

## The Power of Color

We recently painted a thirty-year-old condominium, which was painted beige with brown trim, a color combination quite prevalent thirty years ago, with a brighter eggshell white. Many believed that the color change shaved at least ten years of the appearance of the building. This issue features a guest article by John Murray; Business Development Representative for Benjamin Moore & Company about the power of color can enhance your property and property value.

The architecture may be remarkable, the setting impressive, yet, consciously or not, the first thing we notice about a property is its color palette. That's the power of color; it captures our attention, speaks to our emotions, and manipulates our perception. It can convince us that a small property looks larger, a squat property has height, a plain property possesses panache. Color can be used to accentuate a property's best features or camouflage its flaws. It can project a particular mood, refresh a tired facade, and, in a neighborhood of look-alikes, make a single property stand out.

Because most properties get their color, and much of their character, from paint, architects and designers have long sought rules that would identify which paint colors work well together and which don't. But from a purely decorative perspective, coming up with hard and fast formulas for choosing them may be impossible. Color preferences are almost as unique as fingerprints, and for every "rule", there is a combination just waiting to prove it wrong.

The way we perceive colors changes depending on how and where they are used. The color combination that you love on a color chip or on that property you saw on your last vacation won't necessarily work on your property. That's because everything from light to scale to context changes the way color behaves.

- • **Light** The way colors look varies as the light changes from dawn to dusk, summer to winter, and even north to south, so you should always view color chips where they will be used and at different times of day. A dark green for a door that appears fine in the even illumination of the paint store, for example, may look almost black in the shade of your front porch. Conversely, a pale hue can "bleach out" in brilliant sunlight, so much so that it winds up reading as white.
- • **Scale** Very simply, the more there is of a given color, the more powerful it is. An eye catching hue that looks intriguing on a small paint chip can easily become overbearing when it covers an entire property. To avoid this pitfall, a color rendering or samples applied to good size areas of the property will help. The color choices should be viewed at various times of day and in varying light conditions before making your decision.
- • **Context** The way we perceive a color is altered by its surroundings. In the case of a property, the natural setting, the neighborhood, and the permanent elements (roof, driveway, etc.) will influence how a color looks. Sage greens, reddish browns, and others

can appear out of place in Florida, for example, but work beautifully with the palette of the desert Southwest; pastel pinks and aquas that are perfect for a property at the shore can seem incongruous in a urban setting. Similarly, the other colors in your exterior color scheme will change the way your main color looks. As a general rule, start by choosing the body color, and then make your other choices with it in mind.

## Color Cues

- • **The architecture** This should always be your starting point. For inspiration, look for properties like yours whose colors you admire. Some styles are characterized by their own distinctive palette. If you are interested in historical accuracy or appropriateness, research your property's period style.
- • **The givens** Existing elements that won't be painted such as the roof, the driveway, and the chimney, should play a role in shaping your color choices, For a façade that's partially stone, using a similar color will visually connect the property. If the fixed colors are intense, a terra cotta tile roof, for example, a neutral color such as sand or a warm white will bring balance.
- • **The landscaping** Select colors that fit in with the surrounding palette. If you have brilliant colored spring blooming trees or a sea of green foundation plantings, choose colors that will complement them.
- • **Neighboring properties** Choose a color scheme that is compatible with the other houses in your neighborhood. If you like a neighbor's palette, try pairing the colors differently to avoid an exact replication.

Benjamin Moore & Company has been the leader in color trend forecasting. To this end they have developed many tools to help people choose colors for their properties including soft ware that can digitally show you what your property will look like with any color palette you can imagine. You may contact any local Benjamin Moore representative with a digital picture of your property and they will do the rest. They may even provide you the software.

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