CASE STUDY / RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Which condo layouts residents actually want, and why

Turning feature preferences and floor-plan reactions into a design brief a developer could act on.

FOR	Developers and the built environment
CLIENT	A major Greater Toronto condominium developer
ROLE	Designed, fielded, analyzed and reported by my practice, 2023

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The best design ideas protected storage, light and separate spaces

A developer and its interior-design partner wanted evidence to guide new suite layouts and upgrade options. Prospective residents put storage first, in the kitchen and bedroom above all, followed by natural light and distinct spaces for distinct activities.

Attractive upgrades that cost counter or closet space lost support once residents saw the trade-off. The wide one-plus-den plan won on separation and light. Seven preference segments meant upgrade packages should be chosen project by project.

Design priorities grounded in daily use

n=575 prospective residents · 7 preference segments · 3 appliances reach 97%

BACKGROUND

Built around the people who would live there, not investors

575

RESPONDENTS

Adults 18+, open to buying or renting a condo to live in. Investors screened out.

GTHA

GEOGRAPHY

Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

1 week

ONLINE FIELDWORK

October 2023

The developer was exploring a new approach to design decision-making: gather evidence on what residents struggle with today, test proposed floor plans, and measure the value of possible upgrades before committing the design brief to its interior-design agency.

THREE OBJECTIVES

Current pain points · Reactions to proposed layouts · Preference share for upgrades

Each research method answered a different design question

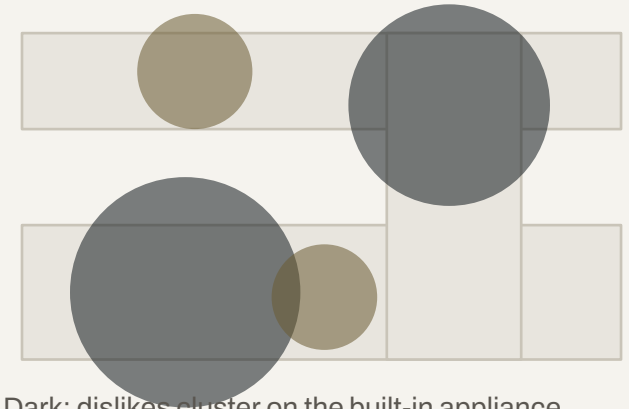
Design question	Research approach
What is difficult in today's home?	Current uses, pain points and open-ended feedback, room by room
Which features deserve priority?	Paired feature comparisons and MaxDiff preference share
Whose preferences differ?	Latent class segmentation on the MaxDiff data
What works, and where, within a layout?	Click-on-plan diagnostics: respondents clicked the part of a floor plan or render they liked or disliked and explained why (heat maps)
Which appliance set should the design accommodate?	TURF analysis of appliances owned or wanted

ACTION / FEATURE DIAGNOSIS

A visual upgrade could carry a functional cost

Feature idea	What appealed	What needed attention
Upgraded kitchen	Integrated, attractive appearance	Counter and cupboard space lost to built-in appliances that cannot be moved or replaced
Pull-out island surface	Room for dining and guests	Where the extra chairs would go
Bedroom workbench	A bright, inviting place to sit or work	The closet space it displaced

CLICK DIAGNOSTICS, KITCHEN RENDER



Dark: dislikes cluster on the built-in appliance column and the counter. Brass: likes on the finish and integrated look.

Respondents clicked the part of the render they reacted to and explained why, so feedback attached to a location rather than the whole design. The upgraded kitchen drew the most comments of any feature, most of them about recovering counter and storage space.

The upgraded kitchen led on preference, and the runners-up may lead on margin

Upgrade option	Preference share	Reading
Upgraded kitchen	Highest	Reflects the perceived value of the appliances; likely to rise if counter and storage feedback is built in
Walk-in bedroom closet	60 to 75% of the kitchen's demand	Strong storage payoff; may be a higher-margin option to offer
Laundry room with built-in storage	60 to 75% of the kitchen's demand	Same logic; residents want laundry in its own space
Kitchen island with pull-out surface	60 to 75% of the kitchen's demand	Doubles as a second dining table for guests
Entry closet with bench; split bathroom	Marginal	Probably not worth offering as paid upgrades

MaxDiff preference share, n=575. Shares are relative to the upgraded kitchen; exact values are withheld.

