



**David Stoddard**  
**Home Seller**

# ***Room By Room Review***



**101 Quick & Easy Tips to Make Your  
Condo Show Like a Model**

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# Not All Condos Are The Same

Toronto condominiums come in all sizes, shapes and forms. We've got regular townhouses, stacked townhouses, low-rise and high-rise suites and lofts to name a few.

In order to encompass all of these condo styles, some of the tips you'll see in this book will possibly not apply to your particular home—or maybe they will!

Many condo corporations take full control of the exterior look of the property—including door paint colours, style etc. Many others take care of all grounds maintenance so those items are out of your immediate control.

However, the condominium interior is 100% your responsibility. You have the ability to enrich the buyer's experience, and your own pocketbook, when the time comes to put your home on the market for sale. If you've ever tuned in to any of the home improvement shows on TV, you already know that 'sizzle' sells!

**Most buyers have 3 problems...** they don't have the skills to see 'thru the dust' to envision what your home would look like after some cleanup, painting or minor renovation; they're already scraping their pocketbook to cover their closing costs on the purchase and don't have money left for any fix-ups; OR they just don't have the time to do any of the items required (working two jobs, long hours, etc).

## Where's The Value To You?

Home staging has proven itself as the single best investment a home owner can make before putting their home on the market. From the basics of de-cluttering to painting and decorating the home, the goal is to highlight your selling features and creating a desire in the purchaser to fall in love with your condominium.

Your sale price will be increased and your time-on-market will be decreased!

The major mistake many home owners make is doing too much—spending money on the wrong fix-ups—and doing things that will **NOT** bring them a substantial return on their investment.

That's where the **Room-By-Room Review** comes in. I will take a walk through your home (you'll have a pen & paper in hand) and give you room-by-room feedback on what inexpensive, cosmetic-only fix-ups you should do to maximize your home's sale price.

So, read through this book, take some initial action on your own, and **set an appointment** for me to review your home as early in the process as possible... ideally a **minimum of 4-8 weeks before** you'd want to have your condominium on the market! That way you won't spend time and money on doing the wrong things and will have plenty of time to do the right ones :).



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# It All Starts with Creating Curb Appeal

The first impression people have of your condominium is what it looks like from the outside. What are they going to say to themselves as they approach your front door? Believe it or not, some buyers make a decision to keep on driving just by looking at the outside of the dwelling.

Here are some tips to make them want to come inside: Remember, many of **these** tips apply mostly to townhouse owners.

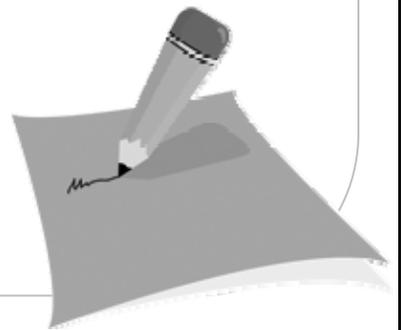
- Tidy up the outside by removing any leaves, debris, branches, and other “yard clutter” to make a neat and tidy appearance.
- Pick up any garden equipment, buckets, rakes, shovels, lawn mower etc. and coil hoses neatly.
- Give the hedges a fresh trim, paying special attention to anything blocking windows or getting in the way of walking to and from the house.
- Power wash the driveway, walkway, patio and deck.
- Spruce up the lawn by cutting, trimming, weeding and fertilizing where necessary. A great looking lawn makes a better impression than a neglected lawn.
- Color it up by adding some bright annuals in places that could use some brightening, or add a nice colorful potted plant at the entry way.
- Make the garage and front door look as inviting as you can. If it needs it, a fresh coat of paint and kick-plate can inexpensively transform a front door. Make sure the garage is not dented or dirty. Little things count a lot. Be sure to know what your condo corporation’s rules are as they relate to outside door colours, etc and what leeway you may have with those colours.
- Fresh bark or pine straw placed around the base of trees and flowerbeds gives a fresh and maintained look for not a lot of money.
- Wash the outside walls and windows if necessary, including any glass/flooring out on a balcony or roof-top deck.
- Look at the mailbox if you have one. Does it need freshening up? Maybe consider replacing it if it needs it.
- Make sure the numbers on the property make it easy to find, and consider getting new ones if it would improve the look from the street. Cut back and vegetation that may have grown over to obscure the numbers.



