

# Color & Finish Idea Book

*A design tool for architects working  
with exterior metal façade systems.*



POSITIONING

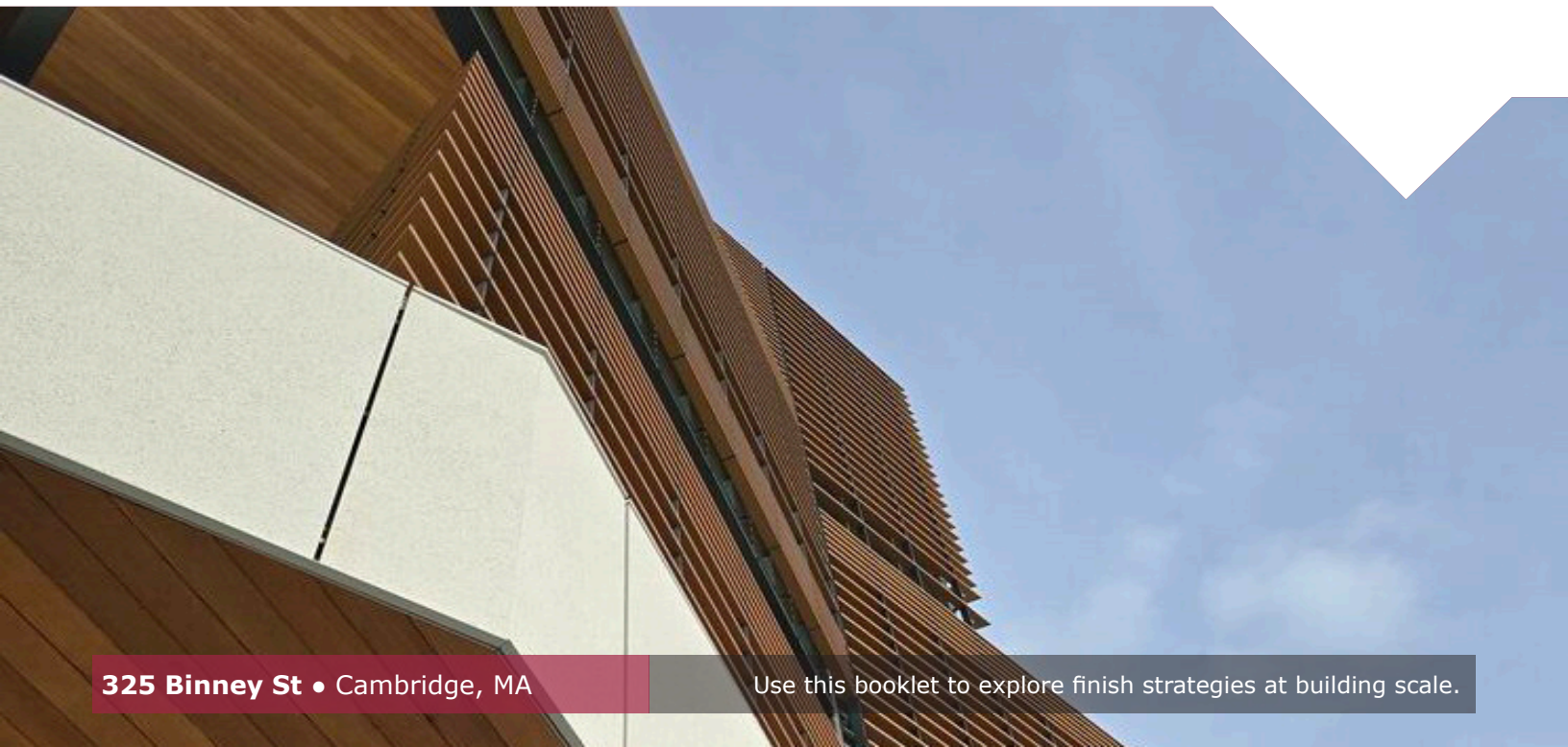
## Finish Decisions Are Façade Decisions

Color and finish are not the last step in a façade design; they're an architectural decision made early, informed by scale, sun angle, viewing distance, and building program. This booklet exists to help you think through those decisions systematically, not decoratively.

