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## Design & Planning

Floor design choices, room-by-room planning,  
colour selection, pattern layouts, and flooring trends  
for NB homes

17 Expert Answers from Floor IQ

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## What visual tricks with flooring pattern and colour direction make a long narrow NB hallway look wider?

**Light-coloured flooring installed perpendicular to the hallway's length creates the strongest visual widening effect.** Running planks across the narrow width rather than down the length tricks the eye into following the wider dimension, making the space feel less tunnel-like.

### Colour and Pattern Strategy

Choose light to medium tones in oak, maple, or ash hardwood, or select light grey, beige, or whitewashed LVP options. Dark floors absorb light and emphasize the narrow boundaries of a hallway, while lighter colours reflect available light and push the visual walls outward. In NB's older homes with limited natural light in interior hallways, this colour choice becomes even more critical.

Wide-plank flooring (5-7 inches) creates fewer visual breaks across the narrow dimension compared to traditional 3-inch strips. Fewer seam lines mean less visual clutter and a cleaner, more expansive appearance. Engineered hardwood and quality LVP both offer these wider plank options and handle NB's humidity swings better than solid hardwood in hallway installations.

### Installation Direction and Layout

The perpendicular installation (planks running wall-to-wall across the width) works best when your hallway connects to rooms where you can transition naturally. If your main living areas have flooring running lengthwise, you'll need transition strips where the hallway meets each room. Plan these transitions carefully — too many strips create a choppy appearance that negates the widening effect.

For extremely narrow hallways (less than 36 inches), consider a **herringbone or chevron pattern** in engineered hardwood or LVP. These diagonal patterns eliminate the strong directional lines entirely, creating visual movement that distracts from the narrow proportions. However, these patterns require more precise installation and generate more waste, increasing costs by 15-25%.

### NB-Specific Considerations

Maritime humidity affects how wood flooring expands across its width. In narrow hallways, perpendicular installation means seasonal expansion happens along the hallway's length rather than across its width. This typically creates less noticeable gapping during NB's dry winter months. Engineered hardwood or LVP eliminates these seasonal movement concerns entirely while achieving the same visual effect.

Many NB homes built before 1970 have board subfloors running perpendicular to floor joists. If your hallway joists run lengthwise, installing finish flooring perpendicular means both subfloor and finish floor run the same direction — this requires adding a plywood overlay for proper support and to prevent squeaking.

### **Professional Installation Recommendations**

Hallway flooring installation involves multiple room transitions, precise measurements for consistent reveal gaps, and often requires scribing around door casings and built-in features. The visual tricks only work if the installation is perfectly executed — uneven gaps or poorly fitted transitions immediately draw attention to flaws rather than the intended widening effect.

Need help finding a professional flooring installer? New Brunswick Flooring can match you with experienced contractors who understand both the technical requirements and visual design principles for narrow hallway installations.

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Q2

## **What flooring design considerations matter for a NB home office or studio space with rolling desk chairs?**

**Rolling desk chairs create unique flooring challenges that require balancing durability, mobility, and comfort.** The constant rolling motion, concentrated weight loads, and potential for scuff marks mean your flooring choice directly impacts both the room's functionality and your chair's performance.

**Chair casters and flooring compatibility** is the most critical factor. Hard wheels designed for carpet will scratch and dent hardwood, laminate, and LVP surfaces within weeks of regular use. Soft rubber or polyurethane wheels designed for hard surfaces roll smoothly without damage, but they struggle on carpet and create resistance that makes movement tiring. The flooring you choose determines which caster type you'll need, and switching casters on office chairs costs \$40-80 for a quality set.

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) with rigid SPC core** performs exceptionally well under rolling chairs in NB home offices. Quality commercial-grade LVP like COREtec Pro Plus or Shaw Floorte Pro resists indentations, scratches, and scuff marks while providing smooth rolling action with soft casters. At \$5-8 per square foot installed, it's cost-effective for a typical 120-150 square foot office space (\$600-1,200 total). LVP also handles NB's humidity swings without expansion gaps showing around furniture legs, and it's completely waterproof if you keep drinks at your desk.

**Engineered hardwood** offers the warmth and professional appearance many prefer for home offices, but it requires more careful selection and regular maintenance. White oak or maple engineered flooring with a thick wear layer (4mm+) can handle rolling chairs with proper soft wheels, though you'll see gradual wear patterns in high-traffic rolling areas over 5-10 years. The bigger concern in NB offices is seasonal gapping during winter heating season — visible gaps between planks can catch chair wheels and create an uneven rolling surface. Maintaining 35-45% relative humidity with a humidifier prevents this issue.

**Laminate flooring** is the budget-friendly option at \$4-7 per square foot installed, but choose carefully. AC4 or AC5-rated commercial laminate handles rolling traffic better than residential grades, though the surface will show scuff marks and micro-scratches over time that cannot be repaired. High-quality laminate with textured surfaces hides these marks better than glossy finishes. The click-lock installation makes it easy to replace individual damaged planks if needed.

**Avoid carpet in rolling chair areas** unless you're committed to hard plastic chair mats. Carpet creates rolling resistance that strains your back and legs during long work sessions, and chair wheels gradually create permanent track marks and crush pile fibers. Even commercial-grade carpet shows wear patterns within 2-3 years of regular chair use.

**Subfloor considerations** matter more in office spaces because rolling chairs amplify any imperfections. Small bumps or dips that you'd never notice walking become annoying obstacles when rolling. If your NB home has original board subfloors (common in pre-1970s houses), consider a plywood overlay to create the smooth, flat surface that rolling chairs need.

**Radiant floor heating** works well under home offices, especially during NB's long heating season, but avoid it under hardwood if you use a rolling chair frequently. The combination of heat cycling and concentrated rolling loads can accelerate seasonal movement and create more pronounced gaps.

**When to hire a professional:** For office spaces over 200 square feet or rooms requiring subfloor leveling, professional installation ensures the smooth, flat surface that rolling chairs demand. DIY installation works fine for smaller spaces with good existing subfloors, particularly with click-lock LVP or laminate.