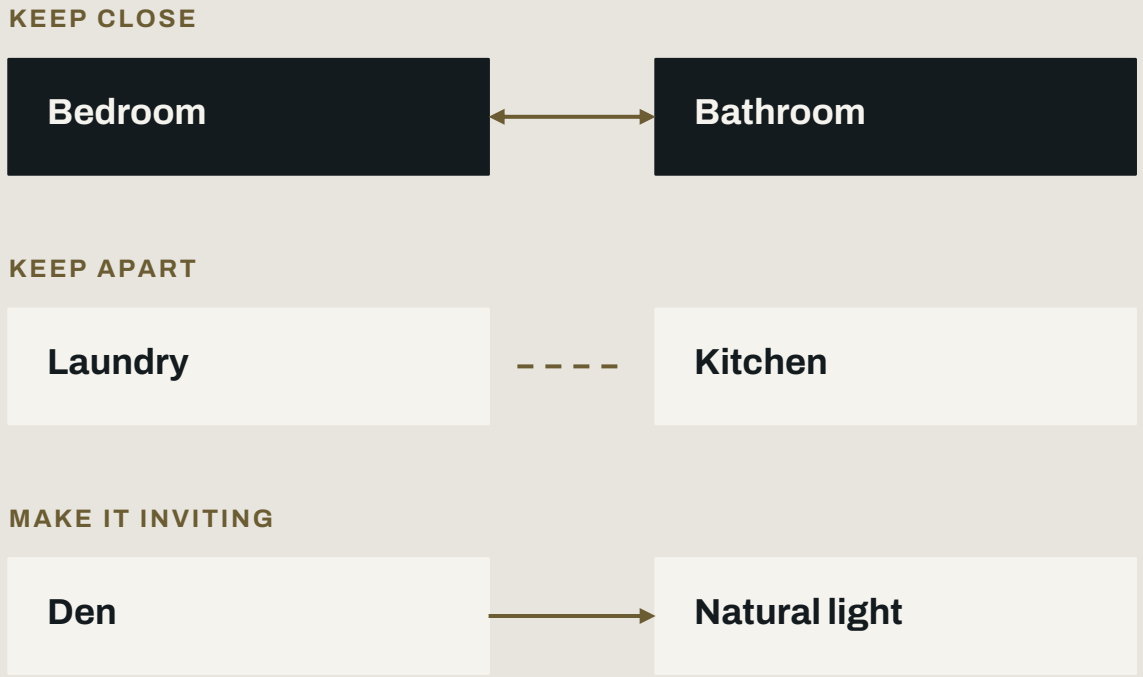
SEVEN PREFERENCE SEGMENTS

Latent class analysis on the MaxDiff data found seven groups. Storage priority shifted with household stage and size: larger and older families leaned to the upgraded kitchen, small young families to convenience upgrades, higher-income buyers cared less about storage. The upgrade mix should follow the target buyer of each project.

The wide one-plus-den plan won on separation, light and room to entertain

Among the one-plus-den options, the wide plan was the clear preference. Residents pointed to a kitchen separated from the bathroom and laundry, a den with real daylight, space to host, and the option of a walk-in closet. The runner-up lost mainly because its walk-in closet pushed the bathroom away from the bedroom. Among one-bedroom plans the wide layout also led, narrowly, for the same reasons.

Space to entertain surprised the design team: the best-liked plans drew the most comments about hosting guests.



Relationship diagram summarizing floor-plan feedback. Proprietary plans are not reproduced.

ACTION / APPLIANCE PLANNING

Designing for three appliances reaches 97% of residents. A fourth adds under 1%.

01
List appliances

What residents own or want to own, from blenders to pressure cookers.

02
Compare sets

TURF evaluates every combination for unduplicated reach and frequency.

03
Check the addition

How much new reach does one more item add?

97%

REACH WITH THREE

Blender, toaster and coffee maker

<1%

ADDED BY A FOURTH

A toaster oven adds almost no new reach

DESIGN IMPLICATION

Air fryers were the top “want to own” item. An oven with a built-in air fryer saves counter space and meets the demand.

Reach means owning or wanting at least one appliance in the set. TURF: Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency.

The study surfaced two things the brief did not ask for

DEN ORIENTATION

Dens arranged for good feng shui drew specific praise

Residents preferred dens with daylight rather than a tucked-away corner, and several singled out layouts where the desk faces the entrance. A small cultural design consideration that matters in the GTA buyer mix, and one a floor-plan test would never reveal without location-specific feedback.

FURNISHED PACKAGES

44% were strongly interested in buying furniture from the builder

Interest concentrated on complete packages with modular solutions rather than single pieces. A separate revenue line for the developer worth exploring.

Both findings were reported alongside the core design priorities so the client could decide whether to pursue them.

RESULT

The findings translated into specific design priorities

Priority	Guidance for the design brief
Protect	Storage in high-use areas, natural light and useful work surfaces
Refine	Attractive features that reduce counter space or storage, so they keep their appeal without the cost
Separate	Laundry from kitchen, and bathroom close to bedroom, where residents expressed discomfort
Tailor	Upgrade options to the target residents of each development, using the seven segments

Delivered as a full report with room-by-room diagnostics, floor-plan heat maps, preference shares by segment and demographic, and the TURF results.

RESULT / EXPERTISE

Preference scores became a design brief the team could build from.

I design studies where every question maps to a specific decision, so the report reads as a set of priorities rather than a stack of charts.

Quantitative design	Combine prioritization with diagnostic feedback in one instrument.
Advanced analysis	Apply MaxDiff, latent class, TURF and click diagnostics to distinct questions.
Decision support	Translate patterns into priorities a design team can act on.

Discuss your project kenjfield@gmail.com

ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

Client, floor plans, and exact figures are withheld or generalized to protect confidentiality. Findings are summarized; no sales, absorption or margin outcomes are claimed.