# It All Starts with Creating Curb Appeal

- Make the windows sparkle wherever you can reach them safely. Clean windows and repair any caulking or paint that needs attention.
- Slim out any patio/balcony/deck furniture you may have. Set up the furniture as if you were having some relaxing moments out on the balcony—remove all the rest of the things you've probably had stored out there for months if not years.

## Notes:



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# The Entry Way Sets The Tone For The Entire Home

Nothing matches the anticipation of the moment the buyer is thinking what's inside like the first moments in your condominium. The entry is where you set the stage for what's going to be revealed.

Here are some tips to make the front entry experience a great one:

- Does your front entrance and front door make a good first impression? A fresh coat of paint and a seasonal wreath make a good door great.
- Potted plants can add some color and define an entry way if you've got the space for them.
- Does the front entrance light work? Replace the light bulbs to brighten up the entry, and make sure it's on if people are going to be coming at dusk or after dark.
- Make sure the doorbell works.
- Replace any torn or worn screens on storm doors, and make sure the door is in perfect working order. No squeaking, jamming, or sticking locks. Make it effortless to get in the house.
- Once inside, make sure the immediate entry way is free of clutter, shoes, coats, umbrellas and anything that takes up space.
- If your entry way is small, brighten it up with a bright light bulb and a light colored coat of paint if appropriate.
- Weed out all the "stuff" from the entry table, or shelves in the front entry. Pick up extra key rings, mail, and other stuff that gets piled up at the front door.
- Clean out the front closet of all but immediately used coats, boots, shoes, hats, gloves and all the other clutter that gets thrown in the closet. Make the closet look spacious, not cluttered.



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# Tips For Every Room In The House

- Give the suite a real “once over” cleaning. Clean it from top to bottom including baseboards, crown mouldings and those hard-to-get-to corners. Clean houses have a competitive edge over dirty houses.
- Let some air in. Get a fresh breeze going to completely air out the suite and get rid of any “stale” odors you may not even personally notice. Spring time fresh!
- Start packing now. Pack up everything you don’t use right now, put it in boxes and store the boxes out of the house if possible.
- Think model home. Remove “extra” furniture and accessories. Make it appear spacious, not crowded. That favorite chair may have to go for now.
- Clean and deodorize carpets, paying special attention to high traffic areas and stains that can be removed.
- Check all the light fixtures and lamps, replacing burned out or low light bulbs with bright white bulbs. Make sure light switches are functional, consider updating them.
- If the couch, chairs or loveseat need some updating, try a neutral slip cover and add accent color with some throw pillows.
- Check for squeaky doors—add a little WD40 to remove the hinge squeaks.
- If necessary, paint interior walls. Paint is relatively cheap, and a great return on investment. It doesn’t have to be white, but stay away from the other end of the spectrum. Neutrals may be best.
- Remove any peeled or torn wallpaper and borders.
- Check the window coverings to make sure the blinds work. Clean them and keep them open to let in as much light as possible.
- Remove all valuables and make sure confidential documents are out of sight, and safe.
- Weed out the magazine racks, and coffee table. Only the most current magazines should be viewable.
- Make sure the suite smells it’s best at all times. Keep cat boxes clean at all times, and preferably out of the house for showings.



# Tips For Every Room In The House

- Do some plant and flower triage, removing the ones that aren't going to make it. Clean the leaves of the healthy ones and make sure they're watered and looking great.
- Let the buyers see THEIR lives in your house...not yours. Store excess family photos, the "wall of fame" and anything that is too much a reflection of YOUR life. We want them to not get caught up in the museum of your life, and focus on what their life would be like in their new home.
- Put the book shelves on a diet. Pack up most of the books on your shelf, leaving only the larger books and lots of room on the shelves. Overcrowded bookshelves shrink the appearance of a room.
- Make the windows sparkle wherever you can reach them safely. Clean windows and repair any caulking or paint that needs attention.
- Slim out any patio/balcony/deck furniture you may have. Set up the furniture as if you were having some relaxing moments out on the balcony—remove all the rest of the things you've probably had stored out there for months if not years.

## Notes:



# Making The Most Of Your Kitchen & Dining Area

The kitchen is the heart of the home, and it's the most highly valued room by buyers, so you want to make it show it's best.

