

Time To Re-Decorate? Part 3

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Lots of us are living in smaller spaces, moving into condos or townhomes perhaps because we want to downsize or make a lifestyle change. More and more, we find couples with young children living in the downtown core of Vancouver.

A few guidelines when decorating a smaller space:

It's all about harmony and unity, simplicity and sophistication.

The first thing we need to do when we are planning a move into a smaller footprint is to **make a floor plan**. Either measure the space yourself and draw on graph paper to a scale of 1/4" = 1 foot or have someone help you with this. It's important. Having the floor plan in hand will allow you to measure the furnishings you are planning on bringing with you so you'll know if they will fit when you move and the same goes when you want to buy new pieces. While you're at it, measure the doorways in your new place to make sure the furniture will fit through the door! Don't want that problem do we?

At this time you are probably going to be editing of your stuff. I think it's a good plan to keep what you love and recycle or give away what you don't. Remember, storage or lack of, will probably rear its ugly head. You know what they say, less is more! Having furnishings that are multi-purpose and functional is a good idea.

Now that we have a smaller space to decorate, perhaps we can up the ante and go for more \$\$ finishes because we don't need as much of them! Something to think about!

Consider built-in's if possible. They look great and provide lots of additional storage.

More open floor plans if possible, which will visually increase the space.

The **colour schemes** best suited to smaller spaces are, monochromatic (adding some neutrals for accent), neutral and analogous, with the addition of some black & white for punch. Lighter and muted colours will increase "visual" space. You can choose to add accent colours for a punch of colour! Consider 10% the right amount for the accent colours. Avoid too much contrast with the colours.

As in any dwelling, **keeping the same style throughout** creates harmony and flow.

Keep in mind the function and activities that will take place in the space, especially when arranging furniture. The following guide is useful which is why it is in Part 2 and 3.

- A coffee table should be 1 to 1½ feet from the sofa, otherwise it is too far to reach for your glass of vino!

- A major passageway should be 3 – 6 feet wide.
- A minor passageway should be 1 ½ - 2 feet wide. Space from the dining table to wall should be 3 feet to allow for chairs to be pushed back.
- Sofas and chairs should be placed 8 – 10 feet across from each other makes for easy conversation.

When arranging furniture: place large pieces 1st, smaller pieces 2nd and accessories last.

Keep the use of patterns to a minimum (a maximum of 3 is considered best). Tone on tone fabrics will work well.

Furniture should have simple, clean lines which will increase the feeling of “visual” space. Know when to stop, keep things simple.

Avoid clutter, or just too much stuff, it tends to make the space feel smaller, leave some empty space, it will make things feel more open.

Choose bathroom fixtures and kitchen appliances with the same finish, i.e.: chrome/stainless steel. Use similar coloured countertops in both spaces.

Vertical furnishings will increase the height of the room, i.e. draperies hung from the ceilings.

Horizontal placement of furniture and pictures will increase the feeling of width. Something to keep in mind is that the use of too many vertical furnishings will increase the formality of the space. What you are looking for is a variety of both with the addition of a few curved items.

Smooth and shiny surfaces visually expand a space because they reflect light.

Add a mixture of fine to medium textures, tone on tone will give the look and feel of texture.

Fabrics with large sprawling patterns that show a lot of background will expand visual space, i.e. a large damask pattern. Match the background colour of a window covering fabric with wall colour.

Mirrors, placed appropriately, reflect light, which increases visual space. Just be careful about what they reflect, i.e. you don't want to hang a mirror in the dining area so that the people facing it see themselves throughout the meal, unless they are narcissistic!

Entryways in small spaces can be a challenge and they make the first impression! Ask yourself where you will I put the coats, place a mirror to check myself before going out the door, lighting that's in keeping with the rest of the dwelling. Consider where you want to put your keys, set down the mail, and have a place to sit down to put on/take off your shoes. Hopefully there will be a closet but not always!

Probably a no-brainer but closets in smaller spaces need to be well planned for efficiency and to use all the space effectively. Check out closet planners to see how to maximize storage.

Now, is this not fun? Yup, there's a Part 4!