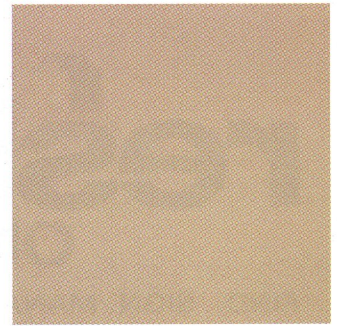
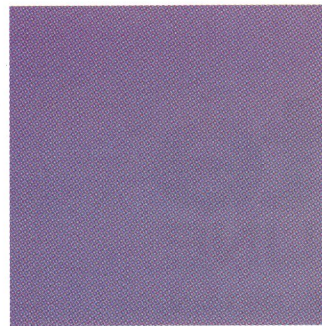
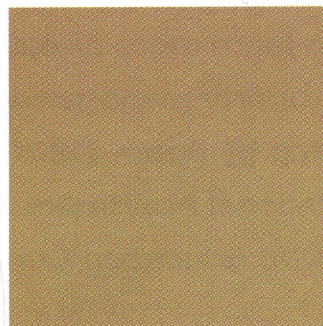
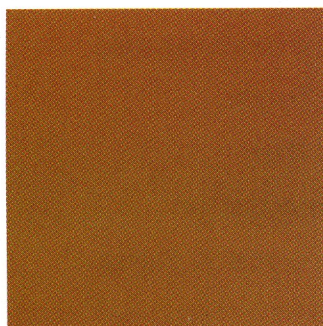
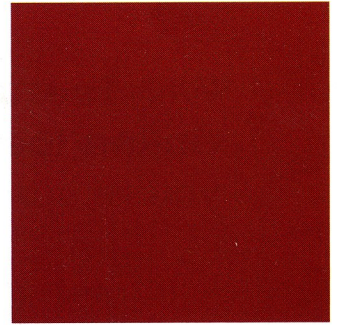
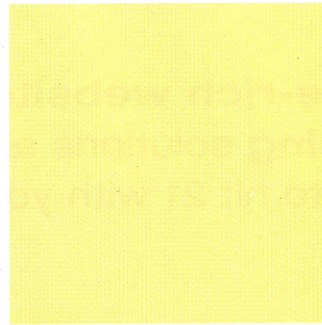
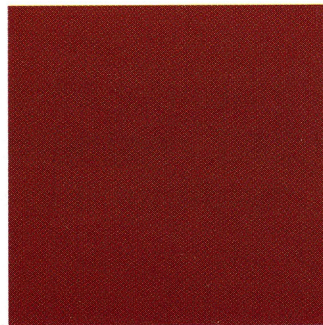
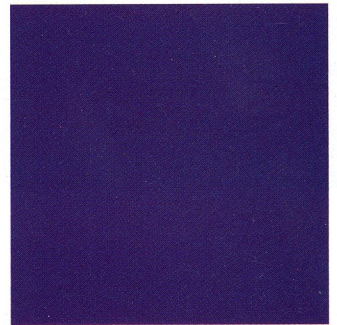
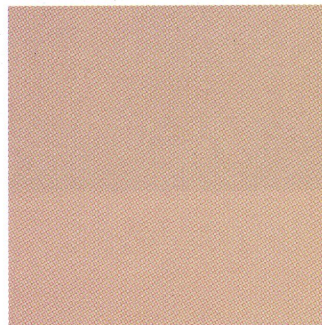
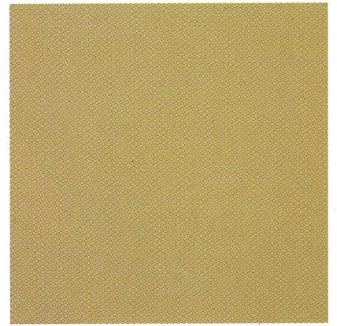
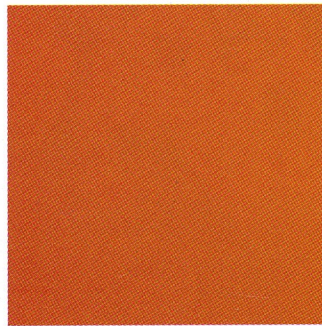


# INSIDE EDITION

*BY JAMES MARTIN*

If a community's curb appeal draws people in, its interiors hold them there.



