilhite Grasso**  
ProSource Corporation  
Fort Worth, Texas

### 2> COREtec Originals

"COREtec has been our go-to brand in luxury vinyl plank for well over a decade. Their product line offers the widest assortment of styles, with the most authentic and realistic visuals in the category. Beyond design, COREtec delivers a multitude of widths, lengths and thicknesses to meet the unique needs of every consumer. From entry-level price points to the most luxurious options in the marketplace, their assortment truly has something for everyone. In addition, COREtec leads the way with the industry's most comprehensive collection of WPC products, offering consumers the softest, most comfortable walk in their homes."

**Bruce Odette**  
Carpet Exchange  
Denver

**3 > Johnson Hardwood**

"We have Skyview, Farmhouse Manner and Public House. I love the looks and the colors of all three of those floors. They took their Ale House wood line and made it into Public House—it's one of the nicest SPCs we have. Johnson covers all the bases. Whoever does their designing and color renderings knocks it out of the park. My sales team and installers all love it, and we do really well with it. They also stand behind everything, and we never have an issue. Relationships are huge—I've known the Johnson guys for a long time—and we value their relationship. They're a key player in the industry."

**Doug Bockrath**  
Bockrath Flooring and Rugs  
Dayton, Ohio

**4 > IFC Canopy Flex**

"Our past relationship with their leadership team—and the new go-to-market strategy from Canopy specifically—[drew us to the brand]. We appreciate the style, design and the user-friendly merchandising vehicle. They allow our account managers and trade professionals to shop easily while providing peace of mind that the product is somewhat exclusive and correct for their project need. We value relationships, quality product and IFC's determination to make those paramount in their go-to-market strategy. We also value innovation and technology which has naturally aligned our two companies."

**Daniel Wilhite Grasso**  
ProSource Corporation  
Fort Worth, Texas

**6 > Mohawk SolidTech R**

"We sell a lot of it. The story is great. The core is PVC-free, it's affordable. We've had no issues with it, installation is easy and the color selection is stylish and trendy."

**Ashlie Butler**  
Bob's Carpet & Flooring  
Tampa, Fla.

**7 > Hallmark**

"We've used the Courtier product for years, and it's been a good product [for us]. It can often come down to price point and visuals. Plus, it can be hard to get materials to Montana. The Courtier visuals are good, and we're still doing well with it. We've had success with all the Hallmark lines. It gives us a range from entry level to high-end. And we're looking forward to seeing the new laminate collection—I think we'll do really well with that line, too."

**Ted Arts**  
MT Flooring Center Showroom  
Belgrade, Mont.

**8 > Karndean**

"It's more than just the product itself. Our partnership with Karndean—from our rep to corporate—is great to work with. But the product is fantastic. The visuals are my favorite in the entire industry. When we get to their tile looks there isn't another company that has as a good of a grout line as they do. So there is a large gap in tile looks between the industry and Karndean."

**Mark Douquet Jr.**  
Creative Carpet & Flooring  
Mokena, Ill.

**9 > Shaw**

"Shaw is an excellent partner for us. When it comes to waterproof product, we sell truckloads every year. We just don't have problems with it. We've found with Shaw you don't just have beautiful style and pretty colors, you have quality and it's on hand and readily available."

**Sha Reason**  
After Five Floors  
Powder Springs, Ga.

**5 > TRUCOR**

"What we like most about the TRUCOR is the combination of quality and design. TRUCOR offers true waterproof performance, which is a major selling point for today's homeowners. The visuals are very realistic, the locking system is superior and the wide range of colors and styles appeals to our customers—making it an easy product to sell."

**Tami Grasso**  
Capitaland Flooring Company  
Clifton Park, N.Y.

## Beautifully Crafted Luxury Vinyl Flooring

We've just introduced stylish new wood- and stone-inspired designs for our Knight Tile and Opus collections. While each collection offers something different, all the new designs have been created with the same artistry and craftsmanship that set our luxury vinyl flooring apart.

See the new designs on our website: [Karndean.com/newproducts](http://Karndean.com/newproducts)



## Carpet

### Winner: Karastan – Black Label

#### About the product

For 96 years the Karastan brand has been synonymous with luxury. This year, the brand steered design leadership in soft surface with its most expansive launch to date—the Black Label collection.

This refined collection showcases carefully curated designs that evoke low-key luxury. Each handwoven wool style in the Karastan Black Label portfolio is billed as a work of art, merging traditional craftsmanship with contemporary elegance.

To make a statement in-store, Karastan Black Label is merchandised on an easy-to-shop, eye-catching destination wall or a small destination display where space is more limited. Destination display sample cards are designed to stand out with high-end finishes and promote the ability to create custom rugs.

#### Why it deserves recognition

A Best of Surfaces winner in Style & Design for 2025, Karastan Black Label has that "it" factor. Since its introduction, flooring retailers have talked about the sleek look and design of the line and its display, and eagerly waited for the chance to sell it. "It's sharp, it's different, it's got an exclusive look to it—a Cadillac or Aston Martin look to it," said Andrew Thompson, sales manager, National Design Mart, Medina, Ohio. "It's got an attitude about it."

Michael Longwill, president of Airbase Carpet and Tile Mart, New Castle, Del., summed it up this way: "It's breathtakingly beautiful."

#### Highlights:

- Crafted from 100% New Zealand wool in unique patterns
- Crush and static resistant
- The Talas line is offered in six styles (shown is Boardwalk)
- All broadloom offerings can be customized into an area rug

## Area Rugs

### Winner: Stanton – Tori Rug

#### About the product

Sophisticated, timeless and statement-making, the Tori Rug in Raindrop reimagines a classic plaid with fresh appeal. Its crisp lines and versatile palette create a foundation that is both bold and refined, capable of elevating a variety of interiors.

Crafted from 100% New Zealand wool, Tori offers natural softness and rich texture that enhances its tailored design. Available in five colors and multiple sizes, this rug delivers versatility and enduring style, making it an ideal choice for anyone seeking a design that feels both current and classic.

#### Why it deserves recognition

The Tori Rug stands out for its ability to transform a traditional plaid motif into something elevated and design-forward. Its clean geometry, layered with a contemporary color story, captures the right balance of timelessness and modernity, a signature of great design.

"We are known for our elevated designs. We differentiate by design, and Tori Rug in Raindrop is a prime example of that uniqueness," said Christine Zampaglione, vice president of marketing for Stanton.