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Q3

## What flooring options work best for a NB covered porch or veranda that is exposed to temperature swings but not rain?

**For a covered NB porch or veranda, porcelain tile, composite decking, or marine-grade vinyl plank are your best options** — these materials handle New Brunswick's extreme temperature swings (from -25°C to +30°C) without cracking, warping, or deteriorating from freeze-thaw cycles.

**Porcelain tile** is the gold standard for covered outdoor spaces in New Brunswick. Quality porcelain rated for freeze-thaw resistance costs \$4-\$8/sq ft and handles our Maritime temperature extremes without cracking. The dense, non-porous surface won't absorb moisture during spring thaws or summer humidity spikes. Professional installation over a properly sloped substrate runs \$8-\$15/sq ft total, but the result lasts decades with minimal maintenance. Choose textured or matte finishes for slip resistance when wet.

**Composite decking planks** offer the warmth and appearance of wood without the maintenance headaches. Premium brands like Trex or TimberTech cost \$6-\$12/sq ft installed and expand/contract predictably with temperature changes. Unlike natural wood, composite won't split, warp, or require annual staining in NB's harsh seasonal cycles. The synthetic materials resist moisture absorption during our wet springs and humid summers while maintaining dimensional stability through winter freeze-thaw.

**Marine-grade luxury vinyl plank** designed for outdoor use provides the most budget-friendly option at \$4-\$8/sq ft installed. These specialized LVP products use enhanced UV stabilizers and cold-weather plasticizers that remain flexible down to -40°C. Standard indoor LVP becomes brittle and cracks in NB winters, but marine-grade versions handle our temperature swings while offering realistic wood or stone visuals.

**Avoid these materials** on NB covered porches: Standard laminate flooring (moisture absorption causes swelling), solid hardwood (extreme movement with humidity changes), ceramic tile (less freeze-thaw resistant than porcelain), and standard indoor vinyl (becomes brittle and cracks in cold weather). Natural stone like slate can work but requires professional sealing and may develop hairline cracks over time from thermal movement.

**Installation timing matters** in New Brunswick — schedule porch flooring projects for late summer through early fall when temperature and humidity are most stable. This allows materials to acclimate to moderate conditions before facing their first Maritime winter. Proper substrate preparation with adequate drainage and slope prevents water pooling that could freeze and damage any flooring material.

**When to hire a professional:** Porcelain tile installation requires expertise in outdoor substrate preparation, proper sloping for drainage, and freeze-resistant installation methods. Composite decking and marine-grade LVP are more DIY-friendly but still benefit from professional assessment of the existing porch structure and moisture management.

Need help finding a flooring professional experienced with outdoor installations? New Brunswick Flooring can match you with contractors familiar with Maritime climate challenges for your covered porch project.

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## What flooring colour trends are popular in New Brunswick homes in 2026?

The dominant flooring colour trend in New Brunswick homes heading into 2026 is cool-toned and natural — think light to medium tones with grey, greige, and soft white-oak undertones replacing the warm orange and red tones that dominated for decades. This shift reflects both national design trends and the practical realities of NB homes, where natural light is often limited during the long winter months.

**Light and natural tones** are leading the market. White oak and light maple finishes — whether in genuine hardwood, engineered hardwood, or luxury vinyl plank — dominate new installations across Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. These lighter floors brighten rooms that receive limited daylight from October through March, which is a genuine practical advantage in NB rather than just an aesthetic preference. Expect to see matte and low-sheen finishes rather than the high-gloss looks of previous years. A natural white oak engineered hardwood in a matte finish runs \$6 to \$10 per square foot for materials in NB.

**Greige (grey-beige blends)** continues to be extremely popular, especially in LVP and laminate. This neutral tone works with virtually any wall colour and furniture style, making it a safe choice for homeowners who want a modern look without committing to a fully grey or fully warm palette. Quality greige LVP from brands like COREtec or Shaw Floorte runs \$5 to \$8 per square foot in NB.

**Warm naturals are making a comeback** alongside the cool tones, but in a refined way — warm honey and caramel tones rather than the orange-red that characterized 1990s and 2000s oak floors. This is particularly popular in heritage-style NB homes in Fredericton's older neighbourhoods and Saint John's uptown, where a warm natural hardwood complements traditional millwork and trim.

**Dark floors are declining** but not gone. Espresso and dark walnut stains still appeal to some homeowners, particularly in larger, well-lit spaces. However, dark floors show every speck of dust, pet hair, and scratch — a real consideration in NB homes where winter salt, sand, and snow tracked indoors create constant cleaning challenges from November through April. If you love dark floors, consider a medium-dark tone like a classic walnut rather than near-black espresso.

**Wide planks continue to dominate** across all colours. Seven-inch and nine-inch-wide planks create a more contemporary, open feel compared to the narrow 2-1/4-inch or 3-1/4-inch strips of traditional hardwood. Wide-plank engineered hardwood handles NB's humidity swings better than wide-plank solid hardwood, where the wider boards amplify seasonal expansion and contraction.

When choosing a flooring colour for your NB home, bring samples home and view them in your actual lighting at different times of day. A colour that looks perfect under showroom lighting may read completely differently in a

north-facing NB living room on a grey January afternoon. Most NB flooring retailers will lend samples for this purpose — take advantage of it before committing to hundreds of square feet of material.

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**Q5**

## Should I use the same flooring throughout my entire NB home?

**Using the same flooring throughout your entire home creates a beautiful, seamless look that makes spaces feel larger and more cohesive — but in New Brunswick, practical considerations around moisture, room function, and your home's specific conditions should guide where you use the same material and where you switch.** The best approach for most NB homes is a consistent primary floor with strategic material changes in wet areas and basements.

A single flooring material flowing through the main living areas — living room, dining room, hallways, and bedrooms — eliminates transition strips, creates visual continuity, and makes open-concept layouts feel unified. This works beautifully with engineered hardwood, LVP, or quality laminate. For a typical NB home with 800 to 1,200 square feet of main-level living space, one consistent floor in the \$6 to \$12 per square foot range (fully installed) gives you a polished, intentional look.

**However, NB's moisture conditions make a single material throughout the entire home impractical in most cases.** Bathrooms and laundry rooms need waterproof flooring — porcelain tile or LVP, not hardwood or standard laminate. Basements in NB sit below the water table in many communities, and spring snowmelt pushes moisture through concrete slabs from April through June, making moisture-resistant flooring essential below grade. Entryways take a beating from winter salt, slush, and gravel tracked in from November through April — tile or LVP handles this abuse better than hardwood.

