Architectural Anodizing Color Guide

Architectural finish selection works best when color, material and preparation are considered together. NIA's large line offers two-step architectural coloring in champagne, bronze and black families, with a maximum part length of 330 inches.

Start with the project requirements

Identify the project specification, exposure, visible faces and adjoining materials. A finish selected for a storefront, trim assembly or interior feature still needs a defined appearance standard and agreed acceptance requirements.

Select a color family

Family	Use during selection	Resolve before ordering
 Champagne	Compare a light metallic color direction	Target sample and acceptable light-to-dark range
 Bronze	Compare the depth of the brown metallic tone	Specific sample rather than the word bronze alone
 Black	Compare the desired dark architectural finish	Two-step process, texture and appearance reference

Illustrative colors only; not measured NIA finish standards. Approve a physical sample for production.

Understand two-step coloring

The aluminum is anodized first. In the second step, an electrical process deposits metal from a metal-salt bath into the oxide pores. The controlled deposit produces the color. This differs from absorbing an organic dye into the coating.

Two-step coloring is widely used for architectural finishes where resistance to fading matters. The complete finish must still satisfy the project's specified performance and exposure requirements.

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Planning and next steps

Coordinate the aluminum supply

For adjoining components, identify the alloy, temper, product form and supplier. Extrusions, sheet and welded assemblies may not develop identical appearances. Review representative samples together instead of approving each part in isolation.

Agree on the appearance range

Consider an agreed light and dark range for the chosen finish. Project-material samples are more representative than an unrelated display chip. Establish viewing distance, lighting and orientation when appearance is critical.

Complete the finish schedule

• Part or assembly identification and the faces visible after installation.

• Alloy, temper, surface preparation and two-step color selection.

• Applicable specification and revision, coating requirements and required verification.

• Approved sample IDs, acceptable variation and any agreed instrumental color criteria.

• Rack-contact locations, masking, packaging and installation grouping.

Plan repeat and phased orders

Tell NIA when multiple orders will be installed together. Retain the agreed finish reference and identify material changes or new suppliers before ordering the next phase. A previous order number helps identify the intended finish but should not replace the specification.

Send the finish schedule and representative drawing for a project review. Discuss any required architectural standard explicitly; color selection alone does not establish compliance.

Review an architectural finish

Contact NIA with your drawing and project requirements to review the next step.

Sources: NIA Capabilities 2025, pages 7-8 and 10-11; large-line length corrected by NIA to 330 inches; Aluminum Anodizers Council - Electrolytic Coloring of Anodized Aluminum; Linetec - Anodize Color Variation.