#### Highlights:

- Classic plaid reimagined for modern interiors
- Available in five versatile colorways
- 100% New Zealand wool
- Sizes offered: 8 x 10, 9 x 12, 10 x 14
- Strikes the right balance of bold and timeless





# KARASTAN

## BLACK LABEL

*Timeless style.*  
**FOREVER ICONIC.**

*Many thanks for the recognition, Floor Covering News!*



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## Resilient: LVT

### Winner: Karndean – Opus

#### About the product

The Opus glue-down collection skews modern and contemporary, expanding the creative palette with everything from wood- and stone-inspired luxury vinyl designs to abstract and geometric visuals.

With the introduction of 10 new wood- and stone-inspired luxury vinyl designs, the Opus collection has gotten a significant refresh. Long distinguished for its cool grey tones and modern aesthetics, the new wood and stone designs bring warmth to Opus, broadening the collection's appeal. A glue-down collection with a 20-mil wear layer, Opus is ideal for creating custom installations that include Karndean's glue-down design strips and borders.

#### Highlights:

- Wood- and stone-inspired designs
- Abstract and geometric visuals
- Glue-down installation
- 20-mil wear layer
- Custom installations

#### Why it deserves recognition

*"When we introduced the Opus collection in 2012, it was a deliberate choice to expand the creative palette both residentially and commercially,"* said Jenne Ross, director of product. *"With beautifully crafted wood-inspired LVP designs, stone-inspired LVT designs, abstract visuals and geometric patterns, the Style & Design Award is a testament to the collection's continued relevance for creating stylish interior spaces."*

## Resilient: SPC

### Winner: COREtec Tile

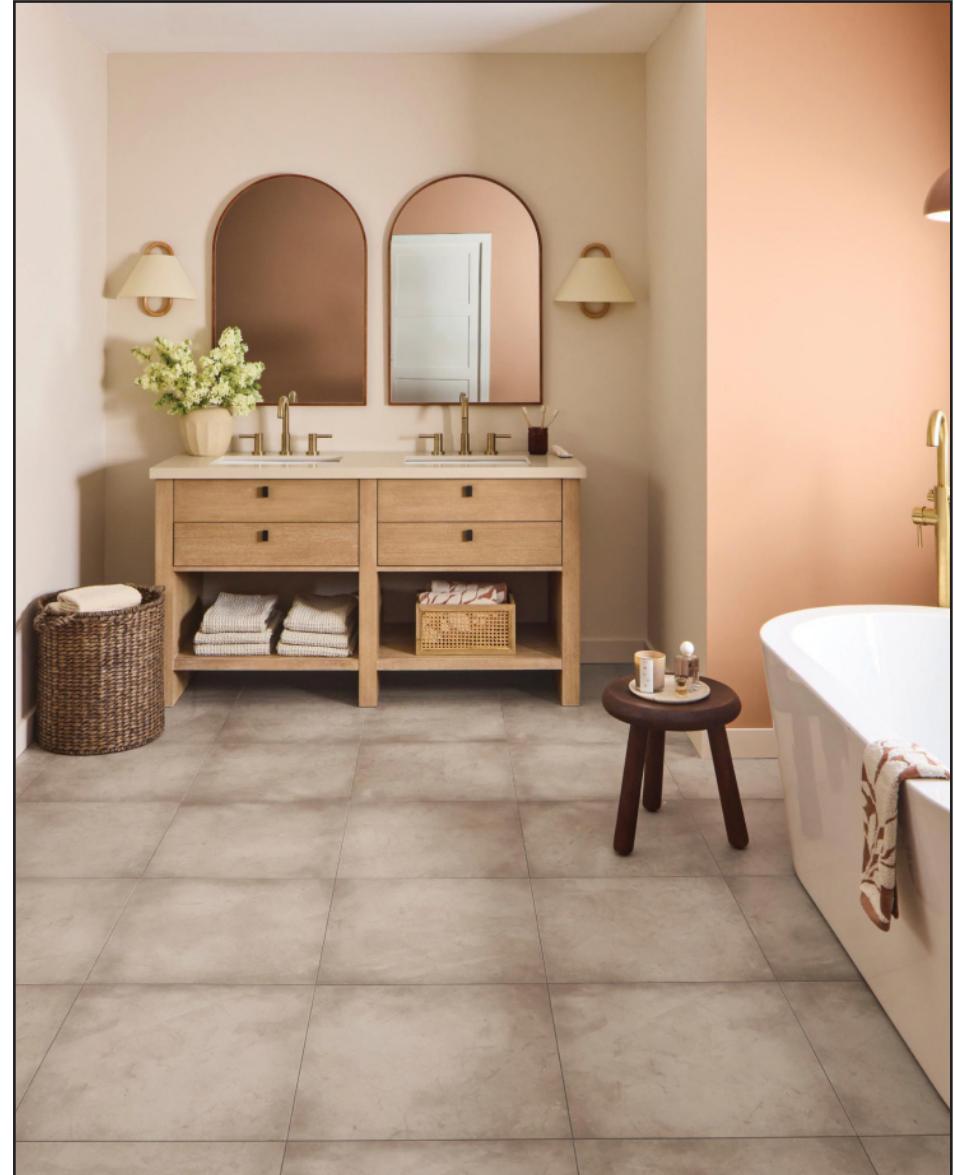
#### About the product

COREtec's Raw Terra Cotta is a hand-designed terra cotta visual that boasts an earthy and textural look. The images were created by hand using clay, then scanned and digitally finished. Another unique element of this new LVT style is that it features an 18 x 18 square tile visual on an 18 x 36-inch SPC tile format, thanks to an innovative product design that incorporates an integrated grout line in the center of the tile.

Every pattern in this COREtec Tile line received the same level of care, ensuring that each surface not only meets high aesthetic standards but also resonates with current and emerging trends—from soft, tactile luxury to nostalgic-modern layering—demonstrating how thoughtful artistry and modern design technology can create surfaces that are both timeless and trend forward.

#### Why it deserves recognition

*"This line celebrates the artistry and meticulous curation that goes into every detail of design,"* said Sarah Gist, director of COREtec product design. *"Our handmade style, Raw Terra Cotta, stands out as a true example of organic modern and quiet luxury trends. Raw Terra Cotta's pattern was carefully hand-poured by our product designer, then scanned and digitally rendered to capture the perfect balance of movement, texture and subtle color variation. The result is a surface that feels alive yet understated — perfectly aligned with today's demand for natural, tactile and sophisticated interiors. Being recognized in FCNew's 2025 Style and Design Awards highlights the innovative approach and design-led thinking at the heart of this product."*



# The brand your customers are asking for by name.

It's hip to be square — a first-of-its-kind, award-winning LVT innovation!

**Raw Terra Cotta** boasts an earthy and textural hand-designed look that evokes feelings of comfort and serenity. **This award-winning style features an 18" x 18" square tile visual on an 18" x 36" SPC tile format**, thanks to its innovative product design.