The practical strategy that works best in most NB homes involves choosing a **primary floor for the main living areas** (engineered hardwood or LVP are the strongest choices for NB's humidity cycles), then selecting **complementary materials for wet areas and high-abuse zones** that coordinate in colour and tone. For example, a light oak engineered hardwood through the main floor with a matching-tone porcelain tile in bathrooms and a coordinating LVP in the basement creates a cohesive look without forcing the wrong material into the wrong environment.

**If you want truly consistent flooring everywhere**, waterproof LVP is the only material that can realistically go in every room of an NB home — main floor, bathrooms, kitchen, basement, and entryway. Quality SPC-core LVP is 100% waterproof, dimensionally stable through NB's humidity swings, and available in realistic wood-look finishes that are difficult to distinguish from real hardwood. At \$5 to \$12 per square foot fully installed, it is also the most cost-effective single-material solution.

**A few practical tips for NB homes:** use transition strips where flooring heights change between materials, and plan your transitions at doorways or natural break points rather than in the middle of visible sightlines. If you are renovating room by room over time rather than all at once, choose your primary flooring first and keep extra material on hand — flooring colours and styles get discontinued, and matching later can be impossible. Store spare material in a climate-controlled area of your home, not in an unheated garage where NB temperature extremes will damage it.

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**Q6**

**What flooring pattern works best for small NB rooms to make them feel bigger?**

**Running your flooring planks lengthwise — parallel to the longest wall — is the single most effective trick for making a small NB room feel larger, and it works with hardwood, engineered hardwood, laminate, and LVP alike.** This simple layout choice draws the eye along the length of the room, creating a visual sense of depth and openness that cross-laid planks do not achieve.

Beyond plank direction, several other pattern and material choices help small rooms feel more spacious. **Wider planks** (7-inch or 9-inch rather than 3-1/4-inch) reduce the number of seam lines visible in the room, creating a less busy visual field that reads as more open. Wider engineered hardwood or LVP planks are widely available in NB at \$4 to \$9 per square foot for materials. **Longer planks** have the same effect — fewer end joints mean a cleaner, more expansive look. Look for products with random-length planks averaging 48 inches or longer.

**Light-coloured flooring** makes small rooms feel significantly larger than dark floors. A light natural oak, pale ash, or blonde maple finish reflects more of the limited natural light that many NB homes receive, especially during the winter months when daylight hours are short and skies are frequently overcast. This is particularly important in small bedrooms and hallways in older NB homes where windows tend to be modest in size. A light-toned engineered hardwood or LVP in a matte finish is the strongest combination for opening up a tight space.

**Diagonal installation** at a 45-degree angle is another technique that can make a small room feel larger by drawing the eye to the corners, which are the longest sightlines in any rectangular room. The trade-off is that diagonal installation generates more waste — plan for 15% extra material rather than the standard 10% — and it takes longer to install, adding to labour costs. At NB installation rates of \$2 to \$6 per square foot for hard surfaces, expect a modest premium for diagonal work.

**For tile in small NB bathrooms,** larger format tiles (12x24 inch or larger) with thin grout lines create fewer visual breaks, making the floor feel more expansive. Light-coloured porcelain in a large format can transform a cramped 40-square-foot powder room. Conversely, small mosaic tiles create a busy pattern that can make a tiny bathroom feel even smaller.

**Patterns to avoid in small rooms:** herringbone and chevron patterns are beautiful but visually busy — they work best in rooms with enough square footage to let the pattern breathe (150 square feet minimum). Heavily textured or hand-scraped finishes also add visual weight that can make small rooms feel cluttered.

**One NB-specific consideration:** if you are choosing a floating floor (laminate or LVP) for a small room, the expansion gaps around the perimeter are proportionally more noticeable in a tight space. Use quarter-round moulding or baseboards that fully cover the 8 to 12 millimetre expansion gap so the room looks finished and polished. In NB's humidity cycles, those expansion gaps are doing critical work — do not reduce them to save appearance, but do cover them properly.

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## How do I choose the right flooring colour for my NB home's lighting?

The key to choosing the right flooring colour for your home's lighting is to test actual samples in your specific rooms at different times of day — because the same floor can look completely different under NB's grey winter daylight, bright summer sun, and warm artificial lighting. Never choose a flooring colour based solely on what you see in a showroom under fluorescent lights.

**Start by understanding your natural light.** North-facing rooms in NB receive cool, indirect light year-round and tend to make warm-toned floors (honey oak, golden maple) look washed out while cool-toned floors (grey, greige) can feel cold and unwelcoming. A medium-toned natural floor with balanced undertones works best in north-facing NB rooms. South-facing rooms receive the most direct sunlight and can handle either warm or cool tones beautifully — darker floors work well here because the strong light prevents them from making the room feel cave-like. East-facing rooms get warm morning light and cooler afternoon light, while west-facing rooms are the opposite.

NB's seasonal light variation makes this decision more complex than in sunnier provinces. From November through February, many NB homes receive limited natural light — short days, overcast skies, and snow-reflected glare create lighting conditions that are dramatically different from the long, bright days of June and July. **Light-coloured floors** (white oak, light ash, pale grey) help compensate for NB's dark winters by reflecting whatever light is available and keeping rooms feeling open. Dark floors absorb light, which can make already dim winter rooms feel smaller and gloomier.

**Consider your artificial lighting carefully.** Most NB homes rely heavily on artificial light for five to six months of the year. Warm LED bulbs (2700K-3000K colour temperature) add yellow tones to flooring — a grey floor can look slightly warm, and an already warm floor can look orange. Cool or daylight-balanced LEDs (4000K-5000K) are more neutral but can make warm floors look dull. The best approach is to test your floor samples under the actual bulbs you use or plan to install.

**Practical testing method:** borrow or purchase two to three flooring samples from your NB retailer. Place them on the floor of the actual room — not held up to the wall, not on a table, but flat on the floor where you will see them daily. Leave them for at least 48 hours and check them in morning light, afternoon light, overcast conditions, and under your evening artificial lighting. Take photos at each time to compare. This simple step prevents the most common colour mistake in flooring selection.