## Here are some tips to create a captivating kitchen and dining area:

- You can cut down on visual clutter by removing items you normally store on the counter. This will help your kitchen look more spacious.
- Your eat-in kitchen should have a table and chairs in it. Buyers like to see an eat-in kitchen but often don't have the vision to see it as such without the furniture.
- Remove window screens in the kitchen. Screens take away from allowing natural light inside. Plus, no one will notice they are missing.
- It's a good idea to keep some toll-house cookie dough on hand, and bake up a few cookies just before a showing...but don't over do it
- Keep the exotic spices and fish to a minimum when cooking the night before a showing. Work towards achieving a "clean" smell.
- Thoroughly clean all your appliances and cupboards, including the inside of your oven and microwave.
- Set the dining table with your best china to stimulate your buyers' imagination of the dinner parties they'll host.
- Many buyers will look inside your cabinets, so make sure the inside is organized and clean. Also store non-essential items elsewhere to make the cabinet look more spacious
- Clean as much as possible off the countertops. Items such as the coffeemaker, toasters, can openers, salt and pepper shakers, recipe boxes and dish draining rack can be put away. If your counter space is very limited, even remove a counter-top microwave if it's quite large.
- Make sure that your counter is spotless and shiny.
- Make sure that if you keep fruit or flowers on your counter that they are always fresh.



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# Making The Most Of Your Kitchen & Dining Area

- If your cabinets show wear and tear you might want to paint them. A simple trick to update the look of your cabinet doors is to replace your current knobs with new ones. It's much cheaper than getting a new kitchen, but it sure can make a difference.
- Shine your faucets and knobs and use spot removing cleaner to keep them from getting water spots.
- Remove notes, pictures and coupons that are hanging off the front of the refrigerator door. Take all trash out before your home is being shown. Garbage and recycling bins must be out of sight.
- If your kitchen counters are an old style or showing signs of wear—chips, stains or burn marks—consider painting them with a neutral-coloured melamine paint. Amazingly it makes them look almost brand new.

## Notes:



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# Can Buyers See Themselves Living In Your Living Room?

The living and family rooms are where your new buyers will do most of their “living” so you want to make sure and make the space as inviting and ‘neutral’ as possible.

**Here are some tips to make the living and family rooms appear their best:**

- If you have a favorite “old” chair that doesn’t go with the rest of the setting it must go. Big furniture can weigh down a space
- Place a vase with flowers on the coffee table, or you can put a tray with a tea pot and cup set and napkins
- Take down or rearrange certain pictures or objects on walls. Patch and paint if necessary
- Vacuum your floor each morning. You may also want to think about getting your carpets cleaned before potential buyers view your condo. If the carpeting is in bad shape, shampoo it or replace it.
- Clean your fireplace.
- Leave on certain lights during the day. During “showings” turn on all lights and lamps.
- If your furniture shows the effect of raising five kids or if pets have ruined the rugs and upholstery, think about storing or getting rid of your existing furniture. Buy, borrow or rent what you need.
- Put away your holiday decorations—unless you are showing your home during the holiday season.
- Have your DVD collection, CD’s and video games out of sight.
- Open the drapes and blinds. Nothing is more depressing than walking into a home where shades, curtains and drapes are closed. If you do have a sun-blinding south or west view, mitigate that by opening verticals to a 50% point or drop shades a third of the way.
- Remove all knick-knacks under 10 inches tall. Pack them up and put them under the bed.



# Make Your Bathroom(s) Sparkle

Next to the kitchen, the bathroom is the room that gets the most scrutiny and some inexpensive designer tricks can make your bathroom look like a million bucks.

## Here are some tips specifically for the bathroom:

- Always empty bathroom trash cans before showings. Also put the trash can under the vanity if you can since it takes up floor space and you want the bathroom to appear as big as possible.
- A fresh new shower curtain is a great investment – very little money for a big impact.
- Things like toilet cleaners, plungers, and hampers add clutter—put them away while you're selling your condo.
- Keep all reading material out of sight in the bathroom.
- Personal items like hairdryers, makeup kits and hairbrushes should always be neatly placed in cupboards or drawers.
- Hang matching new towels—go for the best looking towels you can. Like shower curtains, they add a nice impact.
- Remove everything from the countertop, except pretty soap sets, candles or fresh flowers
- Check the faucets for leaks, drips or disrepair. Repair, or buy new faucets if they are leaky or worn out. You might consider re-glazing your tub or sink if it has chips or permanent discolourations. Scrape and paint the ceiling if moisture has caused any damage.
- New silicone beading can do wonders for your shower, tub and sink area...especially if caulking is stained or cracking.
- Shine your faucets and knobs and use cleaner to keep them from getting water spots on them.
- Keep your shower and tub area spotless. Buyers will often look behind the curtain...so make sure the area looks as good as it can. Keep shampoos and soaps to a minimum.
- Scrub tiles and bleach the grout so it all sparkles.
- Replace or paint the vanity (using melamine paint in a neutral, matching colour) if it shows excessive wear and tear. Replacing knobs can give an updated look to an older vanity.
- To give a modern look to an older bathroom consider replacing old ceiling or wall light fixtures.