Everything here is organized around exterior metal façade applications. The finishes referenced are exterior-grade, performance-driven coating systems engineered for the demands of built form at scale. There are no chip charts here, only strategies for working at the scale of a building.

Use this as a thinking tool during Schematic Design and Design Development, when the finish logic is shaping massing, identity, and material strategy before selections become commitments.

**PRO TIP:** Exterior color decisions are read at scale; what works on a chip behaves very differently on a façade.



## Establish the Logic Before the Color

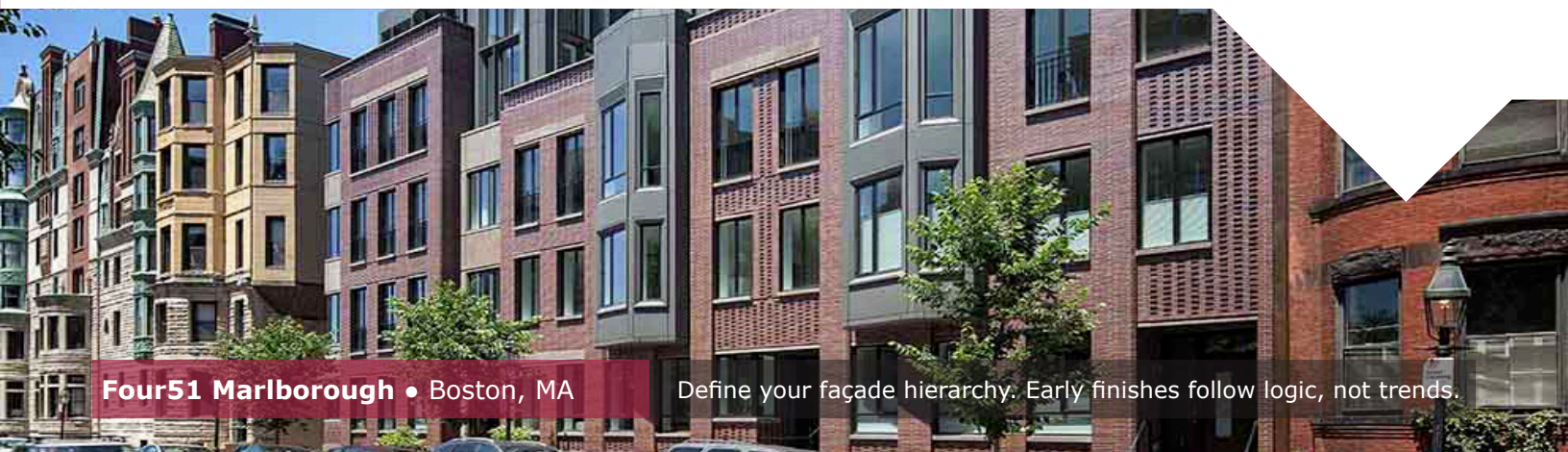
Successful façade color strategies don't start with swatches; they start with hierarchy. Most high-performing exterior designs operate on three distinct layers:

- **Field:** The dominant surface that defines massing. Often neutral, calm, and consistent.
- **Accent:** Secondary elements that articulate form, depth, or transition.
- **Feature:** Intentional focal points (entries, volumes, or program identifiers)

Color does more than aesthetics on a façade. Exterior applications introduce three conditions that interior color work never confronts: sun angle, which shifts finish appearance through the day and across seasons; viewing distance, which determines how much surface detail and tonal variation actually reads; and repetition, where the same panel module tiles across a large elevation and any color decision is amplified at a scale a single sample never reveals. Closer in, finish behavior (sheen, texture, light response) shapes the pedestrian experience and the quality of architectural detail.

The pages that follow are organized to support this kind of thinking. Not finish selection, but finish strategy.

**PRO TIP:** Establish a clear field / accent / feature hierarchy before selecting specific colors.



## Six Families. One Clear Decision.

Fairview Architectural's finish portfolio is organized into six distinct families, each engineered for a specific role on the exterior envelope. Understanding what each family does at building scale is the first step toward a confident, coordinated selection.



### **Solid**

Grounding the field. Consistent, calm, and versatile at any scale.



### **Mica**

Depth without complexity. Quiet movement and light response.



### **Metallic**

Precision and articulation. Most effective as a controlled accent.