**Undertone matching matters more than the main colour.** Every flooring colour has an undertone — warm (yellow, orange, red), cool (blue, grey, green), or neutral. Match your floor's undertone to your trim, cabinetry, and wall colours. If your NB home has the classic warm-toned oak trim and doors found in many 1980s and 1990s builds, a floor with warm undertones will coordinate naturally, while a strongly cool-toned grey floor may clash. If

you are planning to paint trim and walls as part of your renovation, you have more flexibility.

**A final NB tip:** if your home has limited natural light and you love the look of darker floors, consider a medium tone rather than going very dark. A classic walnut or medium brown gives depth and warmth without absorbing the light you cannot afford to lose during NB's long winter.

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Q8

## Is herringbone hardwood flooring worth the extra cost in NB?

**Herringbone hardwood flooring is stunning and adds genuine visual impact and resale value to an NB home — but it costs 30 to 50 percent more than a standard straight-lay installation, so it is best reserved for high-visibility rooms where you will appreciate the pattern daily.** For most NB homeowners, a herringbone feature in the main living area or entryway paired with standard plank installation elsewhere offers the best balance of impact and budget.

**The extra cost comes from three sources.** First, herringbone requires shorter, precisely dimensioned planks that are often sold as purpose-made herringbone or parquet stock — these specialty products typically cost \$1 to \$3 more per square foot than standard-length planks in the same species and grade. Second, material waste is significantly higher: plan for 15 to 20 percent waste compared to 10 percent for a standard installation, because every row requires precise angle cuts at the walls. Third, and most importantly, labour is substantially more expensive. Herringbone installation takes an experienced installer roughly twice as long as straight plank work due to the precision layout, angle cutting, and careful alignment required. At NB labour rates of \$3 to \$6 per square foot for standard hardwood installation, expect herringbone labour to run \$5 to \$10 per square foot.

For a 300-square-foot NB living room, the numbers look like this: a standard straight-lay engineered white oak installation might run \$2,400 to \$4,200 fully installed, while the same room in herringbone could cost \$3,600 to \$6,000 — a premium of roughly \$1,200 to \$1,800. For a smaller entryway or foyer of 60 to 80 square feet, the premium is more manageable at \$300 to \$600, and the visual impact per dollar is arguably higher because herringbone makes a dramatic first impression.

**NB's climate adds one important consideration.** Herringbone patterns orient wood planks in alternating directions, which means seasonal expansion and contraction pulls in multiple directions simultaneously. In NB's 30 to 50 percent annual humidity swing, this multi-directional movement can stress the pattern more than standard parallel-plank installation. **Engineered hardwood is strongly recommended over solid hardwood for herringbone in NB** — its cross-ply construction resists dimensional movement far better than solid wood, and the pattern will stay tight through winter drying and summer expansion cycles. Most professional installers in NB will recommend glue-down installation for herringbone on a properly prepared subfloor, which further stabilizes the pattern.

**Is it worth it?** If you are renovating a home you plan to live in for many years and you genuinely love the look, herringbone in a main living area or formal entryway adds character that you will enjoy daily and that sets your home apart at resale. It works best in rooms with enough open floor area — at least 150 square feet — to let the pattern develop visually. In small rooms, the busy pattern can feel overwhelming rather than elegant.

**Hire a professional for herringbone installation without question.** This is not a DIY project. The precision layout, glue-down technique, and angle cutting require experience and specialized tools. A poorly executed herringbone pattern is worse than no pattern at all — misaligned rows and inconsistent spacing are immediately visible and cannot be fixed without tearing up the floor.

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## What flooring looks best in an open-concept NB home with kitchen and living room combined?

**The best flooring for an open-concept NB home with a combined kitchen and living room is a single continuous material that handles both cooking spills and living-area comfort — engineered hardwood or quality LVP are the top two choices, with each offering distinct advantages for New Brunswick's conditions.** Running one floor through the entire open space eliminates awkward transitions and creates the unified, expansive feel that open-concept layouts are designed for.

**Engineered hardwood** is the premium choice and the most popular option for open-concept main floors in NB. Its cross-ply construction handles NB's seasonal humidity swings — from 20 to 30 percent relative humidity in winter up to 60 percent or higher in summer — far better than solid hardwood, especially in the wide planks (7 to 9 inches) that look best in large, open spaces. A quality engineered white oak or maple in a matte or satin finish runs \$6 to \$14 per square foot fully installed in NB. For the kitchen portion, choose a factory-finished product with a durable aluminum oxide or UV-cured urethane topcoat that resists water spots and food spills better than a site-finished floor.

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP)** with an SPC or WPC core is the practical powerhouse for open-concept spaces. It is 100% waterproof — a genuine advantage in the kitchen zone where spills, splashes, and dishwasher leaks are inevitable. Quality LVP is also dimensionally stable through NB's humidity extremes, comfortable underfoot, and available in wood-look finishes that are remarkably realistic. At \$5 to \$12 per square foot fully installed, it often costs less than engineered hardwood while delivering superior moisture resistance. Brands like COREtec, Shaw Floorte, and Mannington Adura offer NB-appropriate options.

**What to avoid in an open-concept NB space.** Solid hardwood is risky in wide-open layouts because there is no wall break to absorb expansion — a 25-foot continuous run of solid hardwood across an NB living room and kitchen will move significantly between seasons, and expansion gaps at that scale are difficult to manage. Standard laminate with an HDF core is vulnerable to kitchen moisture and will swell at the edges if water penetrates the joints. Tile, while excellent in kitchens, creates a cold and hard surface across the living room that is uncomfortable during NB's long heating season and requires radiant heat to feel warm underfoot.

**Design considerations for large open spaces.** Choose wider planks — they suit the scale of an open-concept room and reduce the visual busyness of too many seam lines. Lay planks parallel to the longest sightline or toward the main window wall to maximize the sense of space. Use a consistent colour throughout — light to medium natural tones are the most versatile and brighten NB homes during dark winter months. Place area rugs in the living room seating area for warmth and comfort without committing to a flooring transition.

