

# HDR — Raising the Bar on Real Estate's #1 Tool, Photography

By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

Survey after survey has proven that the number *and quality* of photographs makes the biggest difference when it comes to marketing real estate listings. There is wide variation in what listing agents are willing to spend on this important aspect of their marketing. At one end of the spectrum are agents who use their smartphone or a point-and-shoot digital camera. At the other end are agents who hire a professional photographer to shoot still photos, and even a videographer to create a video tour.

For Golden Real Estate, I've chosen to do both tasks in-house and have, over time, increased the quality of our equipment. After starting with a point-and-shoot camera, I upgraded to a Nikon digital SLR with a wide angle lens and flash attachment for interior pictures and a cou-

ple telephoto lenses for exterior views such as of mountain peaks and city lights.

Then I discovered HDR, which stands for High Dynamic Range photography. At last November's Realtor convention in San Francisco I invested in a system which adds this capability to our Nikon camera.

Below are matched photos of the same scenes. Both were shot with the same Nikon camera, but the ones on the right were created applying HDR technology.

Each HDR photograph is a software-generated composite of multiple exposures, with the software choosing the best exposure for each element of the photograph. As a result, I obtain both good outdoor views through windows and perfect "lighting" on each interior element.

There is no flash used. Instead, the camera, mounted on a tripod, takes nine separate exposures using only available light.

At first, I figured that HDR imaging was only necessary for scenes which include a window, but I've come to realize that all interior and even some exterior scenes can benefit from this process. Although the difference in the windows is most striking, notice the extra detail obtained from interior elements such as furniture and light fixtures. To help you more fully appreciate the quality of the HDR photos, I have posted these *and additional examples* on my blog. To see them, go to [www.JimSmithBlog.com](http://www.JimSmithBlog.com).

It takes special equipment and

special software to take these pictures. It also takes some training, so instead of just making the equipment available to all our agents, I made the decision to have the staffer who has mastered the process take the photos of each agent's listings, at no cost to them.

Recently I discovered that the same technology can be applied to video. How does it work? The video camera, which records, say, at 30 frames per second, underexposes and overexposes every other frame. Software then processes the resulting file, creating a similar HDR effect frame by frame. I'm looking into acquiring this technology for Golden Real Estate to further enhance the video tours we create for all listings.

## Slab Granite Isn't the Only Upgrade for Countertops

As an active Realtor, I show lots of homes to lots of buyers throughout the year, and although I've seen a lot of slab granite countertops, occasionally I also encounter many less common — and very attractive — alternative materials.

Despite granite's near-universal appeal, I'm a big fan of Corian countertops, especially when they have integrated kitchen sinks with no seams to catch dirt. Another nice thing about Corian is that it is American made — including in Denver — and not shipped from distant continents. In addition, I find it easier to clean and maintain.

I've seen some other beautiful materials used, including quartz, glass & concrete. Combined with great interior design, backsplashes, accent walls and stainless steel appliances, the effect can be stunning. In researching this article, I did a web search for "sustainable countertop choices" to see what's available that doesn't consume as much energy to create, ship and install. There are many choices of "green" countertops, as described on the website [www.HouseLogic.com](http://www.HouseLogic.com). That article describes countertops made from recycled paper using low-VOC resins, reclaimed wood countertops, and recycled glass-and-concrete countertops.

Search the web yourself, and you'll discover there's a world of alternatives to slab granite countertops, one of which might be right for you.

WITHOUT USING HDR



USING HDR



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