

The Expanding Markets of Sliding Doors

"Sliding doors offer many benefits and projected growth for this type of door opens up opportunities for distributors in multiple vertical markets."

by Bryan Meyer

The construction industry endured a challenging 2020 and 2021, but the 2022 economic forecast appears optimistic despite the current supply chain constraints. The 2021 American Institute of Architects Consensus Construction Forecast predicts a 4.6% increase in non-residential building construction this year. Additionally, the residential sector is expected to grow by 9%, according to Oxford Economics and ConstructConnect forecast.

AIA notes, "The construction spending downturn was widespread last year. Only retail and other commercial, industrial, and health care facilities managed to eke out spending increases. This year, only the hotel, religious, and public safety sectors are expected to continue to decline. By 2023, all the major commercial, industrial, and institutional categories are projected to see at least reasonably healthy gains."

This projected growth in the market means an opportunity for design professionals and contract hardware distributors to capitalize on one product segment that continues to be a strong player in multiple vertical markets: sliding doors.

Advantages of Sliding Doors and Hardware

Sliding doors offer many benefits that appeal to various markets, such as healthcare, hospitality, multifamily, office spaces and places of worship.

- *Space savings.* One of the main reasons sliding doors are so popular today is their ability to fit into small spaces. A typical swing door requires room to open, can block walkways, and can damage walls with the door lever or knob. A sliding door does not use hinges. Instead, it hangs from a track-mounted inside the header or surface mounted to the header. This is especially beneficial where square footage is at a premium, such as in the multifamily and hospitality verticals. Depending on the application, sliding doors can save up to 14 square feet of space in a room.
- *Simple to operate.* Sliding Doors are easy to open and close, which is helpful for individuals with mobility issues. When a person is confined to a wheelchair or uses a walker, it is easier to operate a sliding door than to navigate around a wide-swing door.
- *Better flow and acoustics.* In larger spaces, sliding doors can be kept open to allow more light into an area and a seamless flow, but when closed deliver a more intimate and private setting.



Types of Sliding Doors

There are five main types of sliding doors:

- *By-pass doors.* By-pass doors slide one in front of the other and are typically set in a double opening. By-pass doors are the traditional sliding door solution for any size closet, doors between rooms, storage walls and movable partitions. As the top track supports all the weight of a by-pass sliding door, the bottom track is optional and only used to help guide the door. A bottom guide should be used when there is a concern that the door might be bumped hard enough to swing.
- *Bi-fold doors.* Bi-fold doors are made up of multiple leaves that fold back on themselves to reveal an entire opening. The doors are hung on pivots and fitted to runners, when opened, they slide and fold simultaneously for seamless operation. Bi-fold doors are a hybrid of sliding doors and traditional French or patio doors, and they offer the best of both worlds in terms of space-saving ability. They are primarily used for closets and pantries. Think of a concertina edifice (like an accordion) to visualize how bi-fold doors work. Bi-fold doors are like any doors, only connected into pairs with hinges and hung on a track.

- *Wall-mounted doors.* Wall-mounted doors sit almost flush against the wall and slide easily back and forth. Wall-mounted doors are best designed for applications with tight clearances above the door and are largely used for closets, pantries, and offices. Wall-mounted doors are designed to blend seamlessly with any interior décor – from a cosmopolitan postmodern loft to a space-saving traditional environment. Their architecturally focused design delivers a clean, finished look to any interior doorway or room divider.
- *Barn doors.* Comparable to wall-mounted doors, barn doors also sit almost flush against the wall. Barn doors have become increasingly popular in residential, hospitality, healthcare, and multi-living facilities. They are perfect for utility rooms, hallways, bathrooms, pantries, and more. Barn door hardware is available for both wood and glass doors. Today's sliding barn door makes a powerful design statement, transforming any space with its harmonious blend of old and new. They add character and interest to any design setting by redefining an open area, creating a cozy nook, or optimizing space in a tiny room.
- *Pocket doors.* A pocket door is a sliding door that, when fully open, fits neatly into a compartment in the adjacent wall. Pocket doors are commonly used when there is no room for the swing of a hinged door. Predominantly used for bathrooms, closets and areas that need more accessibility. Choosing a pocket sliding door over a hinged door can create more space, but it's worth considering that the hidden parts and hardware can make it difficult to replace or repair.

Sliding doors are elegant, sophisticated, flexible, and durable. Meeting many of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for code-compliant door openings, they are particularly appealing in these vertical markets.

