

# WHERE DO I START?

## 3 TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR CONDO FINISHES

BY YANIC SIMARD

### UPON WALKING INTO THE FULLY UPGRADED

model suite in the design centre for your new condo, you are presented with a number of decisions for materials, colours and upgrades. You immediately go for the hardwood, which is much pricier than the laminate; you've always wanted a spa tub fully loaded with jets; and you love those stainless steel appliances. You stop for a second and take a breath because all you can see are dollar signs. You have to ask yourself, "is it really going to make a difference when it's all said and done?"

The answer is "yes," but not every upgrade is worth the money you'll pay for it. However, some upgrades from the standard features will make a huge impact, look- and quality-wise, not to mention resale value.



Choosing your finishes should not be an overwhelming experience. Do your research before heading out to choose your final selections and you will be in good shape.

## 1/CHOOSING IN THE RIGHT ORDER

People often start by choosing a paint colour and then trying to match everything else to it. To me, that's going backward. It's much easier to choose your paint colour last, having it complement your other, more-permanent selections, such as cabinetry. Finishes that are the least difficult to change should be chosen last.

Start with the flooring and cabinetry. In smaller spaces like condos, keeping the flooring consistent throughout the home will create a nicer visual flow and feeling of openness.

Next, choose the backsplash, countertop and cabinetry hardware. I wouldn't suggest going with a bold and colourful pattern for the backsplash – keep it simple and neutral. You can add colour to your home with accessories and soft furnishings, like pillows and throws. I don't advise experimenting with colour on finishes that are permanent. Your countertop and backsplash will be expensive to change if you don't like the end result. The countertop and backsplash should coordinate with each other, and pick up colour tones from one another. As for the hardware, I like

combining knobs and pulls. Knobs for the doors and pulls for drawers, and you can never go wrong with a brushed-nickel finish.

Lastly, choose your paint colour – something that matches nicely with the already-chosen finishes. Bring a wide selection of paint chips with you.

### \* DESIGNER TIP

I'm known for using Benjamin Moore's Classic Grey (OC-23) for the walls, trim and ceiling. I paint the walls and ceiling with a flat finish, and the trim in semi-gloss.

## 2/THINK RESALE

Certain features sell better than others, which is very important to keep in mind when choosing upgrades. Stainless steel, granite countertops and hardwood flooring are all elements that buyers look for and are attracted to, and smart upgrades to invest in.

Though you probably won't be thinking "resale" at the time of purchase, it's crucial to always keep it in the back of your mind. Remember that you want your choices to cater to a wide demographic of prospective purchasers down the road, so be sure that your selections will appeal to a broad range of tastes and style preferences.

### \* RULE OF THUMB

Spend about five per cent of your budget on upgrades, in order to maximize your return on investment.



### 3/PROFESSIONAL HELP

The benefits of using a reputable designer will pay off. Designers have an eye for colour and they know what works well in a particular space and what doesn't. It's a wise decision to employ a designer up front to avoid making mistakes that could end up costing you more money down the line, if you don't like the finishes that you chose yourself. A good designer who is familiar with builders' finishes will help you to mix and match the options and upgrades to achieve the ultimate look at the lowest cost. It's all about knowing where to spend your money and how to match your various selections.

#### ★ SOME UPGRADES THAT PAY OFF

- › Hardwood in lieu of carpeting
- › Kitchen backsplash
- › Countertop with undermount sink
- › Stainless steel appliances
- › Interior doors and door hardware



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