



Mark Cohen is a founding partner of The Condo Store Marketing Systems, a firm specializing in the design, marketing and sales of condo and new home communities in and outside of the GTA. condostorecanada.com
mark@condostorecanada.com

Thinking back to when I purchased my first car. I sauntered into the showroom with one thing on my mind — how much horsepower I could afford. Even though most of the disposable income of my youth was to soon disappear down the gas tank of my '79 Camaro, I felt satisfied. It's the parallel I make to my sales team when we encounter new condo purchasers fixated on square footage. The square footage of a condominium is an important buying criteria, yes, but is it as critical as we make it out to be? I would argue that the way a suite functions and the components that it has is a far more important driver to your purchasing decision than how much footage a condo has.

Need specifics? Of course you do. I have seen an abundance of new one-bedroom condos that now feature an additional small powder room. This has been a hit in our experiences with people who may not want to share their primary W/C with a guest. Further to that, suites with a den or some small in-suite storage space allow one to maintain some sense of clutter management in the condo lifestyle. Balconies/terraces with a little bit of extra depth allow one to eat meals regularly in an outdoor environment. This may not be a regular occurrence but an amazing option for a condo owner. I have the benefit of working with some of the most brilliant interior designers in the city, and love to watch them perform wizardry on suite layouts.

Renowned Toronto designer — and a lifelong friend of mine — Alex Chapman of Union 31 always reminds me of his three guiding principles of apartment living: abundance of light, easy flowing space, and wide shallow conceptual design. When possible I try and relay this to the

Look beyond square footage when **condo** **shopping**

people I speak to. The driving force is always suite livability and functionality. Let's face it, high-rise space is expensive. Rooms that have dual purpose or that have a clever component can be a remarkable ease to one's lifestyle. I have recently seen some dining 'bars' that can move. This allows you to make your space 'function specific'. Components such as integrated shelving, maximization of cabinetry, fireplaces, increased ceiling heights, powder rooms, in-suite storage, breakfast bars, microwave range hood fans, gas on the balcony, floating vanities, etc. now take a front seat to plain old expensive square footage.

No two homeowners are the same, which is why you have to get down to the nitty gritty when analyzing your day to day lifestyle and the right condo for it. Big on dining? Love entertaining? Enjoy outdoor space? Like gas cooking? Need an above average amount of storage? don't need a bathtub? Sucker for fireplaces? The right condominium is out there for you. The choice in this city is fantastic, and developers continue to push the bar in the world of suite functionality. I had a great conversation with a young couple the other day who we were able to find a condominium for at IT Lofts on College Street with outdoor planters on the terrace. This was a modest sized outdoor space, but the tranquility and privacy of outdoor planters was worth a hundred feet. Just a simple, thoughtful and clever move by a condo developer. I also explained to them that a clever "component filled" suite can fit their lifestyle just as well as one that may be larger without the livability features, not to mention cheaper to purchase and less expensive from a maintenance fees perspective.

I strongly urge you to challenge yourself when condominium shopping. The nuances of your life paint a picture of the perfect condo for you. Space is a premium in today's marketplace, but ingenuity and innovation are hallmarks of the great Toronto condo developers. Take advantage of that.

By the way, today I drive something that is a little bit more modest and with a little less horsepower. However, the interior components are extraordinary and my driving experience is superior to that of my days with "My Whip" (my '79 Camaro). **CL**