**For a typical NB open-concept main floor of 600 to 1,000 square feet,** budget \$3,600 to \$14,000 fully installed depending on material choice and quality. Get at least three quotes from local installers experienced with large open-concept layouts — expansion planning, transition placement at exterior doors, and subfloor preparation over this scale require professional expertise. New Brunswick Flooring can help match you with local flooring professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network for free estimates on your open-concept project.

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## How do I plan flooring for a full NB home renovation room by room?

**Planning flooring for a full NB home renovation starts with a whole-house strategy before you choose a single product — decide on your primary flooring material, coordinate colours across all rooms, and match materials to each room's moisture and traffic conditions.** Renovating room by room without a unified plan leads to mismatched floors, awkward transitions, and missed opportunities to save money on bulk material purchases.

### Start With a Whole-House Material Plan

Divide your home into zones based on moisture exposure and function. **Zone 1 — main living areas** (living room, dining room, hallways, bedrooms): this is where your primary flooring goes, and it should be a single, consistent material for visual continuity. Engineered hardwood (\$6-\$14/sq ft installed) or quality LVP (\$5-\$12/sq ft installed) are the strongest choices for NB's humidity cycles. **Zone 2 — wet areas** (bathrooms, laundry, kitchen if separate from living areas): waterproof materials only — porcelain tile (\$9-\$20/sq ft installed) or waterproof LVP. **Zone 3 — basement:** moisture-resistant flooring over a vapour barrier or drainage membrane — LVP, carpet tiles with moisture-resistant backing, or tile. Never install solid hardwood below grade in NB. **Zone 4 — entryways:** the abuse zone where NB winter salt, gravel, sand, and slush get tracked in from November through April. Tile or LVP handles this punishment best.

Once your zones are defined, choose colours and tones that coordinate across the whole house. You do not need identical material everywhere, but the tones should flow — a light oak engineered hardwood on the main floor should pair with a coordinating light-toned tile in the bathroom and a similar-shade LVP in the basement.

**Sequence your renovation strategically.** In NB, the best time for flooring installation is late summer through early fall (August to October) when humidity is moderate and stable, and materials acclimate most predictably. If you are renovating room by room over several months, start with the main living areas so your primary floor is established first, then work outward to bedrooms, wet areas, and finally the basement. This approach lets you see your primary floor in place before finalizing complementary materials.

**Budget the full scope before starting.** A complete flooring renovation for a typical 1,500-square-foot NB home — including material, installation, old flooring removal (\$1-\$4/sq ft), subfloor preparation (\$1-\$5/sq ft where needed), baseboards, and transitions — typically runs \$12,000 to \$30,000 depending on material choices. Breaking this into phases is fine, but knowing the total helps you allocate funds and avoid spending your entire budget on premium hardwood for the living room only to discover you cannot afford decent material for the bedrooms.

**Critical NB planning details:** order 10 to 15 percent extra material for waste and keep leftover stock for future repairs — store it in a climate-controlled space, not a garage or shed where NB temperature extremes will damage

it. Coordinate with other trades before flooring goes down: plumbing, electrical, and painting should be complete first. Plan for door trimming — new flooring raises the floor height by 8 to 15 millimetres, affecting every door in the house. And test your subfloor moisture levels in every room, especially on concrete slabs and in rooms over crawl spaces, before any material is ordered.

Get three or more quotes from local flooring professionals who can assess your full home and provide a phased or complete scope. This ensures consistent pricing and installation quality across all rooms rather than dealing with different installers who may have different standards.

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**Q11**

## **What colour hardwood floor is best for a dark NB home with small windows?**

**A light-coloured hardwood floor is the single most effective flooring choice for brightening a dark NB home with small windows — light natural oak, pale ash, or a soft whitewashed finish will reflect the limited daylight and make rooms feel significantly more open and airy.** This is especially impactful in New Brunswick, where short winter days and frequent overcast skies from November through March mean many homes rely on every bit of available light.

The physics are straightforward: light floors reflect 40 to 50 percent more ambient light than dark floors. In a room with small windows, that reflected light bounces off the floor surface and illuminates walls and ceilings, creating a secondary light source that dark floors simply absorb. In an NB home where grey skies and early sunsets limit natural light for nearly half the year, this reflective effect makes a meaningful difference in how a room feels day to day.

**The best specific colour choices for dark NB homes** include **natural white oak** — the most popular hardwood colour in NB right now, with a warm, neutral tone that flatters both traditional and modern interiors. **Light maple or birch** with a clear or natural finish offers a clean, bright look with subtle grain. **Whitewashed or limed oak** provides a coastal, airy feel that maximizes light reflection — particularly effective in NB homes near the Bay of Fundy or Gulf coast. **Light greige tones** (grey-beige blends) offer a contemporary neutral that brightens without feeling cold.

**Finishes matter as much as colour.** A matte or satin finish is ideal for light-coloured floors in dark rooms. High-gloss finishes reflect light in concentrated spots, creating glare near windows and leaving the rest of the room feeling darker by contrast. Matte finishes scatter light evenly across the floor surface, producing a softer, more uniform brightness throughout the room. Matte finishes also show fewer scratches and footprints — a practical bonus.

**What about medium tones?** A medium-toned natural walnut or warm brown can work in dark rooms if the walls and trim are kept light (white or off-white), creating a contrast that draws the eye to the bright walls. But in NB's darkest winter months, medium floors will feel noticeably darker than light floors, especially on overcast afternoons.

**Colours to avoid in dark NB homes:** espresso, dark walnut, and near-black stains absorb light and make small, dark rooms feel smaller and more enclosed. They also show every particle of dust, pet hair, and winter salt tracked in from outside — a constant cleaning challenge in NB from November through April.

**Engineered hardwood is recommended over solid hardwood** for NB homes regardless of colour choice, but it is especially practical in darker homes where wide planks (7 to 9 inches) are desirable for their room-expanding effect. Wide solid hardwood planks amplify seasonal movement in NB's humidity swings, while engineered construction keeps wide planks dimensionally stable. A light natural white oak engineered hardwood in 7-inch wide planks with a matte finish runs \$6 to \$10 per square foot for materials in NB, with installation adding \$2 to \$5 per square foot.