### **Chromatic**

Identity and placemaking. Used sparingly for maximum impact.



### **Patterned / Textured**

Narrative and material reference. One deliberate architectural move.



### **Anodized**

Integral color, matte-to-satin depth. Premium character at field scale.

Finish families work best when combined with purpose. One family setting the field, one or two others adding rhythm, depth, or focal points.

**PRO TIP:** Finish families help control visual complexity across large elevations.

**Identify a primary finish family before exploring accents.**

SOLID FINISHES

## The Strongest Façades Start with a Quiet Field

Solid finishes are the backbone of most well-designed exterior metal façades. Their power lies in consistency, a continuous, uninterrupted surface that reads clearly across large planes and long distances. On institutional buildings, commercial towers, and large-scale mixed-use projects, solids calm the massing, bring coherence to complex programs, and create the visual stability that allows architectural form to speak for itself.

Solids perform best on expansive field conditions: large, unbroken surfaces where texture or variation would fragment the composition rather than enhance it. They're also the most versatile foundation. Any accent or feature finish reads more clearly and with greater authority, against a well-considered solid field.

**PRO TIP:** Solid finishes perform best when used to calm massing on large, uninterrupted



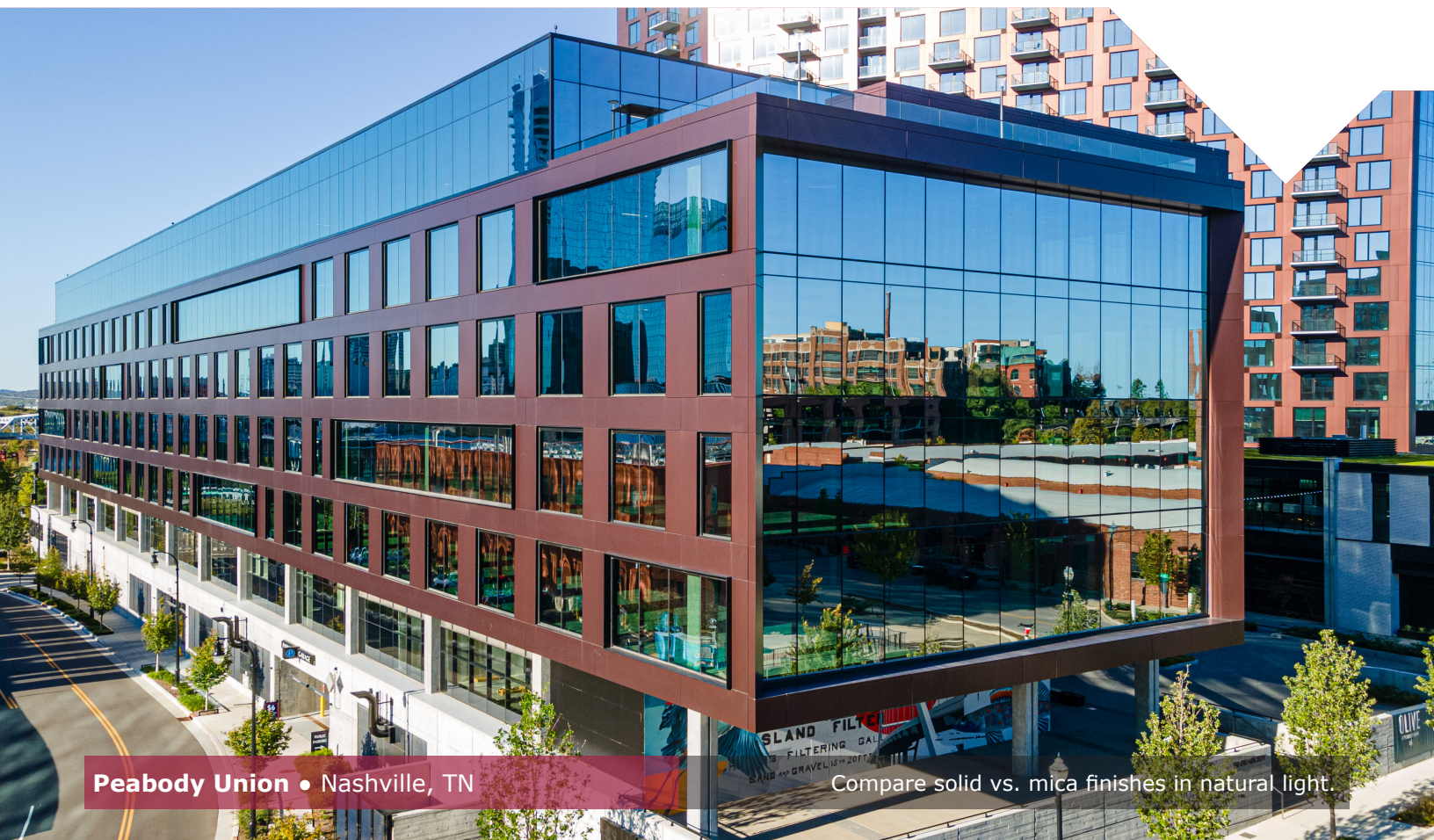
MICA FINISHES

## Depth, Without the Drama

Mica finishes sit between the simplicity of a solid and the visual complexity of a metallic. Tiny reflective particles within the coating shift with light and viewing angle, introducing a quiet sense of movement and material depth that flat solids cannot achieve while avoiding the high-contrast reflectivity of a true metallic.

On large elevations, a mica finish reduces perceived monotony without introducing visual noise. It rewards closer inspection, a pedestrian-scale richness that reads as a refined solid from across the street. This makes mica particularly effective on projects where scale is a challenge: long unbroken runs, repetitive facades, or buildings where the design goal is material texture without pattern.

**PRO TIP:** Mica finishes add depth and movement without the visual noise of metallics.



METALLIC FINISHES

