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First Impressions Decor

Choosing the right finishes for your new home

For those of you in the market for a new home, and for those who have already purchased a new home and are approaching the appointment to select the finishes, a better understanding of what you like and why will help you in creating a look to suit your space and lifestyle.

A truly functional house represents the style of life of

those who occupy it. You shouldn't have to try to change your lifestyle to fit the house; the structure should evolve from those who will use it. How can you ensure that your home will meet your needs? Plan, research, source and compare what is currently in the marketplace that suits your budget, practical needs and lifestyle.

Homebuilders today offer excellent selections for floor treatments, cabinetry, counter-tops, windows, architectural features, exterior finishes, bathroom fixtures, and paint colours.

Floor Treatment

The floor plays a large part in any room and should have practical treatments applied. Consider the space: how much traffic will be going through? And what mood are you trying to create? If your first choice is a wood surface for living areas, and your budget allows, investing in strip hardwood flooring (available in various widths and

thicknesses) speaks volumes above the parquet compromise. Consider your furnishings before you choose a stain colour. Dark stained strip floors that are highly polished offer the perfect impact to a modern interior. On the other hand, lightly stained wider boards enhance a more classic setting.

Nothing can compare to the beauty and durability of natural tile, from ceramic to granite, slate to marble. Ceramic tiles are available in a variety of colours, sizes and patterns, including the new mosaic styles currently available. Ceramic tiles are extremely durable, easy to maintain, have an abundance of patterns to select from, and are reminiscent of old European homes. Granite has become a popular choice for entrance floors, kitchen floors, counter tops and back splashes. You'll never have to worry about burns, stains, cuts or discolouration with this quarried stone. It will also stand the test of time and add a timeless quality to any kitchen.

Carpet construction, fiber and finish generally reflect the price. This is a good choice for adding colour, pattern or texture to a room. Carpeting choices should be made with careful consideration of room use. Decorative, aesthetic and practical considerations are essential factors in choosing a floor treatment.

If you are selecting upgraded cabinetry, keep in mind that it would be wise to choose styles and materials that are classic rather than trendy. More importantly, choose materials that are easy to maintain and durable.



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Windows

Almost all residential home builders are now using good quality vinyl windows. If these are offered as an upgrade, it is well worth your while to invest in them in place of wood frame windows. Vinyl windows are maintenance free whereas wood windows need constant maintenance.

Architectural Features

Columns, cornice moldings, and baseboards all add architectural dimension to a space. These features can transform a box-like space into an architectural delight. Most builders today offer cornice moldings and columns as options. Coffered and vaulted ceilings are details which should not be ignored. Selecting different ceiling designs in today's dramatic open concept living spaces helps to define the different areas. It is definitely worth the investment to add these details at the building stage.

Kitchen/Bathroom Finishes

Do the cabinetry and layout meet your needs in the kitchen and bathroom? Those of you who have been through a kitchen or bathroom renovation are well aware of the cost and the trauma involved with any major changes to these rooms. When purchasing a new home, it is well worth the investment to select upgraded cabinetry. Also, study the layout of the kitchen carefully and make any changes to it that you require to make the space practical for your needs.

The style of cabinetry in both the kitchen and the bathroom is a personal design style choice. If you are selecting upgraded cabinetry, keep in mind that it would be wise to choose styles and materials that are classic rather than trendy. More importantly, choose materials that are easy to maintain and durable.

Counter top choices vary from arborite to granite to solid surface material. Here the choice is dependent upon the usage.



Master ensuites are becoming more elaborate and sumptuous. White continues to be the most popular colour for fixtures.

Generally more expensive than arborite, granite and solid surface materials can withstand heat, stains, and knife cuts.

Don't forget the hardware, faucets and bathroom fixtures. Master ensuites are becoming more elaborate and sumptuous. Current trends in bath design include white fixtures continuing to be the most popular colour; also popular are faucets with separate handles, mixed-metal faucets, contour bathtubs and separate glass showers, his and hers basins, textured tiles and extensive use of solid surface material.

Exterior Finishes

Modern housing design includes dramatic roof lines, keystone and dentil trim, brick arched windows, soldier coursing and other masonry detailing to highlight various elevations, creating impressive streetscapes.

Tying it All Together

The most difficult element of bringing your selections together is colour choice. With open concept designs this can become an intimidating task. Almost all home builders employ staff or have a décor centre to help purchasers make their selections. Some purchasers hire a decorating professional of their own

choice to ensure that selections are cohesive and well coordinated, and to confirm that the selections do in fact meet the needs of the users.

The most important issue to address at this stage of the building process is to ensure that you are absolutely comfortable with the hard finishes selected, such as floor treatment, cabinetry, counter tops, windows, and exterior finishes. These are items that you will have to live with once complete. The last thing you want to do is to move into your brand new home and then discover that the floor treatment type or colour choice was a big mistake.

The interior paint colours offered by builders are usually in the neutral tones. This is ideal for the purchaser. Choosing a neutral paint colour actually eases the selection process for the hard finishes.

Careful planning and selection of your options are critical at the earliest stages of house construction.

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