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Design Decisions:

What Can Wait and What Can't

By Glen Peloso

Glen Peloso is the Principal of Peloso Alexander Interiors and designs with the belief that a client's space should be a true reflection of who they are and reflect "their lifestyle". He is currently a design expert on the Marilyn Denis Show weekdays on CTV. Design columnist for The Toronto Star's "New in Homes section" as well Glen is the National Design Contributor of Canadian Home Trends Magazine, PelosoAlexander.com or Facebook www.facebook.com/glenpeloso and on twitter @peloso1 and @glenandjamie.

When you are selecting a finish package for your condominium, it's difficult to decide what you should include as an upgrade, what your budget can afford and what you will tackle a few years after you have moved into the space. Experience tells me that some things are very important to have completed before you move in because they won't be possible later, may be difficult to change or may mean that you will have to move out during the alteration. Other design decisions can wait until you are in a financial position to tackle them.

LIGHTING

If you have the option of putting in lighting, specifically pot lights, while the condo is being built, I highly recommend having them installed. The electrical outlets for the lighting will be poured into the concrete of the building, so deciding to install lighting at a later date means that you will have to use the electrical outlets provided by the building. Dealing with a concrete ceiling is exceptionally difficult after the fact, and creating good general lighting will mean that you will have to install a bulk head around the room to accommodate the pot lights, or you will be forced to install something that is surface mounted, such as track lighting.

CEILINGS

Most buildings feature a stippled ceiling in most of the principal rooms. Depending on the ceiling height, I recommend that you opt for a flat ceiling throughout your space. The upgrade cost may seem like something you want to avoid, but the result will be extraordinary in terms of the look of your space and well worth the pain and mess. Converting to a flat ceiling after the fact is even messier. As I like to tell people, it's a bit like taking a fifteen-pound bag of icing sugar and running around the condo flinging its contents too and fro. Converting to a flat ceiling can certainly be done after you move in, but it is very hard on the appliances, fabrics, furniture and electronics.

FLOORING

In terms of the flooring in your space, deciding what to do now and what to do later depends on the type of flooring. Tiles in your space are much more difficult to change once you have moved in. Taking out the existing tiles and replacing them with something different, perhaps not provided by the builder, will be a larger and messier renovation. I suggest going with the tiles you really like in the materials selection to avoid having to make this change later. If you really dislike the builder's tiling options, request having carpet installed in the area instead. Carpet is very easy to remove and the floor is easier to prepare for tiles when you find ones you like. Of course you can't opt for carpet in a shower, so if you know you are going to change the tiles later, for now select something neutral that will work with whatever you choose later. If you have to decide between engineered hardwood and carpet and the hardwood doesn't fit your budget, opt for carpet. You can replace it with engineered flooring later.

PLUMBING FIXTURES

When it comes to plumbing fixtures, they are relatively easy to replace in the future, as your budget allows. Provided you are not hoping to change the location of the fixtures, a good plumber can replace them in a couple of hours. Shower faucets are more difficult to change because their working parts are behind the shower tiles. If you have an option with the appliances, you can change them at a later date without too much difficulty. You will simply have to make sure they are replaced with appliances of comparable sizes.

COUNTERTOPS

Moving into the kitchen, the choice between stone versus laminate counter tops can alter your budget substantially. It isn't that difficult to change the counter tops later. Make that choice based on your budget.

One final thing to keep in mind: any renovation or change creates a big mess at the worst, and some inconvenience at the very best. If you are able to do it all before you move in, you will be perfectly happy for ten or so years. Know that you have made a good decision that will increase the value of your property.

I hope that you will love your new space. If you don't, be in touch and we can turn your space into what you really want!



