

# POST HOMES

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## CONDOS

### INSURANCE

Who covers cost of fixing ceiling after a roof leak? *PH4*

## DECOR

### LAMPLIGHTER

Jeffrey Fisher finds great solutions for dull days. *PH4*



## GIFTS

### HANDMADE

Ideas for those who appreciate the artisanal. *PH6*



## IN PRAISE OF SHORT STOREYS

When you can't choose between a house and a tower, a smaller condo building makes sense

*By Iris Benarolia*

The New York City brownstone, whose stairs Carrie Bradshaw famously scampered up and down in Louboutin heels, is not a residential style commonly associated with Toronto. Nor are the sassy walk-up flats found in such cities as Paris and Montreal. Ah, the cinematic romance of transiting from urban street to home without the use of an elevator!

The reality is, people tend to equate Toronto's multi-unit housing stock with towering condominiums — that's not entirely a bad thing, says Evan Johnsen, who runs the boutique firm Circa ([circabuilt.com](http://circabuilt.com)) together with his partner Nick Spiegel, transforming dated rental apartment buildings into stylish, sustainable units that are built really well. Their raison d'être is to beautify buildings in established neighbourhoods, and while Mr. Johnsen lauds select sky-high condos, he feels Toronto should shake things up with more small-scale projects.

"[Smaller] developments create richer urban fabrics and much more interesting communities, and really that's what makes places like Bar-

celona and Manhattan work," Mr. Johnsen says. "In those cities, lots of people own a flat. And I don't think the city makes it particularly difficult to turn a four-storey building into four apartments that four people can own."

On the flipside, Mr. Johnsen likens the process of dealing with Toronto's bureaucracy in Kafkaesque terms, where housing developers endure "a certain amount of suffering" to get a project started. (We'll spare you the boring details.)

Evidently the red-tape ordeal hasn't been a detriment for Circa, which is on its third project: A construction team is in full swing at 1733 Bathurst St., at Eglinton, which is set for occupancy this summer. Priced from \$649,000 to \$749,000, at 979 to 1,189 square feet, three of the eight units sold in the first 48 hours. Past Circa projects include the six-unit Lytton Park and four-unit High Park Boulevard. Both are green to the extreme.

"High Park Boulevard is so super-insulated the people who live there, joke they heat the building by having their kids run around," Mr. Johnsen says.

See **SHORT** on Page PH7

Purchaser Samantha Barone at Cedarvale Ravine, near her soon-to-be home.

MICHELLE SIU FOR NATIONAL POST



“ We couldn’t be happier. I love the fact that it’s like having a house, but not having all the upkeep of a house. And we’re surrounded by million-dollar homes — that’s always nice. — *Samantha Barone*, purchaser



HANDOUT

Renderings of 1733 Bathurst, where a full interior reconstruction created smart homes.

# LIKE A HOUSE, BUT NOT

**SHORT**  
Continued from Page PH1

The Bathurst site shares the same eco-obsession: “We go hard in that direction,” Mr. Johnsen says. (Mr. Spiegel knows a thing or two about the subject, having run for the Green Party.) “We do what makes sense: grey-water recovery, drain-heat recovery — water is a quite an unsung story,” he says of the interior rebuild by the sustainable architectural firm Solares. “A lot of it is also just building well and not with disposable materials.”

To wit: Feel free to really handle the kitchen cabinets at 1733, which won’t crumple if your kid dings her Tonka truck into it. They’re wood, not laminate. Ditto wall trim and window casings instead of skimpy MDF, which only looks good for about the first month you live with it.

Finessed by the excellent design firm Mazen Studio, units feel timeless and modern, and have been kitted out in brands you’d expect to find from an Upper Village address: Bosch, Bertazzoni, Fisher & Paykel, Scavolini and Ginger’s/Elte.

Mr. Johnsen predicts the remaining apartments will be purchased by “someone who bought 624 sq. ft. at King and Bathurst five years ago pre-construction and earned equity from that transaction.” Having outgrown single life, the person now needs bedrooms and a location in a good school zone. It’s the Goldilocks and the Three Bears story of threes: This condo is too small, that

single-family house is too expensive, but this one on Bathurst feels just right.