## Resilient: Peel & Stick

### Winner: IFC – Flex

#### About the product

Flex was created to deliver the premium look and performance of luxury vinyl with the added freedom to install in a variety of layouts without limits. At its core, Flex blends high-end style with long-lasting durability in a way that's both practical and aspirational. The collection offers versatile, design-driven visuals that capture the warmth and authenticity of natural materials while maintaining a clean, modern aesthetic. With its integrated grouted edge, Flex achieves the realistic appearance of traditional tile, while enabling quick installation over existing hard surface floors—including trending checkerboard layouts—to expand creative possibilities.

Installation is simplified with patented SetaGrip technology, which ensures a secure, lasting bond without the mess, hassle or downtime of traditional tile methods. A fiberglass mesh layer further enhances stability and durability, making Flex exceptionally strong in high-traffic environments.

Unlike typical peel-and-stick flooring, Flex is engineered at 5mm thick with true commercial-grade durability. It resists wear, water and daily foot traffic while maintaining its beauty, giving retailers and consumers confidence it will perform for years to come.

#### Why it deserves recognition

"Flex deserved this recognition because it completely redefines what peel-and-stick flooring can be," said Sarah Ballew, marketing director. "Traditionally, this category carried connotations of compromise—products that were convenient but not necessarily stylish or durable. Flex breaks that mold. It elevates the category by combining timeless, elevated design with intuitive self-adhering installation and true commercial-grade performance and durability. The result is a floor that looks as good as it performs, offering beauty, resilience and accessibility all in one."

#### Highlights:

- Design-driven visuals
- Integrated grouted edge
- Quick installation over existing hard surface floors
- SetaGrip technology, which ensures a secure, lasting bond
- 5mm thick with true commercial-grade durability

## Resilient: Sheet

### Winner: Beauflor – Blacktex HD

#### About the product

Inspired by art and style, this luxury vinyl roll collection showcases the latest trends in design, color and embossing technology in 20 designs—giving users the realistic look of real wood or tile at a fraction of the cost.

The waterproof product has a 16-mil wear layer and heavy-duty, 110-gauge construction, which is extremely durable, scratch resistant and easy to maintain—keeping floors looking great for years and reducing the need for costly replacement.

The unique textile backing helps smooth irregularities in the subfloor, making Blacktex HD easy to install with minimal floor prep (can be loose laid up to 500 square feet). It also makes floors warm, comfortable and quiet underfoot with superior noise reduction. These unique performance benefits are achieved through advancements in manufacturing technology, construction, wear layer and finish proprietary to Beauflor. All backed by a lifetime residential warranty and a 10-year light commercial warranty.

#### Why it deserves recognition

"Customers consistently tell us that Blacktex HD is the best luxury vinyl roll product on the market due to its unmatched combination of aesthetics, durability and sustainability," said John Butcher, director of marketing & product development, Beauflor USA. "It's beautiful, waterproof, easy to install, easy to clean and easy to match with any home's style or lifestyle—because at Beauflor we believe that 'Easy is Beautiful'."



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that's easy to buy, easy to  
sell, and easy to love.



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## Resilient: WPC

### Winner: HF Design – VersaCore Pure Edge

#### About the product

VersaCore Pure Edge brings the warmth and elegance of hardwood to life with hi-definition wood visuals that are virtually indistinguishable from the hardwood. Its true natural edge finish enhances authenticity.

Pure Edge is more than just looks—it's built to last. Each 9-inch, ultra-wide plank stretches an impressive 72 inches in length, giving open spaces a bold, modern statement. Beneath its refined surface lies serious strength: a 28-mil commercial-grade wear layer engineered for high-traffic durability. From bustling family rooms to busy commercial settings, Pure Edge stands strong against the demands of everyday life.

At its core, Pure Edge offers superior waterproof protection, with advanced WPC technology and a locking system designed to keep spills, splashes and moisture from becoming a problem. This means peace of mind in kitchens, baths and beyond.

#### Why it deserves recognition

*"VersaCore Pure Edge sets a new design standard in its category,"* said Chris Wieliczko, marketing director, HF Design. *"Elegant 9-inch-wide planks, authentic hardwood true edge treatment and hi-definition visuals balanced with waterproof core technology blends timeless style with everyday practicality. A wide range of organic earth tone colors are available for retailers and designers to elevate any room. We are grateful for this prestigious award and will continue to introduce forward trending styles and innovative solutions."*

#### Highlights:

- High-definition hardwood visuals
- True natural edge finish
- 9 x 72-inch sizing
- 28-mil commercial-grade wear layer
- Waterproof

## Laminate

### Winner: Stanton Design – Hickory Lake Clove

#### About the product

Hickory Lake in Clove, part of Stanton's signature Nuvo Lux 8 Collection, embodies the organic beauty of authentic hickory wood. Its striking contrasts of light and dark tones flow naturally across 8 x 48 planks, creating visual movement that draws the eye and warms any space.

The distinguished character of Hickory Lake comes from its ability to balance rustic authenticity with refined styling. With its rich Clove colorway, this laminate design offers an approachable yet elevated look that feels equally at home in residential or light commercial settings.

Nuvo Lux laminate floors come in 7.7 x 48 and 7.7 x 60 plank options and feature pressed beveled edges on all four sides for a more realistic wood visual. The product boasts a high AC5 rating for wear, features i4F locking technology and comes in a 12mm (10mm + 2mm pad) format.

#### Why it deserves recognition

Hickory Lake Clove is celebrated for its highly realistic styling that brings out the personality of hickory in a fresh, design-driven way. The interplay of light and shadow within the grain delivers a sense of depth and artistry, turning functional flooring into a statement-making style choice. *"It's all about the visuals, the overall richness, the color and the palette of color from light to dark and everything in between,"* said Jamann Stepp, senior vice president, hard surface.

#### Highlights:

- Rich clove colorway with authentic hickory character
- Striking contrasts of light and dark tones
- 8 x 48 planks showcase natural movement
- Style-focused design that elevates laminate visuals





# STANTON

Elevated by design.

## Thank You Floor Covering News

for awarding Stanton as best in Style and Design, honoring the  
**Tori Rug in Raindrop** and laminate style **Hickory Lake in Clove**.

We are thrilled to be recognized in both product categories.

Laminate Floor: Hickory Lake Clove  
Rug: Tori Raindrop  
[stantondesign.com](http://stantondesign.com)





## Hardwood-Residential

### Winner: Fabrica — Artisan

#### About the product

The Dixie Group, parent company of the high-end, high-style Masland and Fabrica brands, continues to expand its overall portfolio to include today's hottest hard surface products. Its latest effort in this regard is the Fabrica Artisan Custom Wood program.