# Look At These Big, Beautiful Bedrooms!

Bedrooms are a key part of the home buying experience. Bigger is better. Nobody comments favorably about “what lovely tiny bedrooms”. Just like other areas of the suite, clutter takes up space and makes rooms look smaller.

## Here are some tips to make your bedrooms look bigger and brighter:

- Candles and fresh flowers are excellent accessories on bedroom furniture.
- New bedspreads or quilts can really make a bedroom look inviting.
- Make your bed look pretty and make sure the bedspread or quilt fits the bed properly and hangs low enough to cover the view under the bed. Buyers won't look under the bed, so you can store other non-essential items there (preferably in low storage boxes)
- Put away the stacks of reading material on night stands and just leave room for one good book.
- In kids rooms, posters, photos, drawings and awards are all personal items that should be taken down for showing the suite. You want the buyers to imagine the rooms as their own.
- Remove the super-ninja turtle posters or torn out magazine covers in kids or teenagers' bedrooms.
- Put away all items that are hanging off the back of doors. Cluttered and clanking doors often make the room feel smaller – especially if they don't allow the door to open (or close) all the way.
- Remember that buyers are most likely going to look in your closets, so a better place to hide things is under the bed. Make sure the closets are as spacious looking as they can be. Remove all the clothes, shoes and stuff that's not being used right away.
- In kids bedrooms be sure and put the toys in boxes or better yet bins with lids that can be shut closed and slid under the bed out of sight.
- Items that you don't need should be taken out of the closet to make them more spacious—get an early start and pack items in boxes and store them in the building locker or a rental storage locker
- Coordinate your clothing in your closets and line shoes up neatly so it looks as organized as possible.

# Create A Clutter Free And Functional Home Office

Working out of the home is a reality for many people today, so a functional home office space can give your home a competitive advantage over other homes on the market.

Many Toronto condo owners share the use of their den as a home office space and as an emergency guest room. Others take over a solarium as their home office.

Try to make the space as functional as possible, and, if it's part of another room, make sure and maintain the main function of that room.

## Here are some home office tips:

- Get some bank boxes and start packing up all the files and paperwork you don't need for every day function.
- Remove big bulky filing cabinets that take up a lot of space, and store them somewhere else to make the office look bigger. Same for extra printers or scanners—store them if they're not essential to your daily work life.
- Clean everything off the desk surface, leaving only your computer and desk lamp. A neat desktop makes the work space look more functional, and the lighting makes it look more inviting.
- Store all personal and confidential or client information out of sight, and set up a password protected screensaver on your desktop.
- Weed out the postings on bulletin boards or wall organizers. A few things are ok to make the office look organized and functional, but an overcrowded bulletin board looks messy.
- Slim out the books from, or even eliminate entirely if possible, any bookshelves that you might have installed. Visually they really impact on the size of the room.
- If your office is a part of another room, make sure it doesn't overpower the main function of the room. If it's in the dining area, consider getting it out of there and into a temporary space somewhere else.



# Making The Most Of Your Laundry Space

Many condo laundry rooms are just a space large enough for a stacking washer/dryer and that's it. If however you've got a larger laundry room, you'll want to make the most of the space by brightening it up and making sure it's clean and inviting.

Nobody wants to go into a dark and crowded room to do laundry, so do your best to make it as inviting as possible.

Here are some simple tips:

- Tidy up and organize your laundry area—if you have items you can give away, recycle or discard, do so.
- If you have unfinished concrete floors paint the concrete to give it a cleaner look.
- Be sure to clean and polish the washer and dryer to give them a bright and shiny look. Remove the dust bunnies from behind the dryer and from the lint filter.
- Put all detergents, laundry items and irons out of sight. Also remove any residue that may have accumulated in the laundry sink (if you have one).
- A bright throw rug in front of the washer and dryer will often help cheer up unfinished laundry rooms.
- If the bi-fold laundry room doors are missing or broken, consider replacing them with new Series 800 bi-folds OR with either a set of stock vertical blinds or a set of basic curtains from Ikea—in a neutral colour. They just need to be trimmed or hemmed at the bottom to be made to fit your space.

## Notes:



