









MANSION







Mapping the Material World

What flooring do Floridians prefer? A survey of builders shows how tastes in finishes vary by region. Nationwide, granite is still rock-solid, and carpet keeps its footing; outdoors, high praise for the versatility of poured concrete

KEY	
	Avg. Square Feet (Luxury Homes)
	Price Per Square Foot
	Kitchen Faucet
	Bathroom Faucet
	Kitchen Countertops
	Flooring
	Patio Material
	Deck Surface







BY SANETTE TANAKA

NEW ENGLANDERS GO for chrome, while Texans live in the bronze age. When it comes to picking materials in home construction, it all depends on where you live. For the past 15 years, the NAHB Research Center, a subsidiary of the National Association of Home Builders, has been tracking construction materials in annual surveys of residential builders in the U.S. Below are nine geographical regions, broken down by the building materials that are most commonly used in luxury-home construction. (Percentages reflect market share in 2006 and 2011.)

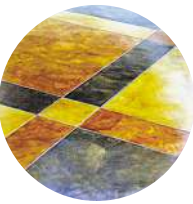
PACIFIC	
	Nickel 2011 44% 2006 25%
	Nickel 43% 23%
	Granite 53% 52%
	Carpet 46% 60%
	Poured Concrete 59% 81%
	Plastic Composite 52% 34%







The Pacific region is the leader in nickel faucets in both the bathroom and kitchen. The sheen can vary based on the finish: brushed nickel has a matte finish while polished nickel can shine like chrome. Andrew Shore, president of Sea Pointe Construction, a design/build residential remodeling firm based in Irvine, Calif., says the choice of finish comes down to home style. “In Southern California, Mediterranean architecture and Tuscan-type homes lend themselves more to a satin nickel as opposed to an oil-rubbed chrome,” he says.



WEST NORTH CENTRAL	
	Bronze 2011 34% 2006 13%
	Bronze Nickel 35% 13% 35% 24%
	Granite 50% 37%
	Carpet 50% 57%
	Poured Concrete 83% 88%
	Plastic Composite 47% 33%







As the most popular patio material in the country, poured concrete is most commonly used in the West North Central region. Poured concrete is durable and low maintenance, says Zach Leo, owner of Midwest Concrete in Lee’s Summit, Mo., a suburb of Kansas City. He adds that the majority of his clients opt for concrete because of its versatility. “You can make it look like brick or stone or even hardwood floors,” he says.



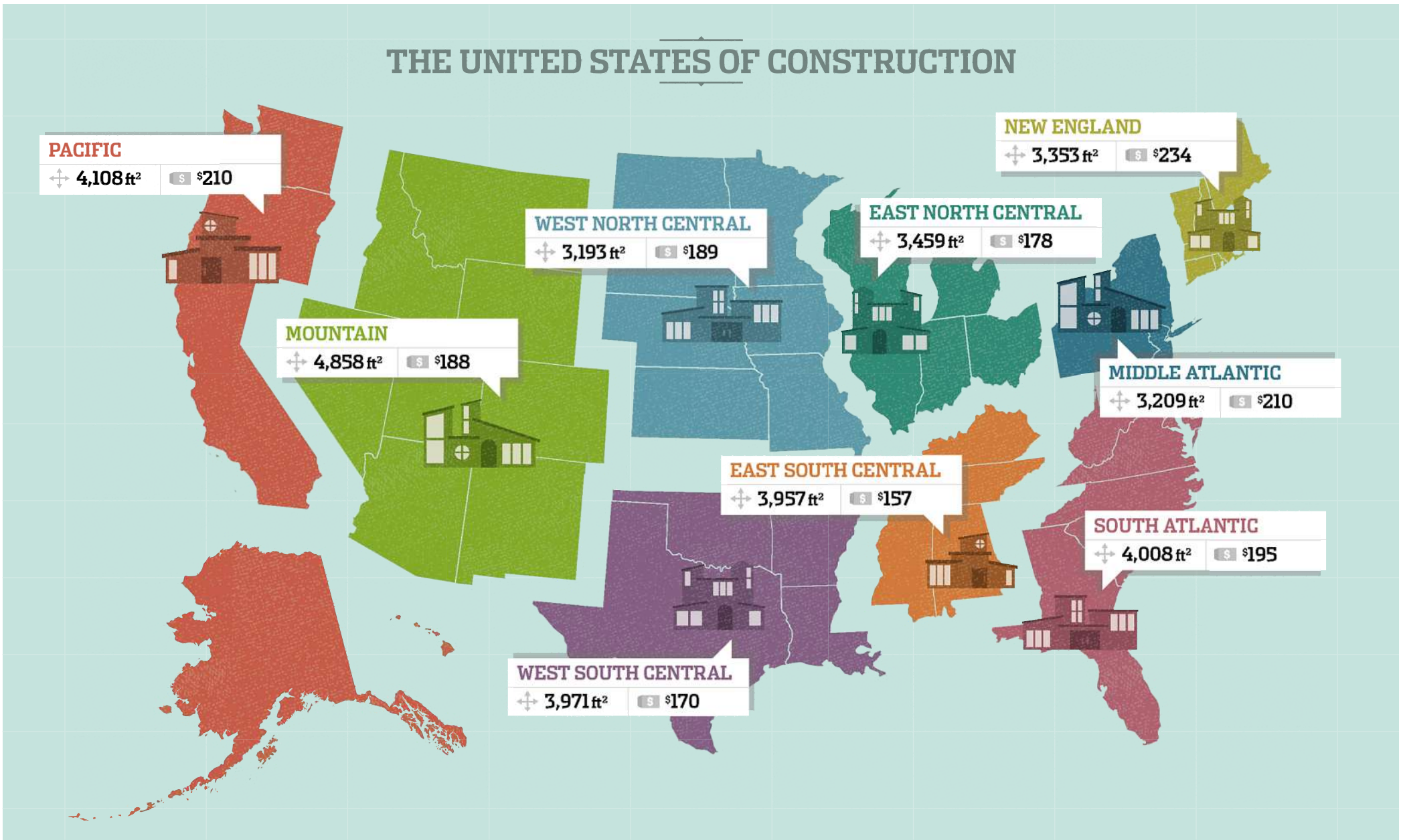
EAST NORTH CENTRAL	
	Nickel 2011 36% 2006 39%
	Nickel 37% 35%
	Granite 51% 52%
	Carpet 51% 51%
	Poured Concrete 64% 60%
	Plastic Composite 54% 31%