Artisan was designed to offer end users authentic, French white oak planks with solid constructions. The program, which is strictly custom, is currently available in three platforms:  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-thick overall thickness (including a 3mm face layer) on a 7-inch-wide board in random lengths up to 86 inches; a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick overall thickness (including a 5mm face layer) on an 8-inch-wide platform in random lengths up to nearly 9.5 feet; and a second  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick option (also a 5mm face layer) on an 10-inch-wide platform in random lengths up to nearly 9.5 feet. The program is currently available in 12, open-line colors.

#### Why it deserves recognition

*Every plank in the Artisan Custom Wood program is unique with distinct characteristics, making the customer's floor a one-of-a-kind showstopper. "Artisan is crafted just for the homeowner with care and quality they can trust," said Tami Stahl, vice president of marketing, The Dixie Group. "The program is taking off like crazy."*

#### Highlights:

- 12 standard colors offered
- Custom colors made to order in four weeks
- Herringbone and chevron patterns available
- Matching trim made from actual flooring planks with exact stain
- Custom trim profiles available, including stair treads, ceiling beams

## Hardwood—Commercial

### Winner: Hallmark—True collection

#### About the product

The main attraction of the popular Knightrider jewelry store in Orlando, Fla., might be the "bling" behind the display cases, but the first thing shoppers see when they walk into the store are the "gems" on the floor. Not diamonds, watches or gold chains, but rather three eye-catching colors from Hallmark's signature True collection: Onyx, Silver Needle and Neroli. All feature French white oak using Hallmark's proprietary through-color technology.

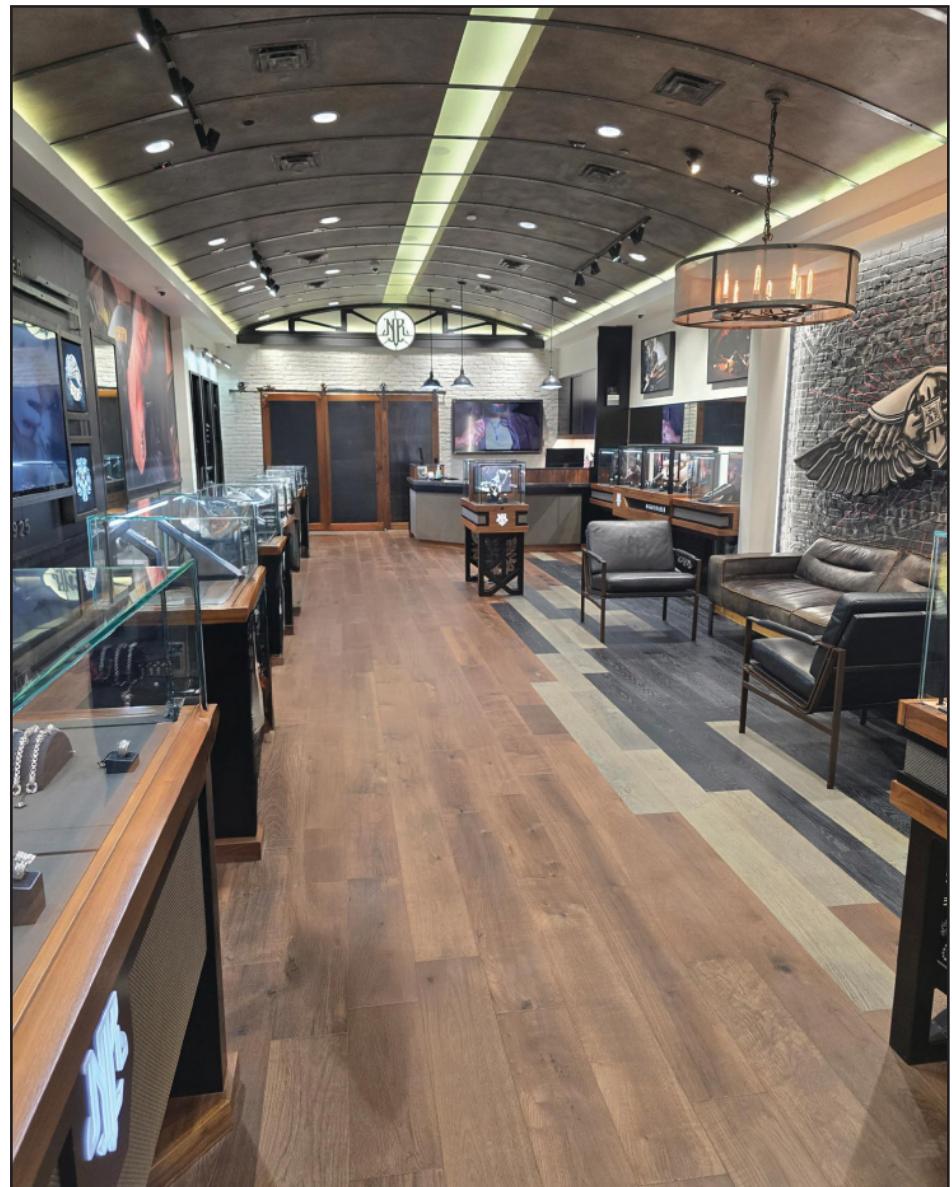
Hallmark Floors is the first to master this revolutionary technology of replicating "the bog-wood process" that occurs when logs lie buried in lakes, rivers and waterways for hundreds of years, deprived of oxygen and sunlight. This natural process can take centuries for the wood to turn from its natural color to deep golden brown or even completely black.

#### Why it deserves recognition

*"These cherished wood treasures are in high demand worldwide for use in furniture and flooring," said Mark Casper, vice president of sales and marketing, Hallmark Floors. "True bog-wood, driftwood and weathered barn wood are all very rare. Now Hallmark has made these prized finishes available to everyone through our True hardwood flooring collection."*

#### Highlights:

- Unique surface treatment that saturates colors throughout the top face layer
- Color is achieved without using stains or dyes
- Nu Oil coating creates a highly durable, fade-resistant finish
- Engineered construction features ultra-thick wear layer



# Latest hardwood looks echo end-user tastes

By Reginald Tucker

**C**lassic, Old-World patterns. Lighter colors and stains. Bold, dramatic formats that convey hardwood's many natural and unique characteristics. These are among the leading trends driving consumer interest in hardwood flooring today.

Genuine hardwood offers today's most sought-after looks and formats, including wide-width planks in appealing colors and textures inspired by nature. Light, non-linear handscraping and wire-brushing, with colors that span the latest in warm hues and classic legacy colors appeal to any style preference.