## Use Metallics to Articulate, Not to Dominate

Metallic finishes are among the most expressive tools in the exterior palette and among the most easily overused. Applied selectively, they articulate form, mark entries, and signal precision and modernity. Applied broadly, they compete with themselves and lose the contrast that gives them their authority.

The most successful metallic applications treat these finishes as punctuation: a vertical feature volume, a canopy underside, a recessed bay. They draw the eye exactly where the architect intends and nowhere else. On a quiet foundation of solid or mica, a well-placed metallic finish reads with clarity and purpose.

**PRO TIP:** Metallic finishes are most effective when used selectively to articulate form or entries.



CHROMATIC FINISHES

## Color as Identity

Chromatic finishes, bold saturated hues, unexpected tones, and high-energy colors are the most direct way to embed identity into a building's exterior. Used with restraint, they function as architectural wayfinding, branding elements, or program markers: the saturated accent on a school entry, the deep teal of a civic library, the warm ochre identifying a healthcare pavilion within a campus.

The operative word is restraint. Chromatic colors are strongest when they're anchored in a purpose tied to program, identity, or the specific demands of the urban context and when they're set against a neutral field that gives them room to read. The more intentional the use, the more powerful the impact.

**PRO TIP:** Chromatic colors are strongest when tied to program, identity, or wayfinding.





PATTERNED / TEXTURED FINISHES

## Pattern as an Architectural Move

Patterned and textured finishes, wood-inspired tones, zinc and oxidized metal references, directional surface patterns bring material memory and warmth to aluminum façades. They allow a metal envelope to reference timber, weathered steel, or natural stone without sacrificing the performance advantages of an exterior-grade metal cladding system.

Used at scale, a pattern can break up a large surface, introduce human-scale texture, or mark a feature volume with a distinctly different material character. The constraint that makes these finishes succeed: limit them to a single, deliberate architectural move. When a pattern competes with itself or with other finish families, it fragments the composition rather than enriching it.