Healthcare Applications

For multiple reasons, wall-mounted or barn-type sliding doors have become increasingly popular in healthcare settings. First, as patients will be regularly entering and exiting the space, sliding doors can be opened with a simple push or pull. Second, healthcare facilities like doctor offices and veterinary clinics often use wall-mounted or barn-type sliding doors to create barriers between patient rooms and public areas. This helps reduce noise and promote privacy but can also create a seamless workflow by allowing staff members to move freely between rooms without opening and closing doors when stocking supplies for the day's patients.

Hospitals also utilize sliding doors in their designs, which has an added benefit from a business perspective. Hospital floor plans are constantly evolving, so when it comes time to renovate a floor or wing, it's easier to retrofit walls and door openings with sliding doors than swing doors.

"We are seeing more sliding doors designed into many types of healthcare facilities," says Brian Clarke, Director of Specifications for Hager Companies. A typical application for health care would be pocket doors, but wall-mount or barn-type doors are gaining traction.

Use in Hospitality

Hotels, restaurants, and other businesses in the hospitality industry often use multiple types of sliding doors. Wall-mount and barn-type sliding doors can create an airy, spacious feeling yet have the ability to provide smaller intimate spaces. In hotel guest rooms, where every square inch of floor space is accounted for, either a pocket, wall-mount or barn-type sliding door can be utilized to provide a more open flow. .

"Several national hospitality chains have incorporated sliding doors into their universal designs," says John LeBoeuf, Manager of Business Development for Hager Companies.

The hospitality sector is also growing. According to Statista, "The hotel pipeline in the U.S. has experienced a steady growth in comparison to other regions of the world. Luxury and upper-scale hotel projects are at record levels."



Multifamily Common Areas and Tenant Spaces

With development costs at a premium, the space-saving benefits of the various sliding doors make them a popular solution for multifamily projects. Pocket, by-pass, and bi-fold type sliding doors offer flexibility. Wall-mount and barn type sliding doors allow for an open floor plan while still maintaining privacy. Beyond the space savings, both the doors and hardware are available in a contemporary or rustic look that meets nearly any design style and building aesthetic.

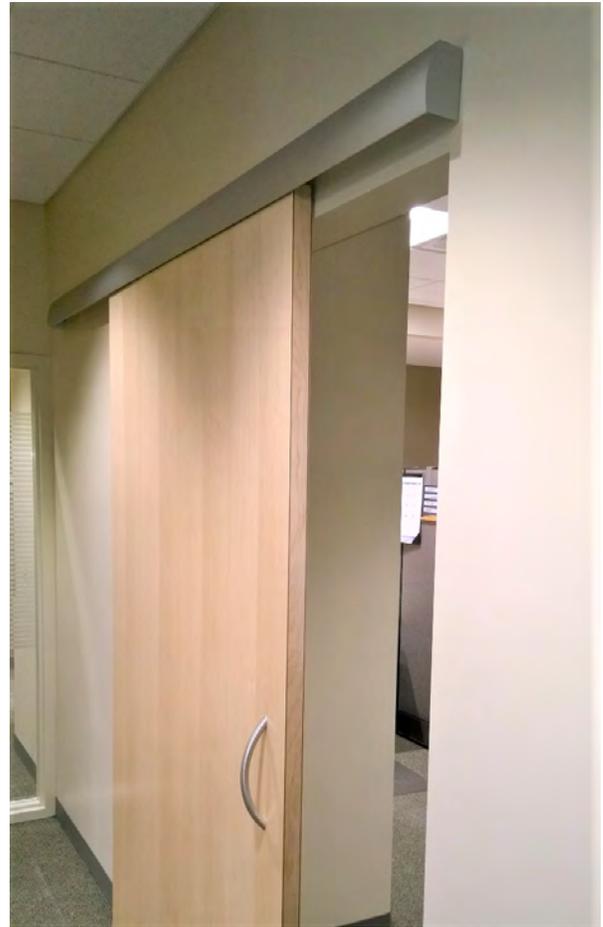
Office Spaces

In recent years, there has been a trend toward using wall-mount or barn-type sliding doors in office spaces. There are several benefits to this approach. First, it can help create a more open and airier feeling in the office. When made from glass, these doors can allow more natural light to enter the space and reduce noise. These doors are often selected for meeting rooms, as they provide easier access from other office areas. All these factors can contribute to a more productive and efficient work environment.

Places of Worship

Sliding doors continue to be incorporated into religious facilities, such as churches and temples. In these instances, they can add a sense of grandeur to the space when open while still providing privacy in small group settings.

The advantages and opportunities of sliding doors and hardware are clear. From versatility to functionality and across multiple market segments, sliding doors continue to be a strong design choice.



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