To that end, hardwood flooring suppliers are tweaking their respective product lines to reflect more natural wood colors and softer hues—a move away from the heavily textured and darker tones seen in the past. In terms of species, European white oak continues to reign supreme, although hickory is making a bigger play. Suppliers are also applying special finishing treatments to red oak to mimic the visual characteristics of white oak to accommodate for the high demand for European white oak. Suppliers are also utilizing manufacturing advancements to make "softer" species typically found in vertical surfaces more suitable for flooring applications.

Case in point is the new Timber Legends Densified Wood Collection from AHF Products. Positioned as a bold reimagining of one of America's most iconic woods, Longleaf Pine, this legendary species is reborn through modern innovation and sustainable forestry, according to Chris King, vice president of sales and market. "While true Longleaf Pine takes centuries to mature and cannot be feasibly reforest-

ed, AHF is honoring its legacy with Timber Legends, a breakthrough collection that captures the character of Longleaf pine using a sustainably sourced pine species and advanced Densified Hardwood technology."

Another popular trend that continues to gain steam in hardwood is the re-emergence of patterns, especially herringbone and chevron. These visuals have roots in classic European architecture and have long been associat-

ed with elegance and heritage. Herringbone provides a "zigzag effect" that creates texture and dimension without overwhelming the décor. In tighter spaces such as narrow hallways or irregular-shaped rooms, patterns can be used to draw attention away from imperfections or guide the eye toward focal points. A chevron layout, for instance, can make a narrow corridor feel wider and more inviting.

**Continued on page 32**



**The herringbone pattern from Mirage's Natural Exclusive Brushed collection is a centerpiece of the Camel's Hump Estate residential project in Bethlehem Township, Pa.**

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Shown in Wharf

**STEP INTO Color.**

**FABRICA**  
ARTISAN CUSTOM COLLECTION



**Woodura Herringbone 2.0 from Bjelin is a modern take on classic design.**



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## Ceramic: Floor Tile

Winner: Del Conca – Horizons

### About the product

Horizons blends concrete and stone into an elegant, contemporary form, giving life to a versatile material rich in character. The collection is available in varied formats—ranging from 4 x 12 to 24 x 48, mosaics and trims—and is suitable for residential, light commercial, commercial and even heavy commercial applications. With rectified edges and a wide palette of neutral tones (ivory, white, gray, graphite), Horizons brings clean sophistication and flexibility for indoor environments. It's ideal for creating polished, minimalist surfaces with seamless finishes.

### Why it deserves recognition

*"Horizons deserves the win because it captures the understated elegance of industrial concrete and the refined charm of natural stone without depending on bold veining—instead, its subtle texture, gentle tonality and clean edges make it effortlessly versatile,"* said Mauricio Inglada Rubio, vice president of marketing and sales. *"It's a design that enhances spaces quietly but meaningfully."*

### Highlights:

- Dual character: The option to express more stone or more concrete in design depending on the setting
- Four versatile colorways that can adapt to different lighting and architectural contexts
- Rectified edges for cleaner lines and better alignment in installations
- Multiple sizes, including large format and smaller chip formats for patterns or detail work
- Suitability across residential to heavy commercial uses

## Ceramic: Wall Tile

Winner: Daltile – Golden Angelite

### About the product

With intricate streaks of amber and honey-toned hues cascading across the surface, Daltile's Panoramic Golden Angelite is designed to exude warmth and sophistication. An ideal choice for luxurious interiors, this 127 x 64 porcelain features a luminous white base with flowing gold veining. Whether used for countertops, floors or walls, this design balances classic refinement and contemporary appeal, bringing charm to any space. Daltile's Panoramic Porcelain extra-large slabs provide seemingly endless design possibilities by marrying the visuals and style of natural stone and marble slabs with the superior performance and accessible price point of porcelain tile.

### Why it deserves recognition

*"This series is 2cm with true through veining,"* said Roy Viana, director of natural stone and slab, Dal-Tile. *"It's the first porcelain that the color of the vein and the detail goes through the body, mimicking natural stone. Plus, you don't have to do a miter. You can straight cut and polish as you would with natural stone. That's a huge positive. This technology is new. We really are the first to come to market with it. And its inspiration is an Italian marble called Calacatta Macchia Vecchia, which, because of its structure, is difficult to bring in as a natural stone. That is the inspiration."*

### Highlights:

- True through veining
- Available in a variety of light and dark colorways
- XL size for striking interiors
- Available for floors, walls and countertops



# Tile designs focus on personalization, authenticity

By Megan Salzano-Birch

**T**ile continues to be one of the most dynamic categories in flooring, evolving each year to meet shifting consumer tastes and design priorities. In 2025, the focus is on personalization: tile is being used not only for durability and performance but also as a canvas for creativity in the home.

One major design trend this year within that personalization theme is the focus on tantalizing texture to create a sense of livability within a space. Crossville's Sand Garden reflects this trend exactly. The collection is inspired by dry gardens and the meditative simplicity of raked sand. The line aims to enhance both visual appeal and sensory experience. Its innovative textured finish features a hyper-realistic fusion of texture and graphic, made possible by Crossville's new Visual Touch technology.

MSI's Girona Collection is another such example. The porcelain tiles feature TileTouch Surface Technology for a tactile texture, showcasing a shell stone design inspired by fossilized seashells and marine life. The line also features intricate organic patterns, neutral tones and a refined lappato finish—combining matte texture with a delicate sheen—with sizes ranging from 12 x 24 to 48 x 48 and 3 x 3.

Color, too, continues to be one of the most powerful trends in tile design meant to help consumers see themselves reflected within their personal spaces. While soft neutrals still carry weight, there's growing appetite for saturated hues—deep greens, warm terracottas, moody blues and rich jewel tones.

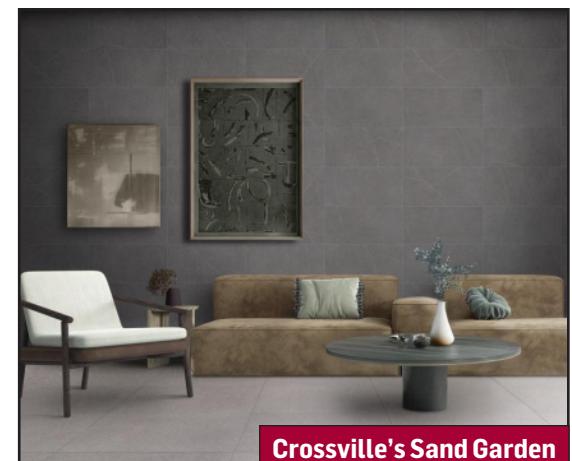
Take Shaw's Tetra line, which is designed to transform any space into a vibrant work of art. Tetra is available in eight colors and a playful mix of shapes—3D hexagon, elongated fan, 5 x 6

hexagon, square and decorative 5 x 6 hexagon—which offers endless design possibilities. Crafted in durable porcelain with matte and multi finishes, Tetra is suitable for floors and walls.