The apartment industry's current strategy is to market apartments as homes. Apartment owners spend a lot of time and money on community improvement and maintenance to make sure that exteriors appear homey and welcoming with stone, brick, natural paint colors and attractive landscaping. But residents spend more time enjoying the insides of their apartments than they do admiring the outsides, so how interiors look—and more importantly, how they feel—is absolutely critical, especially for residents who want to come home, lock their doors, sit in front of their home entertainment centers, order out for food and relax from pressure from business, traffic, finances and 24-hour-a-day BlackBerry intrusions.

## Crucial Colors

**Warmth is essential.** The first rule always is to pick warm colors—those with red or yellow undertones, rather than blue or green overtones. This is a little confusing because although green is usually considered a cool color, yellow-influenced greens, such as khakis and olive tones, are warm colors.

One question to consider is: Does this color promote comfort and relaxation or does it feel like it has a hard edge? Soft whites (more creamy) rather than harsh whites are essential.

Deeper colors also are popular because they feel more comforting.

### Leasing offices and clubhouses.

These are ideal places to display impressive design. Owners cannot afford to go cheap in these locations. First impressions carry a lot of weight in closing initial rental agreements; however, all too often, this is where design thinking ends.

This, too, applies to common areas, where residents come and go frequently every day.

## Wow Them Inside

Following are areas that apartment owners should consider sprucing up to attract long-term residents:

**Entrance halls.** Here is where impressions are made every day. Make sure these halls are well lit and open. Too often, entrance halls are empty, cavernous spaces that are anything but inviting. The entrance hall should create a cordial feeling that makes residents feel at home. Use fun, bright, warm colors. Put pictures on the walls and add pieces of furniture and table lamps to offset those bright overhead lights. Always use warm daylight bulbs in florescent fixtures—they cost more but the way they make the interiors feel is more than worth it.

**Halls.** Walking long, blank hallways that display only practical light fixtures and blank doors is not an inviting or inspiring experience. Hallway lighting is critical, especially in the open, outside walkways that are so common at many communities. Shadows or darker areas make residents feel unsafe. If communities brighten these areas, residents may think twice before considering a move to a different community. Install attractive fixtures to break up the light patterns in the halls. Pictures on the walls or narrow

tables positioned sparingly are ideas worth exploring.

**Doors.** Residents typically do not interact with management every day. But if apartment doors look well maintained, if the paint is fresh, clean and shiny, if the apartment number is bright and attractive and if the fixtures are polished and look new, the level to which owners care

about their residents is consistently reinforced. Residents should feel like the community is different from other places they have lived where management might have acted indifferent. To make residents feel important during those weeks or months when they don't come in contact

with management, owners should have unit doors painted with brushes that deliver smooth, nice coats. Always use high gloss enamel paint for doors, which makes them look fantastic and better able to withstand abuse. This really will pay off.

**Stairwells.** Even buildings that look great because of all the right things in the clubhouse, entries and hallways sometimes become poor stepchildren because of the appearance of stairwells at the ends of the buildings. Owners too often forget these areas and leave them blank. Having been painted with one color, they have all the ambiance of a factory. Stairwells often are dismissed because no one thinks that people really use them—but, of course, they do. At the minimum, paint the stair rails a fun color or accent one wall. And again, proper lighting can give a warmer feel.

**Individual apartments.** In many communities, white walls are standard. Consider changing that to a warmer off-white tone. Many new residential homes and apartments have shifted to cream or light khaki walls and complement them with a soft, warm, white trim. And, instead of beige carpeting, use a darker tone. Most furniture and accessories match these types of colors. Explain to prospective residents that their furniture will go with a more colorful room, because a more colorful wall allows more colors to work together.

Another way to make apartments feel more contemporary is to use an accent color on a wall. Bright, happy colors—even red—are recommended for kitchen walls. Kitchens are small areas and don't take much paint. And, with the kitchen being the heart of the home, these colors make it a special place to which residents will respond well. To get a good sense of what colors can work, visit a home décor store to see them on display. This also will give an indication of the types of furnishings that trendy residents might use for decoration. ■

*James Martin is an architectural color consultant, President-Elect of Color Marketing Group and owner of The Color People, [www.colorpeople.com](http://www.colorpeople.com).*

### HUE NEWS

**What:** Attractive interior design will reduce turnover and increase community profits.

**Where:** Beautify halls, doors, stairwells and individual apartments with warm colors, light and fun accents.

**Why:** Residents spend more time enjoying the insides of their apartments than they do admiring the outsides.