Even with the trend toward wood, carpet still ties with hardwood as the most popular floor covering in the U.S., with 37% of luxury homes having carpet underfoot. But East North Central is the only region that did not see a decline in carpet use last year when compared with the year 2006. This region is known for bitterly cold winters, which may make carpeted floors seem more appealing, says Steve Revnew, vice president of product innovation at Sherwin-Williams, the largest floor-covering wholesaler in North America.









NEW ENGLAND	
	Nickel 2011 34% 2006 42%
	Chrome 48% 41%
	Granite 63% 73%
	Hardwood 65% 63%
	Natural Stone 67% 61%
	Plastic Composite 38% 29%

New England leads in hardwood flooring. Architectural styles common in New England, like Cape Cod and Colonial-style homes, tend to adhere to a more traditional design with hardwood floors and wood siding, says Ed Hudson, director of the market research division at the NAHB Research Center. In the hardwood category, solid hardwood is more common than pricier engineered hardwood, in which a hardwood veneer is adhered to a core. Oak is the most popular type of hardwood, accounting for about half of the market, says Matt Zielenski, industry analyst at the Freedonia Group, a business-research company.









Source: NAHB Research Center 2011 survey of 1,483 builders and 2006 survey of 2,308 builders

MOUNTAIN	
	Bronze 2011 37% 2006 21%
	Nickel 40% 33%
	Granite 83% 73%
	Hardwood 43% 17%
	Poured Concrete 45% 81%
	Plastic Composite 60% 49%







The Mountain region often sees bronze finishes for kitchen faucets and nickel for the bathroom. This split is common in this area, says Lou Rohl, CEO and managing partner of Rohl LLC, which sells high-end, luxury faucets. Countertops, flooring and the overall aesthetics tend to drive the faucet finishes, Mr. Rohl says. A trend toward natural living materials in kitchens, like stone and exposed wood, tends to call for a more weathered finish like bronze, he says. In the bathroom, polished nickel is popular because it withstands corrosion and water spots.



WEST SOUTH CENTRAL	
	Bronze 2011 57% 2006 34%
	Bronze 63% 36%
	Granite 61% 75%
	Carpet 38% 42%
	Poured Concrete 75% 73%
	Treated Wood 32% 87%







Bronze faucets reign in the Texas area. Bronze finishes fall in line with popular architectural styles in Texas, like Italian villas and French country-style homes, says Lauri Wells, showroom manager at Texas Bath and Kitchen, a subsidiary of Pittman Plumbing Supply, in Carrollton, Texas. A coating process called physical vapor deposition, or PVD, protects bronze finishes so they stand up as well against water as chrome does.



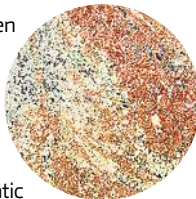
EAST SOUTH CENTRAL	
	Bronze 2011 53% 2006 25%
	Bronze 53% 27%
	Granite 59% 59%
	Hardwood 51% 41%
	Poured Concrete 82% 83%
	Treated Wood 51% 73%







Treated wood, though less common now than in 2006, is still the most popular deck surface material in the East South Central region. Treated wood can contract and expand in areas with extreme heat and cold. But in this region, temperate weather makes this wood perfectly suitable, Mr. Zielenski says. To create treated wood, lumber is infused with chemicals, including copper azole, under high pressure to increase its strength and inhibit decay. Of wood types, treated yellow pine is the most commonly used material.



SOUTH ATLANTIC	
	Bronze 2011 31% 2006 8%
	Bronze Chrome 30% 9% 30% 42%
	Granite 84% 76%
	Hardwood 43% 31%
	Concrete Pavers 37% 14%
	Treated Wood 42% 63%

Granite has been hot in luxury homes for the past two decades and is most pronounced in the South Atlantic region, where 84% of new luxury homes sport granite in the kitchen. “When looking at a certain price point, virtually every house has granite countertops,” says Mary Preston Yates, broker at Prudential Carolinas Realty. Known for its durability, granite is also extremely versatile in pattern and color, Ms. Yates says, fitting well with the varying styles that define the area, from English country-style homes in the Carolinas to Spanish-style homes in Florida.



MIDDLE ATLANTIC	
	Nickel 2011 39% 2006 32%
	Nickel 42% 28%
	Granite 82% 57%
	Hardwood 47% 33%
	Poured Concrete 38% 58%
	Plastic Composite 63% 39%

The Middle Atlantic region sees the highest use of wood-plastic composite decking, at 63%, a 24 percentage-point increase from 2006. Wood-composite is made by heating a mix of wood scraps, sawdust and plastic resins under high pressure and molding it into a desired shape. The composite tends to be more durable and moisture-resistant than traditional wood, making it ideal for seasonal changes, Mr. Zielenski says. Although composite decking is typically three to four times more expensive than treated wood, it tends to be lower maintenance, making it worth the extra cost, he adds.

