Maintenance Designing

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After months of planning and construction, the big day has finally come — a new commercial building is complete and the owner and architect proudly inspect the product. The interior is especially exemplary: beautiful spectrum blue carpets on snowy white floors, with smooth walls done in a pale, no-gloss color. It’s dramatically simple and done in perfect taste and within a month it will be ruined.

The floors will be showing black heel marks, the carpet will be dotted with lint and dirt and the walls will be marred with fingerprints and stains of every description. What went wrong?

In this case, a poor choice of materials made the job of maintenance and cleaning almost impossible. White floors look beautiful when first installed, but they show heel marks worse than any other color. Carpets in strong, solid colors show the tiniest speck of lint at 20 paces. And the flat, no-gloss wall paint which most of us like for our homes is probably the very worst choice possible in a commercial interior.

Will Be Defaced

It looks good, but in a very short time, it becomes defaced with fingerprints which cannot be washed off.

All of this points up the need to consider problems of cleaning and maintenance when designing commercial buildings. Through proper planning, the architect can help his client avoid needless maintenance expenses. Through inadequate planning, the architect can heap upon his client maintenance costs which will have to be paid for monthly, weekly or even daily for the entire life of the building, which may be twenty, thirty or forty years.

There are a number of ways in which the design of commercial buildings might be improved to expedite the janitor’s task. These tips were offered by a janitorial service, contractors whose business is cleaning and maintaining buildings.

Workroom Necessary

In order to clean a building, the janitors first of all must have a place to work from, a base of operations. This will require a janitor’s room on every floor of a multi-story building and in each wing of large sprawling structures.

The room should be built to accommodate cleaning equipment, vacuums, floor waxers, the typing carts, etc. as well as a reasonable stock of cleaning supplies, soaps, disinfectants, wax, paper products, etc. It goes without saying that the room must have a source of water and a drain.

This obvious requisite was overlooked in a 41-story building in the Midwest, and the janitors had to get all cleaning water for the first 24 floors from the building’s basement!

A major source of maintenance expense is lighting fixtures, which in many buildings are too inaccessible for easy relamping. The result is that, at any given time, some percentage of the lights are burned out and stay that way until it becomes absolutely necessary to tackle the job of replacing the bulbs.

To cut down on cleaning costs, fixtures should be concealed or recessed. Exposed fixtures are dust catchers, and thus inefficient as sources of illumination.

When choosing wall paints for commercial interiors, it is best to stay away from the smooth, flat, no-gloss finishes found in most homes. As we mentioned earlier, it picks up fingerprints and stains and (contrary to the claims of some manufacturers) it is not washable enough for this type of service.

The best material for walls is a vinyl coated wallpaper of fabric, which is tough, hard to deface and washable. A good second choice would be paint with a semi-gloss enamel.

Floors and carpets in solid colors do not work as well as a textured design in commercial buildings because they show marks and dirt particles.