Pair your light floor with light-coloured walls, add mirrors to reflect window light, and consider upgrading to warm-white LED fixtures (3000K) to complement the natural tones of a light hardwood floor during NB's long evening hours.

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Q12

## Should I match my flooring to my kitchen cabinets in my NB home?

**You don't need to match your flooring to your cabinets exactly — in fact, a deliberate contrast often looks better and gives you more flexibility when updating your kitchen down the road.** The goal is coordination, not a perfect colour match. When flooring and cabinetry are too close in tone without being identical, the slight mismatch reads as an accident rather than a design choice.

The most reliable approach is to create clear contrast between your floor and cabinet colours. If you have light cabinets (white, cream, light grey, natural maple), a medium to dark floor in warm oak, walnut-toned engineered hardwood, or a rich wood-look LVP creates a grounded, classic look. If your cabinets are dark (espresso, navy, deep charcoal), a lighter floor — natural white oak, pale ash-toned laminate, or light grey LVP — keeps the kitchen from feeling like a cave, especially during NB's long winter months when natural light is limited.

**Undertones matter more than shade.** This is where many NB homeowners go wrong. A cool grey floor under warm honey-toned oak cabinets creates visual tension that makes the whole room feel disjointed. Pull a cabinet door off and bring it to the flooring showroom so you can compare undertones side by side under both natural and artificial light. Warm pairs with warm (golden oak floor with cream cabinets), cool pairs with cool (grey-toned LVP with white or blue-grey cabinets), and neutral undertones are the safest bet if you're unsure.

**For NB kitchens specifically, material choice matters as much as colour.** Kitchens see water splashes, dropped food, heavy foot traffic, and temperature swings from cooking. In New Brunswick's Maritime climate, where indoor humidity can shift dramatically between winter heating season and summer, a dimensionally stable flooring material is essential in the kitchen. Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) with an SPC core (\$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed) is the most practical kitchen flooring for NB homes — it's 100% waterproof, handles humidity swings without expanding or contracting, and comes in realistic wood-look finishes that coordinate beautifully with any cabinet style. Porcelain tile (\$9-\$20/sq ft fully installed) is another excellent kitchen choice, though it's cold underfoot during NB winters without radiant heat.

Engineered hardwood works well in NB kitchens if you're committed to wiping up spills promptly, but solid hardwood in a kitchen is a riskier choice given the water exposure and NB's seasonal humidity cycles.

**Practical tips for getting the coordination right:** Collect samples of your top 2-3 flooring choices and live with them in your kitchen for a few days, viewing them at different times of day and under your actual kitchen lighting. What looks perfect under showroom fluorescents can look completely different under warm kitchen pendant lights. Also consider your countertops and backsplash — the floor, cabinets, and counters form a triangle of colour that should feel balanced without any one element clashing.

If you're planning a full kitchen renovation and choosing both cabinets and flooring at the same time, pick the flooring first. Flooring runs through the entire main level in most open-concept NB homes, so it needs to work everywhere — the cabinets only need to work in the kitchen.

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## What is the best flooring for a New Brunswick mudroom or back entry?

**The best flooring for an NB mudroom is porcelain tile or luxury vinyl plank (LVP) with an SPC core — both handle the extreme moisture, salt, sand, and temperature swings that NB entryways endure through four brutal seasons.** Your mudroom takes more punishment per square foot than any other room in your home, so durability and moisture resistance are non-negotiable.

**Porcelain tile is the gold standard for NB mudrooms.** It's completely waterproof, scratch-resistant, and stands up to road salt, sand, gravel, and snowmelt puddles without fading, staining, or degrading. Choose a textured or matte-finish tile with a slip rating of at least R10 — wet mudroom floors are a safety hazard, and polished tile becomes dangerously slippery when wet. Large-format tiles (12x24 or larger) minimize grout lines, which makes cleaning easier. Budget \$9-\$20/sq ft fully installed for porcelain tile in NB, including proper substrate preparation. For a typical 40-60 sq ft mudroom, that's roughly \$400-\$1,200 total.

The downside of tile in an NB mudroom is that it's cold underfoot, especially during the long heating season from October through April. If your budget allows, adding electric radiant heat mats under the tile (\$8-\$15/sq ft installed by a licensed electrician) transforms the experience — warm floors dry wet boots faster and make the entryway comfortable rather than a cold shock in January.

**LVP with a rigid SPC core is the practical runner-up.** It's 100% waterproof, warmer underfoot than tile, easier to install (click-lock floating system), and costs less — typically \$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed in NB. Quality SPC-core LVP handles the temperature fluctuations near exterior doors better than WPC-core products. Choose a product with a thick wear layer (20 mil or higher) to resist scratches from grit tracked in on boots. LVP is also more forgiving on uneven subfloors common in NB's older homes.

**Materials to avoid in NB mudrooms:** Solid hardwood will cup and warp from constant moisture exposure. Standard laminate with an HDF core swells and delaminates when exposed to standing water — one pair of snow-covered boots left to dry can ruin the floor. Carpet traps dirt, salt, and moisture and becomes a mould risk in NB's humid conditions. Sheet vinyl works but looks dated and is harder to repair if damaged.

**NB-specific mudroom considerations are critical.** From November through March, NB homeowners track in road salt (calcium chloride and sodium chloride), sand, and gravel that act as abrasives on any floor surface. Snowmelt creates standing water that can sit on the floor for hours. Spring brings mud and water from snowmelt runoff. Your mudroom floor needs to handle all of this without complaint.

Install a quality boot tray or drainage mat over your flooring to contain the worst of the moisture, and use a commercial-grade entry mat to catch grit before it reaches the floor surface. These accessories extend the life of

any mudroom floor significantly.

**For installation, a professional is recommended for tile work** — proper substrate preparation and waterproofing are essential. LVP in a small mudroom is a reasonable DIY project for a handy homeowner, as the click-lock floating system requires no adhesive or specialized tools.

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**Q14**

## How do I choose flooring that will still look good in 10 years in NB?

**Choose a flooring material that suits NB's Maritime climate, pick a neutral colour in a classic pattern, and invest in proper installation and humidity control — these three decisions determine whether your floor still looks beautiful in a decade or becomes something you regret.** Trends come and go, but good bones last.

