
Planning the Contemporary Smart Home

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What does a vice president of planning and design do at a real estate marketing group?

We work with a development team, which includes the developer and the managing director on a property, to really understand market expectations for a specific site. We recommend potential designers, and what should be the best strategy in terms of unit mix, the size of the rooms, the linear footage of closets and kitchens, what features should be included.

How do you determine market expectations for a smart home?

The general priorities for buyers these days are craftsmanship of construction, flexible floor plans, the quality of the building systems and the design of the residences. When we start to look at smart homes, the challenge is how to make the home more energy efficient through the

HVAC, the lighting and the consumption of all the appliances. The smart homes of the future will integrate not only the performance of these systems, but also the control of them. That means control of anything, from the entertainment and communications to security and environmental functions. This is more than turning on all the lights from the foyer — but taking it to the next level with an iPad or some other user-friendly interface, where you can control various systems within the residence from not only your living room couch but from your subway ride to work via the Internet.

So integration is the key.

I think so, and that is interesting for my team in terms of the design process of the properties that we are currently working on that might not come to market for another two or three years. We are trying to

create that dialogue at the beginning of the planning process, and prioritize the finishes. It isn't about bells and whistles and gimmicks; it is the integration of technologies and embellishments that really helps the performance of the space and gives buyers a sense of a truly holistic approach.

What are the most compelling components of a smart home these days?

Benchmarks for new condos include programmable HVAC systems, at the



least from a local thermostat, and lighting controls — like the Lutron system where you can turn all the lights on and off from a foyer or a bedside table. Data and computer systems, with cabling to every room, need to be connected to a single source — like a hall closet. That makes it easy to upgrade later without ripping down walls. The Internet needs to be coordinated with entertainment systems, and having infrastructure that is well planned makes it easier.

Acoustics and sound attenuation between floors and residences, and sound insulating from the hallway, are another part of a smart home. You don't want to hear clicking heels in the hallway. Energy Star appliances are another common metric. Energy

Star can reduce your energy usage by anywhere from 10 to 50 percent.

Another factor is window treatments. A fantastic feature is pre-wiring to every window, so if a buyer wants to have motorized shades, they can do it.

Is there a killer app for home automation on the horizon?

The killer app is using a single remote control — an iPad, an iPod or some other home automation device not only to turn things on and off, but to schedule them. When you are coming home, you can use them to cool down the apartment, or to look at all the images from the security cameras while you are away on vacation. This can all be a part of an integrated system.

What are some of the future directions smart homes are moving in?

One trend that will start to come into residential construction and other civic structures in New York is passive design of an airtight building, which is an opportunity to slash consumption by as much as 90 percent. These buildings are heated primarily by solar gain, while the energy loss is minimized. A passive building also gains heat from people and equipment inside.

Other intriguing trends to watch are solar water heating and photovoltaic systems that supply electricity for radiant heating and appliances. ■