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# CONDO TOWNHOME & LOFT LIVINGAZ

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## Modern meets manageable

**Condo design evolves to a comfortable 'transitional' style**

By Elise Riley

**P**anoramic windows, open floor plans and urban settings make condominiums ideal places to enjoy modern design. But for homeowners who are downsizing from traditional single-family homes, there is a way to bridge the gap between old-school and a more contemporary look.

Meet "transitional" design, the trend that takes minimalist, simplistic cues from modern design but adds comfort and the practicality of traditional design.

"Our particular project is transitional," said Michelle Brendel, design manager at The Enclave at Borgata in Scottsdale. "That's what I'm noticing our homebuyers are



wanting. Transitional is a catch-all for the consumer right now. It allows them to use the pieces they already have. Back in the day this was called eclectic.”

#### All the room you need

Open floor plans in condominiums provide ample space for dining, entertaining and lounging. Kitchens tend to be part of the main living space while bedrooms are appropriately sized but not oversized.

“We wanted to create a comfortable living space,” said Nikki Erbele, director of development for Liv URBN, developer of The Mason townhomes “We spent a lot of time thinking through floor plans and space planning. It’s really how you go about utilizing that space.”

Erbele said that moving from 3,500 square-feet to 2,000 square-feet might sound like a significant change but with the right design it doesn’t have to feel like a sacrifice.

“More people are going toward those smaller layouts in terms of square-footage,” Erbele said. “It doesn’t feel like you’re being cramped in a tight space.”

Tim Sprague, owner and principal at Habitat Metro, which developed Portland on

*“You might not keep the sofa, but you’ll repurpose the coffee table.”*

– Michelle Brendel, design manager,  
The Enclave at Borgata

the Park in Downtown Phoenix, said it all comes down to efficiency.

“It’s about paying attention to your buyers and giving them what they want,” Sprague said. “The overall trend is to be smaller. But the flip side with that is that if it’s smaller, you need to be able to make it more efficient. You also have to remember that the lines between live and work are blended now.”

Sprague said that Portland on the Park has designed public common-area spaces for residents to have business or social meetings as well as to enjoy a quiet respite alone.

#### Efficient furnishings for efficient spaces

When homeowners, particularly those who are downsizing, move into a new condominium, they don’t need to buy all-new modern furniture. Instead, thanks to the trend toward transitional design, it’s all about being efficient.

“With condo living, certainly at The Mason, it’s about location,” said Bianca

Olsson, senior interior designer with Est Est who decorated the model at The Mason, a townhome community in Phoenix. “It’s smaller than a single-family home, so you want to utilize the space as easily as you can. You’re talking about furniture that’s sized for the room, that doesn’t distract from your great views. Transitional is lighter colors, lighter finishes, cleaner lines. Where you used to have big rolled arms, big carvings, it’s more tailored and not over-designed.”

#### Inventory current furnishings

Designers recommend taking an inventory of existing furniture and deciding what translates best to the new space. They also remind buyers that the condo lifestyle is simpler — it’s lock-and-leave.

“This is about becoming unencumbered,” Brendel said. “By not having those heavy pieces, it frees you up for something that’s cleaner. Everything is about comfort and clean lines.”



Getty Images

#### Thinking of trying out transitional design? Consider these tips:

- **Stick to neutrals.** Use shades of gray, tan and cream for upholstery.
- **Add pops of color.** Select pillows and throws to add touches of color that you can swap out seasonally or as your taste changes.
- **Avoid anything ornate.** Carvings on sofas, extra embellishments and other eye-catching add-ons can take away from the simplicity of a transitional setting.
- **Consider the scale.** Find sofas and chairs that are the appropriate length and height for the space.