



Paving-stone patios enhance the visitor experience

By Larry Green

As guests arrive at a luxury resort or hotel, the driveway is the area they see first. It is the initial opportunity to set the stage for their stay. As the saying goes, you never have a second chance to make a first impression. If your site is in need of a re-vamped driveway, that first impression could be less than positive.

Once they are onsite, guests are directed to patios, courtyards, pass-throughs and pool decks. Sometimes guests are taken to their rooms, not through an indoor corridor, but through an exterior walkway that showcases

the pool and spa area.

Additionally, rather than trendy restaurants and lounges, the pool is the new hot spot at most upscale hotels nationwide. The fact of the matter is these areas may be getting more use than ever before.

You've decided to expand space for customers to lounge poolside, indulge in luxuriant massages in private cabanas and return in the evenings for poolside parties and functions. The potential for an increase in business has motivated you to improve the look of your outer areas. But, with increasing use, the durability fac-

tor is huge. Why consider pavers? Pavers can be used in any climate and can be walked on immediately upon compaction.

Cracking, which is common with traditional asphalt and concrete pavements, is not an issue with these interlocking concrete pavers due to the joints between the pavers.

Interlocking concrete pavers are a flexible system and allow for movement.

They are almost indestructible because the pavement system moves in unison with the earth's tendency to swell and contract over time, thus avoiding any serious damage.

Pavers are designed to withstand the heavy wear and tear of commercial use common at hotels and resorts. This includes RVs, motor homes, golf carts, buses and more. In fact, paving stones have been used in high-traffic areas such as **Union Station Bus Depot** in downtown Los Angeles, where hundreds of buses pass through each week.

There are more options for materials than ever before. How do you choose



An Embassy Suites in San Diego used paving stones for its entryway.

from among the many selections: cedar, redwood, tile, composite, flagstone, concrete or paving stones?

Economical concerns are often high on the list when making hotel remodeling decisions. If you're interested in the long term and are willing to make a long-term investment in the site, paving stones are the obvious choice.

Professionally installed interlocking paving stones last through decades of wear and tear, and although the initial price is higher than concrete or asphalt (yet comparable to stamped or patterned concrete), you will handily avoid spending money and time repairing cracks that occur frequently on these surfaces.

Pavers are safer

With guests, including children walking, eating, dancing, playing, etc., safety becomes an additional consideration when choosing a surface. The non-skid, non-slip surface of unsealed pavers translates to a lifetime of durability and also keeps your patrons in less danger of falling or tripping. Flagstone and concrete, when wet, can create a hazardous slippery surface.

In addition to aesthetic and safety considerations, maintenance is an added concern for high-traffic areas. Paved surfaces are simple to clean and easy to maintain, season after season. Paving stones are a low-maintenance choice. Cleaning crews need only use a gentle detergent and hose to spray off debris and stains. In keeping with the stone's easy-care reputation, there's no need to reapply sealants annually to paving stones. It is important

for maintenance managers to talk to their hardscape specialist about minimizing slippery areas for public consumption.

Weather is not an issue

Since upkeep is a factor all year round in high-traffic areas, keeping a paved surface safe during any weather conditions is a consideration for hotel management. Interlocking paving stones are built to withstand the dramatic



Pictured is the Ritz Carlton in Dana Point, Calif., around the Starbucks patio.

shifts in weather from coast to coast. Whether it's the severe cold and snow-packed winters of the Midwest and Northeast or the extreme heat and humidity of the South and Southwest — interlocking pavers stand strong. No matter the climate of your hotel or resort, pavers work well.

Snow removal is often a dreaded chore for Northern hotels. Luckily you can plan ahead by choosing dark-colored pavers, which absorb more heat from the sun helping melt snow more quickly. One of the benefits of interlocking pavers is their ability to endure ice-melting agents such as calcium chloride and salt. Or if you're really serious about reducing your clearing duties, you can install heating systems beneath your driveway, patio or walkway.

Whether your establishment is located in the desert or rides out summer humidity, the sun's heat

can contribute to serious wear and tear of driveways, walkways and patio decks. Pavers allow heat to dissipate through its breathable texture, unlike dark asphalt or slabs of concrete that hold the hot temperatures.

Designer driveways

Design options make a driveway, walkway, courtyard or patio surface aesthetically pleasing. Concrete not only lacks the durability of pavers, but offers less opportunity for creativity. In addition, cedar and composite decking (made from recycled plastic and reclaimed wood) or mortar-set bricks don't leave much room for creative patterns or custom design.

Utilizing pavers for hospitality projects allows for creativity, not only with colors but also in design and use of a range of stone shapes. From

circular configurations to geometric patterns — casual to formal — design specialists have helped hotel managers pick the shade and plan the look and the feel of the site.

Pavers can be custom matched to the motif of the interior or exterior design of the building. An example is the use of paving for projects for large chains such as **Embassy Suites**. For example, with Embassy Suites the installation of an entryway and porteche was concisely planned to get a feel for the theme and motif of the hotel upon arrival. ■

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