

FALL HOME

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Area rugs have got the floor situation covered

By **KELLY ROHE**
Special to the Record-Eagle

From a woven carpet mill in Philadelphia, circa 1791, to today's multi-billion dollar business, the carpet industry has seen many changes. However, all things are cyclical in the consumer market and carpets are giving way to an old competitor with style and elegance: hardwood floors.

According to Becky Halloran, flooring manager at the Building Center in Houghton Lake, carpet has its place in the homebuilder's market in the new century, but it is being used in a much different fashion.

"I've been in the flooring business for over 15 years," said Halloran, "and I am seeing a decline in the use of carpet in standard living areas, such as living rooms and dens."

Halloran believes that more

homeowners choose hardwood in these areas for three main reasons: it is affordable, it gives a more elegant look to a room and people believe (although it is not clinically proven) that it aids allergy sufferers.

Ultimately, what flooring the consumer ends up with is a cost factor but, according to Tim Hyland, owner of Floor Covering Brokers with stores in Traverse City and around northern Michigan, homeowners today are budgeting more for flooring.

"Less than five years ago carpet was 75 percent of our business," said Hyland. "Now it is less than 45 percent of total sales."

Hyland believes that homeowners know what flooring they want when they are building their home and include that in their overall design plan.

"People today are using wood floors like the used beige carpet five years ago," said Hyland. "They are spending up to three times the amount they used to on flooring."

From a cost standpoint, wood flooring is a more expensive option for the average homeowner. Commonly measured in square feet, wood floors price out at approximately \$6 to \$8.50 per square foot installed. Carpet, on the other hand, is typically around \$2.50 to \$3 per square foot installed.

However, wood floors are timeless and indestructible. According to Halloran, carpet owners replace their carpet at least once or twice throughout the life of their home or, every 10 years.



Above, this wool area rug from Traverse City's Stewart-Zacks comes in several different color trims.

Of course with the resurgence of hardwood floors comes an increased demand for area rugs. Ken Zacks, owner of Stewart-Zacks, a home decorating store in downtown Traverse City, has seen a large increase in area rug sales in the last two years, nearly quadrupling his stores' rug volume.

"People are looking to protect their floors in high traffic areas," said Zacks. "Kitchens, entryways, even bathrooms. For the most part, we sell all hand woven, natural fiber, rag rugs in smaller sizes such as 2.5 by 4 feet."

According to Halloran, homeowners use area rugs to soften the hard floor look and add a touch of personal taste. Buyers have a wide

range of options when choosing an area rug. From the hand-woven rugs sold at Stewart-Zacks to prefabricated, decorative rugs found at most carpet stores.

"You can buy an area rug for as little as \$399," said Hyland. "One popular look that we've found is the wilderness look—rugs with decorative scenes of deer or the outdoors."

Due in part to homeowners building bigger homes and baby boomers retiring and taking on second homes, the flooring industry as a whole is booming. Carpet is still a popular, viable option for homeowners. It's commonly used in bedrooms, hallways and refinished basements.

According to Halloran, Berber is still popular because of its low maintenance qualities.

"People today are choosing carpeting carefully, based on the twist of the carpet rather than the feel," said Halloran. "They are looking for a low maintenance carpet that wears well, looks good and provides comfort."

Today's carpet customers will find low-density carpets on the market that last as long as plush carpets. And, as always, industry professionals highly recommend investing in a good pad. Padding is said to bear 75 percent of the carpet's wear and tear.

"Carpet will come back," concluded Hyland. "We used to cover wood floors with carpet. At some point people will go back to wanting softer floors again. But, for now, you may find many carpet manufacturers getting into the hard surface business."

Kelly Rohe is a local freelance writer.



Nature themes that complement hardwood floors are a favorite area carpet choice for northern lower Michigan buyers.



Storage solutions that match style and budget

By **KRISTEN COUNTS**
Special to the Record-Eagle

Can't get anything into your closet? Can't get anything out of it? Are rooms cluttered, but there's nowhere to put stuff away?

If you never seem to have enough storage space, you might want to implement some creative storage options. It's all about organizing the space that you have, with choices ranging from a plastic bin to a canvas CD rack to a customized closet.

Storage options are available in great variety at retail and home improvement outlets.

"Everybody has a problem with their closets," said Rob Humphrey, team leader of home storage at Target in Traverse City.

You can organize that messy closet yourself, or you can have someone do it for you. David Halperin, owner of Custom Closets in Traverse City, makes closet organization his business.

Halperin views closets on site and uses a laptop computer to come up with a design that addresses clutter. Components might include shoe shelves, clothing rods, cabinets and jewelry drawers.

Halperin then clears out the closet, installs the pressed wood laminate sections and puts everything back in place.

According to Halperin, a current trend in closet storage is transforming a small bedroom into a walk-in closet.

Do-it-yourselfers can take advantage of storage units that

are easy to assemble. Typically made of pressed wood laminate, systems can include drawers, cabinets, shelves and other options like shoe organizers or canvas hanging shoe bags.

Ashlea Turner, who lives in a small apartment in Glen Arbor and likes shoes, uses hanging shoe bags.

However, closet organization is only half the battle.

"A lot of older apartments don't have much closet space," said Turner, who has one closet in her upstairs apartment.

In that case, storage furniture may be the best option. Pier One Imports carries trunks, CD storage units, entertainment centers and bookcases, according to store manager Colleen Rakunas. Some entertainment centers are designed for the bedroom and have a closet rod instead of shelves.

"They're (storage furniture) made to go in any room," said Rakunas.

For the bedroom, Humphrey suggested taking advantage of items that range from collapsible cardboard drawers to wood furniture such as bookcases. In addition, Target offers children's wood storage furniture. Halperin's storage components can be assembled for use as a piece of furniture.

"Doors can be installed on it to create a wardrobe for the bedroom," explained Halperin.

In bathrooms, shelves, wall cabinets and etageres made of materials such as wood or metal with glass are functional. Hampers can also be used for storage, along with plastic stackable storage

tubs, bins and drawers in a variety of colors and sizes.

"Some have clear plastic so that you can easily see what's in them," said Humphrey. Another versatile option is wicker boxes and baskets.

Kristen Counts is a local freelance writer.

Making most of your space

■ Buy a multitiered plate rack to keep everyday plates handy, providing more cabinet space for other items.

■ In kids' rooms, add removable shelves in one end of the closet for toys and games on lower shelves.

■ Look for underutilized areas for more storage. How about the space under stairs? It can store many items. Often pullout shelves for books, files, sports equipment and games work well.

■ Buy a trunk or an ottoman with a hinged top for extra storage in living rooms, family rooms, dens and home offices.

■ Use the space under the bed for heavy-duty plastic or cardboard storage boxes to corral out-of-season items, such as blankets or sweaters.

■ Maximize a walk-in closet by adding a small chest for lingerie or accessories.

From organization "Making a Home," Meredith Books, \$29.95.



David Halperin of Traverse City's Custom Closets creates an organized design to make the most of storage space by first drawing a model on his computer that suits his clients needs.