Another major trend this year was the artisanal or handcrafted look. Arto Brick's Artillo Arch Set is one such example. Available two sizes, 15 colors and two textures (limestone and standard concrete), the collections features that handcrafted look.



Shaw's Tetra



Crossville's Sand Garden

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MSI's Girona Collection

Calcium Chloride testing reveals how much moisture is emitted—i.e., moisture vapor emission rates—but not how much is left in the slab.



## Proper moisture mitigation requires testing concrete first

By Jason Spangler

**W**aiting vs. mitigating. It's a moisture dilemma most flooring installers face when encountering moisture challenges on the jobsite. Even under ideal conditions, concrete drying takes around 30 days per inch of slab depth. But construction schedules don't always give you that kind of time. And as we all know, time is money.

So how do you determine the next steps? First, you need accurate concrete moisture testing. This will arm you with solid data so you can choose the most cost-effective mitigation method. It makes dollars and sense.

Fresh concrete mix contains water to help it harden or cure. But after initial hardening, concrete continues releasing moisture. If you install flooring over a wet subfloor, it can cause total flooring failure from issues like blistering, bubbling, delamination and warping. That's why flooring professionals consider moisture mitigation systems when pressed for time.

If concrete is too wet to install flooring, you have two choices: 1. Wait until it's dry, keeping the area enclosed with the HVAC system and a dehumidifier running; or 2. Apply a mitigation product, using moisture readings to buy one in the right price range for the slab's RH level.

An epoxy system is generally considered an effective method for concrete moisture mitigation. However, effectiveness varies widely across all moisture mitigation systems, so it's smart to purchase one from a highly reputable company.

With all the different types of moisture mitigation products, protection levels and prices out there, how do you choose the right one for the job? The short answer is: As long as your concrete moisture readings are accurate, you'll be able to use that data to guide your next steps.

Concrete moisture testing helps you determine what level of mitigation you'll need, but it's important to note that some moisture-testing tools work better than others. Let's break down some of the pros and cons of three main tools: calcium chloride testing, concrete moisture meters and relative humidity testing.

**C**alcium chloride (MVER) testing: The upside is test kits are inexpensive and testing procedures are non-invasive. On the downside, this process is very labor-intensive and kits are not reusable, so costs add up over time. Some even argue it's often inaccurate and lacks scientific backing, and only reveals moisture in the upper portion of the slab. For some flooring manufacturers, it will not meet the warranty requirements.

Regarding concrete moisture meters, the main benefit is they meet ASTM F2659 guidelines for identifying moisture hotspots, although it does not provide information to make a final decision on whether or not to install the floor covering in most cases. Other benefits: it's non-invasive, gives instant readings and is reusable across projects.

Conversely, concrete moisture meters are not precise for deep measurements and don't meet most flooring manufacturer requirements for moisture testing before installation. Moreover, these testing meters can be very expensive.

Lastly, relative humidity (RH) testing is considered the industry gold standard for accurate concrete moisture testing. It's able to detect hidden moisture deep inside a slab and meets ASTM F2170 guidelines for floor installation decisions. Test probes are often reusable on the same project.

On the downside, RH testing kits can be expensive (\$400-\$1,500 or more for a starter kit.) In addition, RH testing is invasive; in-situ testing requires drilling a small hole in the slab.

In a perfect world, concrete will dry on your schedule. However, if it fails to dry fast enough, you'll want a moisture mitigation product that provides the results you need for your specific situation. It's your defense against costly delays and callbacks.

Jason Spangler is sales manager for Wagner Meters.

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WAGNER METERS

## guest column

# One wood installation standard doesn't fit all

**H**ardwood flooring, even after it's been cut, milled and sealed, continues to breathe and move with its environment. Part of what makes it beautiful also makes installing it anything but routine.

Yet, one of the most persistent myths in our industry is that wood flooring can be installed the same way no matter where you are located. That's simply not true. Regional climate is the mitigating factor, and when we ignore that, things go wrong.

Wood is hygroscopic—meaning it absorbs and releases moisture until it reaches balance with the surrounding air. When it absorbs moisture, it swells. When it dries out, it shrinks. This happens every time, on every job, regardless of the flooring quality or who installs it.

The NWFA's C300 Regional Climate Variations guide lays this out clearly: equilibrium moisture content (EMC) varies significantly across North America. In dry zones like Arizona or Nevada, wood floors might settle at 4%–6% EMC. But in humid coastal areas or Gulf states, that number jumps to 11%–13%.

Don't get me wrong: industry standards matter; they give us a basic framework. But they're not plug-and-play solutions. Without context, even the best standard falls short. Local climate, jobsite conditions, HVAC systems and even the time of year all influence how a floor will behave over time.

Take acclimation, for example. Too many people still think it's enough to leave boxes of flooring in a room for three days. But three days in a dry mountain winter isn't the same as three days in Gulf Coast humidity. True acclimation isn't about how long—it's about achieving balance. The wood must reach a moisture content that reflects what it will experience long-term in that particular environment.

Many installers still use the same checklist across every project. They follow standard fastening schedules, adhesive



BY EFI EYLOR

spreads or expansion gaps as though they're universally applicable. The truth is, they're not. A fastening method that holds firm in Minnesota might not last in Miami. A glue-down install over slab that performs well in Southern California may fail within a year in the Southeast if slab moisture isn't properly addressed.

Often, what gets labeled a "product defect" is really a "climate mismatch." Cupping, gapping, buckling—these are symptoms of environmental oversight. Even engineered wood, though more stable, isn't totally exempt.

**To get installation right, we need to think geographically, not just technically. Is the job in a dry mountain town or humid coastal city?**

To get installation right, we need to think geographically, not just technically. Is this job in a dry mountain town or a humid coastal city? Is the HVAC system installed and running? Can it maintain consistent interior conditions year-round? Was the flooring delivered to a sealed, climate-controlled space or dropped into a construction site still drying out from paint?

The answers to these questions will shape the approach. Knowing when to use engineered over solid—or when to delay a job to allow for proper acclimation—isn't a delay. It's professionalism.

At the end of the day, it's the responsibility of the installer/contractor to verify site conditions are suitable.

Efi Eylor is a certified NWFA inspector and founder of My Floor Inspection Inc. He writes regularly about real-world flooring failures, jobsite practices and industry accountability. For more information, visit [myfloorinspection.com](http://myfloorinspection.com).