**PRO TIP:** Patterned finishes work best when isolated to a single architectural move.



ANODIZED FINISHES

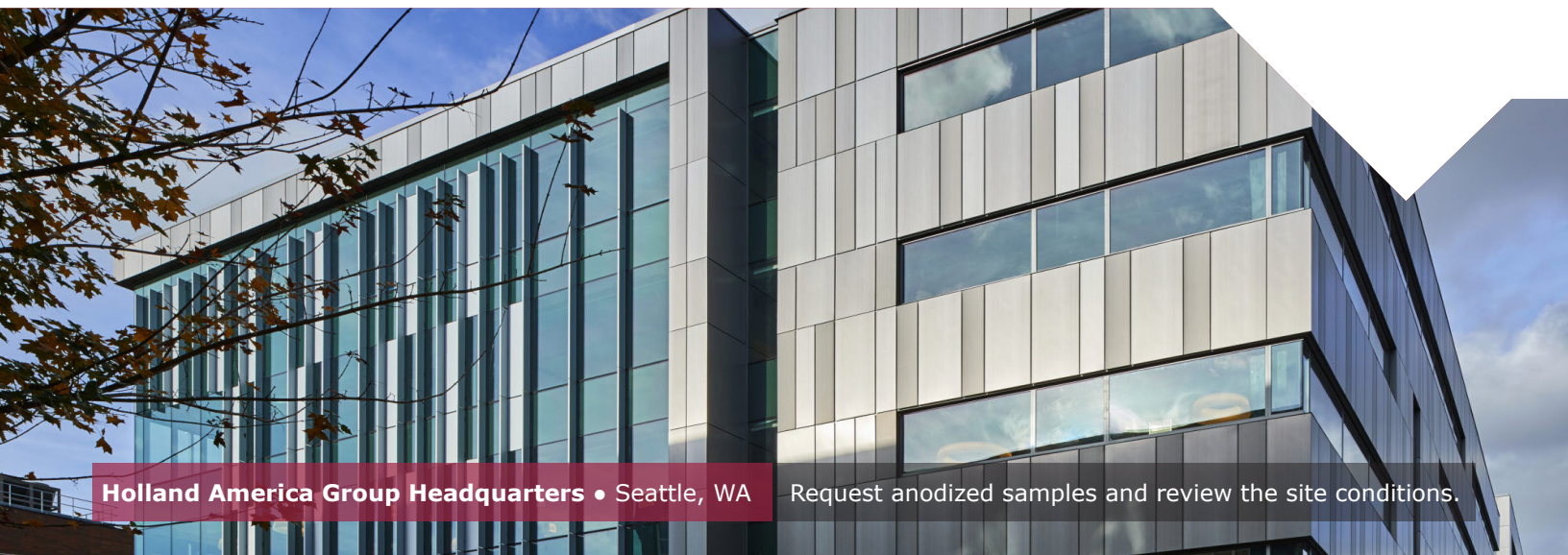
## Color That Lives Inside the Metal

Anodized finishes are produced through an electrochemical process that converts the aluminum surface itself into a dense, hard oxide layer. Unlike painted finishes that sit on top of the metal, anodized color is integral to the material; it has a dimensional quality that shifts subtly with light angle, giving large elevations a depth and refinement that no coating system can replicate. The palette runs from clear and champagne through bronze, dark bronze, and black, with a characteristic matte-to-satin sheen that reads as inherently premium at any scale.

Because anodized color behaves differently across viewing angles and lighting conditions, it is one of the finish families where physical samples are most essential. A color that reads as warm champagne in morning light can shift to a cooler silver-gray under an overcast sky. Anodized finishes are well-suited to large field applications; their low-sheen character holds across expansive surfaces without demanding the precision tolerances that high-gloss requires, and they are particularly effective where a sense of material authenticity and longevity is central to the design intent.

Anodized is not a finish that calls attention to itself; it earns it. The restraint is the point.

**PRO TIP:** Anodized color is integral to the metal; evaluate it in natural light, at a distance, and across multiple samples before finalizing.



DESIGN INTELLIGENCE

# The Most Successful Façades Use Contrast, Not Competition

Design intelligence in finish selection shows most clearly in how families are combined. The principle is consistent: the more expressive one's family is, the quieter everything else needs to be.

A solid field paired with metallic accents creates precision without visual clutter. A neutral, matte-surface background anchors a patterned or textured feature element, letting the material reference read clearly. A chromatic accent used at a single element; one color, one location reads with the force of a deliberate decision rather than decoration.

The most common error in multi-finish compositions is treating all elements as equals. Strong façades maintain a clear hierarchy: one finish family dominates, one supports, one punctuates. When contrast is built on a quiet foundation, it works. When contrast competes, it diminishes everything.