**Material longevity in NB conditions is the first priority.** New Brunswick's annual humidity swing of 30-50% between winter and summer is the single biggest factor that ages flooring prematurely. Engineered hardwood handles this swing far better than solid hardwood and can look stunning for 20+ years with basic humidity management (humidifier in winter, dehumidifier or AC in summer, maintaining 35-55% indoor RH). Quality engineered hardwood runs \$6-\$14/sq ft fully installed in NB. Solid hardwood can last even longer — 50 to 100 years with refinishing — but only if you commit to humidity control. Without it, you'll see gapping every winter and potential cupping every summer, and the floor will look worn and damaged well before the 10-year mark.

Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) with an SPC core is the most dimensionally stable option for NB homes, with no sensitivity to humidity swings at all. Quality LVP runs \$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed and typically carries a 20-30 year residential warranty. The caveat is that LVP cannot be refinished — once the wear layer is worn through, the floor needs

replacement. Choose a product with a 20 mil or thicker wear layer for the best longevity in high-traffic areas.

**Colour and style choices that stand the test of time** are more important than most homeowners realize. The grey-washed and whitewashed flooring trend that peaked a few years ago is already looking dated in many homes. The safest long-term colour choices are natural medium-toned wood looks — warm oak, natural walnut, classic maple. These have been popular for decades because they complement virtually any wall colour, furniture style, and decor update. If you prefer something cooler, a warm greige (grey-beige blend) has more staying power than pure grey.

Wider planks (5-7 inches) have been consistently popular for over a decade and show no signs of fading. Wire-brushed or lightly textured finishes hide wear and scratches better than high-gloss smooth finishes, which is especially important in busy NB family homes. Avoid heavily distressed or hand-scraped finishes if you want a clean, timeless look — they can feel dated as trends shift.

**Installation quality is the hidden factor in 10-year durability.** A perfectly chosen floor installed over an unprepared subfloor will look terrible within 3-5 years. Bumps, dips, and debris in the subfloor telegraph through the flooring surface, creating visible imperfections and accelerating wear at high spots. Proper subfloor preparation accounts for 30-40% of a quality flooring job. In older NB homes — and much of the province's housing stock dates to the 1950s through 1980s — subfloor preparation is especially critical because original board subfloors may be uneven, squeaky, or moisture-damaged.

**Practical tips for long-term beauty:** Use quality entry mats at all exterior doors to catch NB's road salt, sand, and grit before they scratch your floor. Place felt pads under all furniture legs and replace them annually. Keep pet nails trimmed. Clean regularly with manufacturer-recommended products — never use vinegar, oil soaps, or steam cleaners on hardwood or laminate.

Investing a bit more upfront in quality materials and professional installation pays dividends in longevity. A \$7/sq ft engineered hardwood professionally installed will look better in 10 years than a \$3/sq ft laminate installed over a rough subfloor.

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Q15

## What flooring works best with radiant heat in NB bathrooms?

**Porcelain tile is the best flooring for radiant-heated NB bathrooms — it conducts heat efficiently, is 100% waterproof, and handles the temperature cycling without any dimensional movement.** It's the combination that professional flooring installers recommend most often for NB bathroom renovations with in-floor heating.

Porcelain tile's thermal conductivity makes it the ideal partner for radiant heat systems. It absorbs heat from the cables or hydronic tubing below and radiates it evenly across the floor surface, making your bathroom warm and comfortable even during NB's coldest winter mornings. The tile itself is completely unaffected by repeated heating and cooling cycles, so you'll never see warping, gapping, or degradation from the thermal stress. Budget \$9-\$20/sq ft fully installed for porcelain tile in an NB bathroom, including proper substrate preparation and waterproofing membrane. For a typical 60-100 sq ft bathroom floor, that's approximately \$1,200-\$3,000 including the tile work, plus \$500-\$1,500 for the electric radiant heat mat and thermostat installation.

**Natural stone tile (marble, slate, travertine)** is another excellent choice over radiant heat, with similar thermal conductivity to porcelain. Stone adds a luxury feel to NB bathrooms, running \$13-\$27/sq ft fully installed. The trade-off is that natural stone requires periodic sealing to prevent staining and moisture absorption — important in a bathroom environment.

**Engineered hardwood can work over radiant heat** if you choose carefully and follow strict guidelines. The plywood-core construction handles thermal expansion better than solid hardwood. Use only products rated by the manufacturer for radiant heat applications, keep the surface temperature below 27 degrees Celsius (80 degrees Fahrenheit), and maintain consistent indoor humidity between 35-55% RH. However, in an NB bathroom where water splashes are inevitable, engineered hardwood is a riskier choice than tile. Most flooring professionals in the province will steer you toward tile or LVP for bathroom applications.

**Luxury vinyl plank (LVP)** is compatible with radiant heat as long as the floor surface temperature stays below the manufacturer's maximum — typically 27-29 degrees Celsius. LVP is waterproof, comfortable underfoot, and costs less than tile (\$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed), making it a popular choice for NB bathroom renovations on a tighter budget. The limitation is that LVP doesn't conduct heat as efficiently as tile, so the radiant system works harder and the floor surface won't feel quite as warm. Choose SPC-core LVP over WPC-core for better dimensional stability under heat.

**Materials to avoid over radiant heat in NB bathrooms:** Solid hardwood is not suitable — the combination of heat from below and humidity fluctuations in a Maritime bathroom environment virtually guarantees cupping and gapping. Standard laminate is also a poor choice in bathrooms due to water sensitivity, and many laminate products void their warranty when installed over radiant heat.

**NB-specific considerations for radiant heat installations** include the type of heating system you choose. Electric radiant heat mats are the most common choice for bathroom retrofits in NB — they're thin enough to install directly under tile with minimal floor height increase, and they don't require a plumbing permit. However, they must be installed by a licensed electrician and connected to a dedicated circuit with a GFCI breaker. Hydronic (hot water) radiant systems are more energy-efficient for whole-home installations but require a plumbing permit under NB's Plumbing Installation and Inspection Act and are typically only practical during new construction or major renovations.

This type of project involves both flooring installation and electrical or plumbing work, so hiring professionals is strongly recommended rather than attempting a DIY approach.