# VERSA CORE PURE EDGE

## LUXURY WATERPROOF FLOORS

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Finest Pressed  
Bevel Technology

**TRUE**  
Natural Edge



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Performance

28 MIL  
Wear Layer



Ultimate Waterproof  
Protection

**ELEGANT**  
and Durable

Leaders in  
Innovation & Design



# Resilient styling, technology capture attention

By Megan Salzano-Birch

Resilient flooring continues to stand at the forefront of the industry, offering retailers and consumers alike a category defined by versatility, durability and innovation. From sheet vinyl to rigid core to traditional LVT, resilient products have carved out a dominant role in the marketplace by combining style and performance at a range of price points. In 2025, there are several trends making themselves known within

the category, all shaped by the evolving needs of the American consumer.

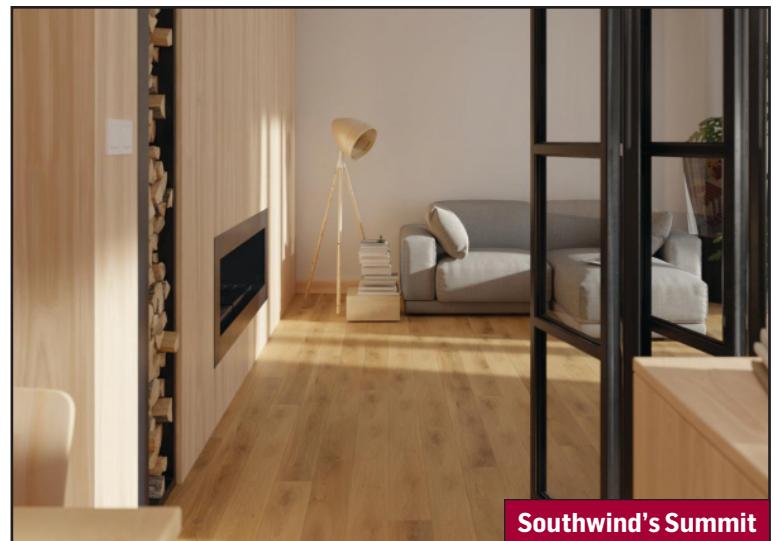
## Large format sizes

Take XL sizes, for example. Once a lone staple in the tile category has now emerged as a style preference for consumers across the country within flooring categories like resilient. Suppliers have embraced the trend and offered up their best large-format looks. Take MSI, for example. The Everlife Studio Collection features extra-wide 9 x 48 planks and a

premium 9mm construction. Studio also offers superior durability with an impressive 30-mil CrystaLux Ultra layer. The domestically sourced luxury vinyl collection is waterproof, stain resistant and pet friendly.

LX Hausys America has also touted its prowess in XL sizes with its PRESTG XL Collection by HFLOR. The PRESTG XL Collection features extra-large planks measure 9 x 60, offering spacious, relaxed visuals while showcasing refined wood patterns. The line also features six new, on-trend colors, enhanced with TrueMatte and TrueQuiet technologies.

Southwind's Summit is a 19mm-thick plank that measures 5 x 60. This has significant installation advantages in time and money savings by avoiding the reinstallation of subfloor material in a typical floor replacement project. In addition to a thicker/longer plank, Summit is also equipped with 30-mil wear layer, 3mm IXPE attached pad, painted bevel, embossed-in-register and Uniclic locking system, which makes it easy to install in tight spaces and under door jambs.



Southwind's Summit



Tarkett Home's First Class

on-trend colors. Designed for homeowners who celebrate the beauty of nature in their style, blends rustic elegance with new-world color palettes—delivering waterproof, ultra-durable performance with style.

However, it's not just LVT or rigid core making the style statement. Sheet, believe it or not, has come a long way thanks to the efforts of today's manufacturing class. Tarkett Home's First Class, for example, is a clear demonstration that sheet vinyl

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doesn't have to be boring. With a design-first approach to the collection, each visual shows that sheet vinyl can be a stylish, on-trend solution and can add depth and dimension to any space. The result is a floor that emphasizes a curated mix of old and new with warm lived-in looks. First Class really captures the essence of the maximalism trend and allows homeowners to make the floor the star of the room.

#### Premium technology

Beyond what consumers see above the surface, there is a lot happening below it, too—especially when it comes to resilient flooring. From HD realism to waterproofing, EIR texture and everything in between, today's resilient flooring is chock full of next-gen tech.

For example, few companies have leveraged the benefits of digital printing like Engineered Floors has with its PureGrain High-Def. The digital printing technology used in PureGrain starts at the design process. Rather than selecting six or 12 different planks, it chooses 35 unique planks. Even in an average-sized room, an expert wouldn't be able to identify a repeat.

Then there's Mohawk's Solid-Tech R. The high-performance flooring line features RealPlank technology to minimize pattern repeats and HDX color clarity for a truly natural finish. What's more, that technology is guaranteed, with a WetProtect Gold lifetime floodproof protection and All Pet Stain & Scratch Warranty covering all pets, all accidents, all the time.

Mannington's newest pattern, Basilica, combines Mannington's TumbledEdge bevel technology with its exclusive NatureForm Glaze finish for an authentic look. For added realism, Basilica showcases a painted bevel that simulates the look of grout. It's offered in a 12 x 24 tile format and features dynamic variation, natural imperfections and subtle color shifts for a realistic visual.

AHF's Armstrong Flooring is another supplier brand tapping into tech. American Personality Pro, for example, features advanced Diamond 10 Technology, which delivers exceptional resistance to stains—including tough substances like driveway sealer—and helps maintain a like-new appearance over time. The proprietary Bounce Back Core enhances durability with superior resistance to indents, ensuring the flooring stands up to daily wear and tear. Plus, with 100% waterproof planks, it's suited for moisture-prone areas like kitchens and bathrooms.



AHF's American Personality Pro



Mannington's Basilica



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Inhaus' Manor collection, shown here in herringbone, is designed to coordinate with standard plank products in its Landmark collection.

## Latest laminates take their cues from hardwood visuals

By Reginald Tucker

It should come as no surprise that the prevailing trends seen in hardwood—the return of classic patterns and shapes, as well as longer/wider planks—mirror precisely the same trends we're seeing in the laminate flooring category.

Take, for example, the new Everest pattern from Mannington. The latest addition to the company's signature Restoration Collection, Everest was designed to reflect a refined European white oak visual with subtle edge spalting and 18-plank repeat. Another standout feature of the new laminate line is an innovative bevel designed to more closely mimic real hardwood. Prior it-

erations of Mannington's Restoration planks featured a painted bevel; now it's transitioned to a pressed, SculptedEdge bevel.

"It gives more design options for that open floor plan where you have those 60-inch lengths compared to 48-inch lengths," said John Hammel, senior director, residential hard surfaces, Mannington.