**PRO TIP:** Contrast is most effective when the background remains quiet.



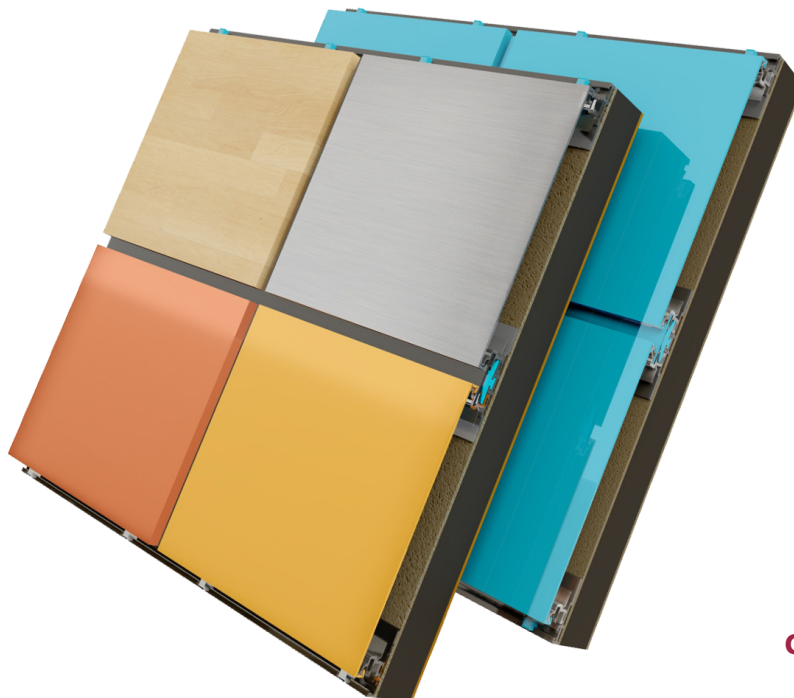
## Finish Continuity Elevates Every Detail

The difference between a good façade and an exceptional one often comes down to the transitions. Corners, sills, copings, and trim conditions are where the gap between design intent and executed reality becomes visible or invisible. Inconsistent finish color or sheen at a panel edge or cap flashing undermines the entire material strategy, regardless of how well the field panels read.

Fairview Architectural's panel systems: Vitrabond® and Vitraplate® are available with the same Vitranar® flexible resin coating applied to the primary cladding panels. Edgeline® flashing is coated at the same time as the panels, so color and sheen match precisely at every edge, corner, and transition. The result is a façade that reads as a unified system, not a collection of components brought together on site.

Finish continuity isn't a luxury detail. It's the condition that allows the overall material strategy to hold together at every scale, from across the street to the moment a visitor reaches the entry.

**PRO TIP:** Finish continuity across panels, plate, and trim elevates perceived quality.



**Consider finish continuity  
early in detailing.**

TURN INSPIRATION INTO ACTION

# Inspiration Is the Beginning. Collaboration Is Next.

Every finish shown in this booklet is available as a physical sample, and physical samples are the only reliable basis for finish approval. Digital renderings and on-screen color chips are useful for early directional exploration, but they cannot accurately represent the depth, sheen, or light behavior of a real coating system at building scale. Request samples early. Review them in natural light. Evaluate them at viewing distances that reflect actual project conditions.

Custom colors are available. If the right finish isn't in this guide, Fairview Architectural's finish development team can work with you to develop it, and the earlier in Design Development that conversation begins, the more options are available before schedule and value engineering close them down.

## How to use this booklet during SD / DD:

1. Review the Finish Family Overview to establish your material strategy and primary finish logic.
2. Use the individual finish pages to narrow your selection by application type and design intent.
3. Bring physical samples to client and team reviews before selections are finalized.
4. Engage with Fairview Architectural early. Finish strategy decisions made at the beginning of Design Development are easier, better, and more likely to survive the project intact.

The team is ready to support your process, from early-stage finish exploration to final sample review and specification support.

**PRO TIP:** Digital colors are directional, physical samples reveal true depth and finish behavior.

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### DOWNLOAD TECHNICAL DATA

Forming guidelines, coating specs, warranty information, and substrate compatibility data.



### TALK TO A SPECIALIST

Connect with Fairview's coating specialists for your specific application and forming requirements.

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