



Walk in, don't walk out

Lobbies in residential buildings are evolving from plain walk-throughs to swanky, sit-and-soak spaces

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In the material world, first impressions matter. When you walk into a building, its lobby is the first space that you notice. Sprawling, swanky lobbies have been the norm at hotels, but it's no longer their

preserve. Increasingly, even residential buildings are flaunting spacious and decorated lobbies that are more than just walk-throughs. Instead of a handful of paintings and plants being perfunctorily placed, builders are investing thought and money to carve out spaces high on design and utility. Whether it is meant to

provide residents an additional measure of comfort or to create a lasting impression on visitors, lobbies are becoming an integral part of a building's design. Says R. Vasudevan, chairman and managing director, Vascon Engineering, a Pune-based builder: "A good lobby reflects a certain image of the building to people walking

in." Adds Rashmi Ghude, head of design and architecture, Kumar Builders: "The lobby should be pleasant enough to give a welcome feeling to the society's residents and to visitors."

It's the more upmarket residential complexes—home to the so-called lifestyle houses—that are embracing this wider con-

cept. Says Vasudevan: "Building entrances are becoming like hotel lobbies. Their make-up depends on the target audience. So, much like lobbies change with how many stars a hotel has, the same is the case with housing complexes."

Golden Nest, a project by Vascon in Pune, is targeted at senior citizens, and its

3,000 sq ft lobby is an exercise in functionality. It has a replica of a banyan tree, cushy sofas, an aquarium, tea and coffee vending machines and space for playing carrom.

1. Golden Nest's 3,000 sq ft lobby is plush and has high functional value
2. The lobby at Kumar Puram plays on the Rajasthani theme.

Builders are investing thought and money to carve out spaces that are high on utility as well as on design

cards and chess. Then, there are lobbies make a design statement. The Marigold housing project in Kalyani Nagar has a 2,000 sq ft lobby, decorated with fountains and plants, both ornamental and real.

The designs vary, according to the space and the theme. Kumar Puram, a project by Kumar Builders of Pune, has a lobby decorated

with intricate fretwork and arches, to go with the Rajasthani theme on which the entire project is designed. The colour composition of the flooring—a combination of yellow, white and green Jaisalmer marble—gives it a rich feel.

A variety of materials are being used. Silver Woods, by Panchsheel Realty, has a large air-conditioned lobby, where a lot of glass has been used. Another of its projects, Water Front at Kalyani Nagar, has a lobby with a high ceiling and comfortable sitting arrangement. Says a Panchsheel official: "The main purpose of a lobby is to serve as a meeting point and a waiting area, and that shouldn't be defeated." And, of course, it creates a lasting impression. ♦

