



Technical Bulletin – Selecting the Color of Brick Veneer

Brick color selection is a process that should utilize multiple resources to make the most informed decision. The below letter from the Brick Industry Association (BIA) discusses different ways to view brick.



June 28, 2022

Mr. Jim Bryja, SE, PE
General Shale Brick
3015 Bristol Highway
Johnson City, TN 37601

Sent via email: Jim.Bryja@generalshale.com

Re: Selecting the Color of Brick Veneer

Mr. Bryja:

Per your request, the Brick Industry Association (BIA) provides this letter in response to your inquiry regarding the selection of brick veneer colors. As you know, clay brick is a natural product with inherent, subtle variations in color and texture that is influenced by the raw materials and the methods used to form and fire it. Consequently, the selection process for clay brick masonry may be different than other materials. A typical selection process for residential projects includes the following:

- The homeowner views a mini board or sample board in person for initial selections. These are small panels, consisting of approximately 6 to 15 brick faces (cut from a full depth brick unit) adhered to a backing board. These boards are intended to provide a broad, general idea of the size, color and texture of brick and are not intended to present the full color range of the brick.
- If the project is part of a housing development under construction, the homeowner will also be shown other homes in the neighborhood that were built using the desired brick color. Since typical home construction involves thousands of brick surrounded by mortar joints, viewing a similar project allows the homeowner to get a better sense of the product range and what the particular brick product will actually look like once installed on their project. When examples are not available in the neighborhood, other projects by the same builder are often substituted.
- In the case of a custom home project, a sample panel is recommended to be constructed, since similar local projects with the desired brick may not be available for viewing. A sample panel consists of approximately 100 brick that are laid with the selected mortar to create a panel that remains on the project site throughout construction. After curing, the sample panel is reviewed for appearance and workmanship and becomes the standard of both for the project, if accepted.

Note that all of these steps and options in the brick color selection process involve direct, in-person observation of the brick under consideration. This is critical for seeing and evaluating the subtle variations in appearance of the brick under the lighting conditions of the project site. We understand that brick manufacturers offer high quality photographs of their various brick colors in their brochures and on their website as a reference; however, even the most accurate professional photograph of a product cannot be guaranteed to match the actual product. Perception changes in two dimensions compared to three dimensions as well as between observers. There are also differences in lighting for both the subject and the viewer, the influence of the paper in printed photos, and the disparities in graphic displays on electronic devices (computer monitors, phones, tablets). Therefore, BIA strongly recommends against using printed or digital images for final color selection of brick and recommends limiting their use to preliminary selections only.

Should you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 674-1546 or cfried@bia.org.

Sincerely,

Courtney Fried, PE
Managing Senior Engineer, BIA

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