Realism is also a focal point of Eternity Flooring's new Voila 5G laminate. Positioned as a premium-grade waterproof product, the new line—produced in France—reflects European craftsmanship and high styling, according to Isaac Lee, corporate sales, marketing and product development manager. "The product features exclusive designs

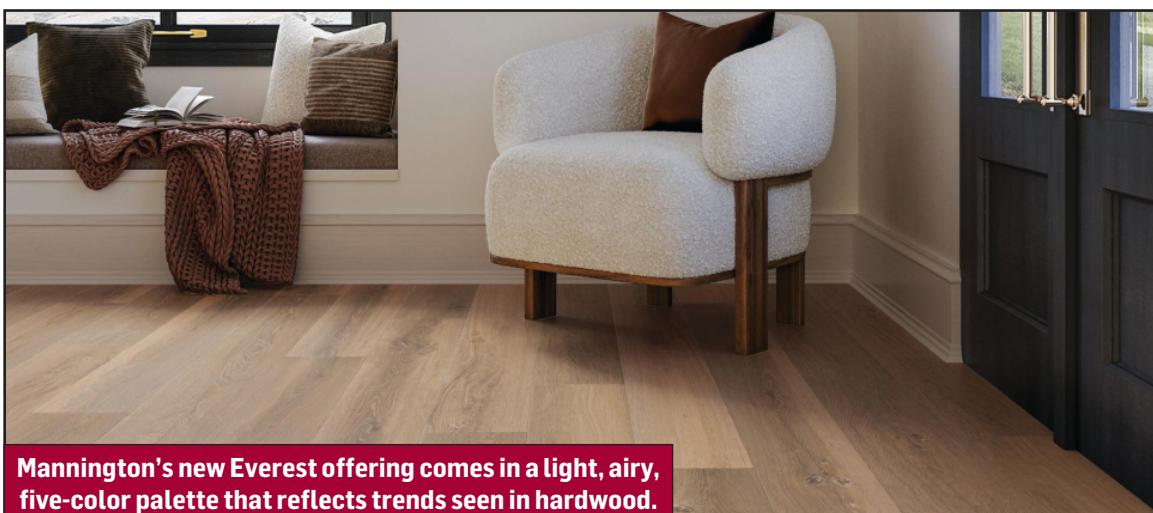
available only through Eternity," he said.

The latest laminate visuals are also taking a page out of the hardwood design playbook when it comes to classic patterns such as herringbone and chevron. Case in point: the new designs in Inhaus' Landmark and Manor collections. Manor, an already popular traditional plank collection, was expanded with a new herringbone pattern. "We took our AC5-rated premium EIR laminate, Landmark, and offered the same curated designs in herringbone in our Manor collection," said Derek Welbourn, CEO. "Along with our replicated moldings that we manufacture ourselves, customers can have one room in herringbone and another room in a standard plank format with the same look."

Just as innovations in digital printing have raised the bar on realism in laminate visuals, embossed texturing and surface treatments also play a crucial role in enhancing the authenticity of laminate flooring. Take Mohawk's RevWood Premier with Signature Technology, for instance. The technology allows 64 layers of textured details with 4x the resolution of some products currently available on the market today.



The Voila 5G line from Eternity Flooring reflects a classic European oak feel.



Mannington's new Everest offering comes in a light, airy, five-color palette that reflects trends seen in hardwood.

## Wood trends

Continued from page 25

A prime example of this is a high-profile installation completed in partnership with certified Mirage dealer Swine Design, Emmaus, Pa., and local builder Erwin Forrest Builders. The eye-catching, high-end residential project—the stately Camel's Hump Estate residence in Bethlehem Township, Pa.—features Mirage's white oak herringbone pattern in Natural Exclusive Brushed from the company's new 2025 Blanc Collection. "This installation perfectly showcases how Mirage transforms homes into timeless examples of wood flooring excellence," said Jerome Goulet, vice president of marketing, Mirage.

Another standout patterned design is the newly launched Woodura Herringbone 2.0 from Bjelin. Representing a contemporary take on a flooring classic, the line features larger strips that can be installed in multiple patterns, including traditional herringbone, double, triple, ladder and blocks. Utilizing panels measuring 3.6 inches wide x 22 inches long, Woodura Herringbone 2.0 exceed the sizes of many traditional parquet herringbone designs for a more modern feel, according to Bjelin. "It's a highly durable and versatile herringbone floor that allows enormous creativity in both residential and commercial spaces," said Hannes Lindblom, head of product management at Bjelin. "Woodura Herringbone 2.0 is easy to install since it clicks into place without glue or nails."

But it's not only herringbone and chevron patterns that are turning heads. Contractors and professional installers alike are also seeing more demand for geometric designs. At the recent NWFA convention, for example, suppliers previewed pre-cut

hexagonal designs of medallions and accent pieces that installers could easily lay down on the job site. Traditional parquet designs are being reinterpreted in playful and bold ways.

### Wide and long still very strong

Of all the trends driving hardwood flooring purchases today, interest in the wide-and-long plank format appears to be the most sustainable. Wide-plank hardwood flooring has surged in popularity as homeowners seek to evoke a rustic or farmhouse aesthetic. They are even more dramatic when installed in a larger, open space—installations that harken back to wood floors in historic structures.

"Larger planks, unique layouts and warm, tone-on-tone color schemes are helping designers reimagine classic motifs for modern applications," said Jordon Munro, managing director of Havwoods North America. "Whether in residential foyers, hospitality lounges or boutique retail settings, patterned hardwood adds character and becomes a design feature in its own right. These creative expressions signal a broader embrace of personalization and storytelling within interior design."

Another trend that continues to hold is consumer preference for low-luster, matte finishes. The shiny, glossy surfaces of yesteryear, observers say, are making way for more organic aesthetics such as wire-brushed or handscraped textures that bring warmth and visual depth to a room. "These finishes complement today's more relaxed and natural design styles and offer practical benefits, like helping to conceal everyday wear in high-traffic environments," Munro added. "As spaces become more lived-in and multi-functional, the need for surfaces that feel grounded and authentic is more important than ever."



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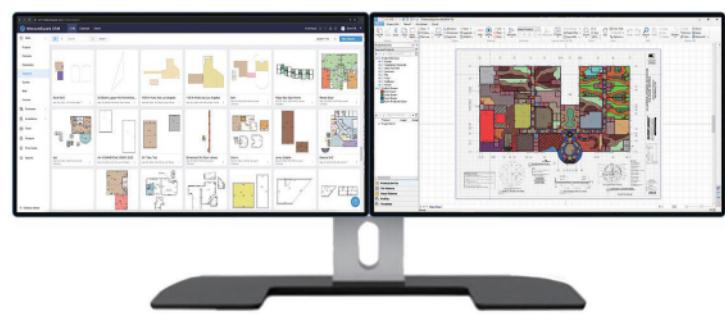
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