

10 Ways To Tell If a Home Renovation is Well Done

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DC's housing market is full of houses and condos that have been recently renovated by developers. The quality of these renovations varies greatly, and we wondered if there was a way for house hunters to tell the good renovations from the bad.

Martin Ditto has done his share of renovations while developing houses and multi-family buildings through his company [Ditto Residential](#), and he gave us a few pointers.

These tips are not foolproof: a home may have fancy appliances but shoddy workmanship where it counts, or be well done throughout but have mid-grade fixtures. Still, here are ten tips that we hope will help:

1. Look at the locks. Schlage and Baldwin are the “gold standards,” said Ditto, while a Home Depot or Quickset lock may indicate a renovator who wasn't willing to spend the extra money.
2. The quality of appliances vary greatly. Write down the serial numbers and see what the developer paid for the appliances.
3. Take note of the bathroom fixtures, and do some research on the price and quality. Kohler is widely used and respected, and a rain shower often costs significantly more than a typical shower head. Again, a mid-range product doesn't necessarily mean that the house is not well done, but a high-range product shows that the developer was willing to invest more.
4. The quality of plumbing fixtures can be determined by weight; the heavier the fixture, the more metal used, which generally translates to a more expensive product. You may not be able to pick up mounted fixtures, but holding a handle may give a sense of the weight.

5. Doors also fall into the “the heavier, the better” category. Swing the interior doors to determine their weight; solid core doors are heavier than hollow core, and are more expensive.
6. Cabinets and kitchen drawers also vary. One trick is to look at the drawers to see if they are [dovetailed](#). Dovetailed woodwork indicates a higher quality, though a lack of dovetailing doesn’t necessarily indicate a poor job. [Here](#) are a few ways to check out the cabinets.
7. Perhaps the biggest worry when buying a renovated home is whether the developer has covered up large problems — mold, cracks in the foundation, a bad electrical system — with drywall or quick fixes. Look for water damage, which may indicate mold, or bring a trusted inspector or experienced real estate agent with you.
8. To that end, get your hands on the inspection report if you can.
9. An A/C system can be a good indicator of how much the developer cares. The difference between the cheaper systems and the nicer ones, like Trane and Carrier, can be just a few hundred dollars and is sometimes determined by the installer; seeing a Trane or Carrier means that you have a developer who insisted on a better system.
10. Finally, a good developer is usually willing to put their name on the product. If you have a hard time finding out who is responsible for developing or renovating the home, you have a right to be suspicious. Don’t be afraid to ask for references of past work, and call the current owners to find out if they are happy in the home.

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