Samantha Barone followed that narrative. The 30-year-old mortgage agent with the Lang Team had been looking for a home with her fiancé for quite some time. They started the search at a high-rise at Yonge and Front, “then realized we couldn’t grow into the space,” she says.

They then turned to houses, becoming frustrated after being outbid several times. Choosing lower-priced places also didn’t work: “We could get a decent home from \$650,000 to \$700,000 but then we would have to throw another \$100,000 to \$200,000 to get it up to date.”

When the couple saw the salvaged redbrick exterior of 1733 Bathurst, they were immediately interested. After reading about the finishes — “the heated concrete floors, top-notch appliances, soundproofing, that it’s a smart home, things that don’t come standard in most projects” — they bought a three-bedroom, two-bathroom 1,189-sq.-ft. unit with a 240-sq.-ft. terrace.

Ms. Barone says she’s thrilled with the outcome of her search. Her Goldilocks ending means she won’t have to bear the brunt of renovating an old house that would have likely come in over-budget (and she can focus on less stressful things like, er, planning a wedding).

“We couldn’t be happier. I love the fact that it’s like having a house, but not having all of the upkeep of a house,” Ms. Barone says. “And we’re surrounded by million-dollar homes — that’s always nice.”

National Post

# Say thanks to all your bric-a-brac, and toss it

## TIDYING BY TOPIC

By KATHERINE ROTH

If you haven’t communed with your socks lately, thanked your shoes for their hard work or bowed (at least mentally) to your home in appreciation, maybe it’s time to consider it.

“It is very natural for me to say thank you to the goods that support us,” says Marie Kondo, whose method of lovingly connecting with belongings that “spark joy” and bidding a fond but firm farewell to the rest is popular in Japan and now catching on elsewhere.

Kondo’s book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, is a bestseller in Japan, Germany and Britain. Ms. Kondo has been the subject of a movie in Japan, and the waiting list for her services, once three months long, is now so extensive she has temporarily stopped accepting clients.

Her “KonMarie Method,” as she calls it in the diminutive and illustration-free volume, encourages a rapid, transformative one-time organizing event — completed methodically and lovingly in no more than six months. It’s not an ongoing battle against clutter.

Ms. Kondo sees “tidying” as a cheerful conversation in which anything that doesn’t “spark joy” is to be touched,

thanked and ceremonially sent on its way toward a better life elsewhere, where it can discover a more appreciative owner.

The result can be life-changing, she says. Clients suddenly find themselves surrounded entirely by things that provide clarity, unencumbered by belongings that carry past baggage (unwanted gifts, clothes that no longer fit) or anxieties about the future (does anyone need more cotton swabs than there are days of the year?). Even her book, she says, should be quickly discarded when it’s no longer needed.

## There’s no need to let your family know what you throw out

Part of what makes her method unusually speedy is that instead of decluttering room by room, she tackles a household by subject, starting with what’s easiest to part with. So, clothes, then books, then documents, then miscellany and, last and most difficult, photos and mementos.

Instead of deciding what to discard, the focus should be on what to keep: Those few things that spark sufficient joy or are truly necessary.

How to contend with family members unready to join in?

If possible, carry the bags out of the house yourself. “There’s no need to let your family know the details of what you throw out or donate,” she writes, although she advises against secretly disposing of other people’s things. “You can leave communal spaces to the end. The first step is to confront your own stuff.”

She then turns to organizing what’s left. The key, she says, is storing things mostly in drawers, arranged so that everything can be seen at a glance and nothing is stacked.

So T-shirts and socks (the ones you’ve kept because they make you happy) are rolled — no painfully balled-up socks with moaning elastic here — and beautifully arranged like sushi in a bento box.

Closets are meticulously arranged to fit everything from electric fans (at the bottom) and spare blankets (on top) to carefully arranged clear drawers of beloved belongings and a shelf or two with a few joy-sparking books.

Papers and documents — there won’t be many since few are truly necessary and they generally hold so little joy — are likewise filed and not stacked.

Ms. Kondo says she has been obsessed with “tidying” since she was five. After years of work at a Shinto shrine, she realized her calling as a professional consultant on attaining the joy of minimalism.

“The inside of a house or apartment after decluttering has much in common with a Shinto shrine ... a place where there are no unnecessary things, and our thoughts become clear. It is the place where we appreciate all the things that support us.”

The Associated Press

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