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## Should I choose light or dark flooring for my NB home?

**Neither light nor dark flooring is universally better — the right choice depends on your room size, natural light, lifestyle, and how much maintenance you're willing to do.** That said, NB's Maritime climate and housing stock create specific conditions that make this decision more nuanced than generic design advice suggests.

**Light flooring (natural oak, pale ash, light maple, blonde LVP)** makes rooms feel larger and more open, which is a significant advantage in NB's older homes where rooms tend to be smaller and ceilings lower than modern construction. Light floors also maximize the effect of natural light during NB's shorter winter days — from November through February, when daylight is limited to 8-9 hours, a light floor reflects available light throughout the room rather than absorbing it. In practical terms, light flooring hides dust, pet hair, and minor scratches better than dark flooring, making it more forgiving in busy family homes. The trade-off is that dirt, mud, and stains are more visible on light floors — and NB homeowners track in plenty of mud during spring snowmelt and wet autumn months.

**Dark flooring (espresso oak, walnut, dark charcoal LVP)** creates a dramatic, elegant look that grounds a room and makes lighter furniture and walls pop. Dark floors work beautifully in larger, well-lit rooms with big windows — think a spacious open-concept living area in a newer Moncton or Fredericton build with south-facing windows. The significant downside is that dark floors show every speck of dust, every pet hair, and every scratch or scuff mark. In NB's climate, the fine sand and salt grit tracked in from winter roads shows prominently against dark flooring. Dark floors also make small rooms feel smaller and can make a home feel cave-like during NB's grey winter months if not balanced with lighter walls and ample lighting.

**Medium tones are the sweet spot for most NB homes.** A natural medium-toned oak, warm walnut-honey blend, or classic maple strikes the best balance between hiding dirt and hiding dust. Medium floors work with virtually any wall colour and furniture style, making them the most versatile long-term choice. This is particularly valuable if you may sell your home — medium-toned floors appeal to the broadest range of buyers in NB's real estate market.

**NB-specific factors to weigh:** Consider how much natural light each room receives. North-facing rooms in NB, which are already dimmer, benefit enormously from lighter flooring. South-facing rooms with generous windows can handle darker tones. Also consider your household — families with young children, dogs, or heavy boot traffic will find medium to light floors much more practical than dark floors that show every mark.

If you're choosing hardwood or engineered hardwood, a wire-brushed or matte finish in any shade hides wear far better than a high-gloss finish. This is true regardless of colour and is especially important in high-traffic areas. For LVP, the embossed-in-register textures that mimic real wood grain also hide scratches and scuffs effectively.

**Before committing, get large samples** (at least 2 feet by 2 feet) and place them on your floor for several days. View them in morning light, evening light, and artificial light. What looks perfect in the showroom can look completely different in your actual space with your actual lighting conditions.

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**Q17**

## **What is the best room-by-room flooring plan for a typical NB family home?**

**The best room-by-room flooring plan for a typical NB family home uses 2-3 complementary materials that balance comfort, durability, moisture resistance, and budget across different zones of the house.** Trying to use one material everywhere creates compromises — no single flooring handles every room's demands perfectly in NB's Maritime climate.

### **Recommended Room-by-Room Plan**

**Main living areas (living room, dining room, hallways)** are the visual centrepiece of your home. Engineered hardwood (\$6-\$14/sq ft fully installed) is the premium choice here — it offers the beauty and warmth of real wood with the dimensional stability to handle NB's 30-50% annual humidity swing between winter and summer. White oak in a natural or warm tone is the most popular and timeless choice in the province. For a more budget-friendly option, quality LVP with an SPC core (\$5-\$12/sq ft fully installed) gives you a waterproof, dimensionally stable floor with realistic wood visuals. Running one consistent floor through the entire main living area creates a seamless, spacious feel in open-concept layouts.

**Kitchen** flooring needs to handle water splashes, dropped food, heavy traffic, and cleaning chemicals. LVP is the most practical choice for NB kitchens — completely waterproof, comfortable underfoot, and available in finishes that coordinate with whatever you've chosen for the adjacent living areas. Porcelain tile (\$9-\$20/sq ft fully installed) is the most durable kitchen option but feels cold during NB's long winter without radiant heat. Engineered hardwood works in kitchens if you commit to wiping up spills promptly, but it's a higher-maintenance choice.

**Bathrooms** demand waterproof flooring, full stop. Porcelain tile is the gold standard — waterproof, durable, and ideal with radiant heat to combat NB's cold winter mornings. LVP is a practical and more affordable alternative that's warmer underfoot without radiant heat. Never install any wood-based flooring in NB bathrooms — the moisture exposure is too constant and unpredictable.

**Bedrooms** are where comfort matters most. Carpet (\$4-\$8/sq ft fully installed with quality pad) is the warmest, softest, and most affordable option — a genuine luxury during NB's heating season from October through April. A quality nylon broadloom in a neutral tone provides durability and comfort. If you prefer hard flooring for allergy reasons or personal preference, engineered hardwood or LVP with a quality area rug gives you warmth where you need it.

**Basement** flooring in NB requires careful material selection because Maritime moisture continuously migrates through concrete slabs, especially during spring snowmelt from April through June. LVP with an SPC core is the safest choice — 100% waterproof, dimensionally stable, and installed as a floating floor that doesn't trap moisture against the concrete. Carpet tiles with moisture-resistant backing (\$3-\$6/sq ft) are another good basement option because individual tiles can be replaced if water damage occurs. Always install a foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier under floating floors, or use a dimpled drainage membrane (\$1.50-\$3.00/sq ft) over the concrete before any flooring installation. **Never install solid hardwood in an NB basement** — moisture migration will cause irreversible damage regardless of mitigation efforts.

**Mudroom and entryway** take the worst abuse from NB's seasons — road salt, sand, gravel, snowmelt, spring mud. Porcelain tile with a textured finish is the toughest choice. LVP handles mudroom conditions well at a lower cost.

**Budget planning for a typical 1,500 sq ft NB home** using this room-by-room approach: expect \$12,000-\$25,000 total depending on material choices and whether you need subfloor preparation. Getting 3+ quotes from local flooring professionals is essential — NB pricing varies 25-40% between contractors for identical scope.

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