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A photograph of a modern living room. In the foreground, there is a light-colored sofa with several pillows, a wooden coffee table, and two wooden chairs with cane backs. A large, white, conical pendant light hangs from the ceiling. To the right, a staircase with wooden steps and a white railing leads up. The room is filled with natural light from a large window in the background, which offers a view of a city skyline. The overall aesthetic is clean, bright, and contemporary.

Technology Comes Home

By Roger Grody

Lagging behind telephones and automobiles, the American home has been slow in adopting cutting-edge technologies. But that's changing.

Ubiquitous in luxury real estate listings and technology magazines, the “smart home” has been a buzzword for decades but is finally emerging as an essential component of modern living. A fully-integrated house — one offering control of everything from lighting, temperature and sound to the activation of kitchen appliances or security alarms from one’s smartphone — is a feature that buyers are increasingly demanding. Smart home technologies not only enhance convenience, but ensure safety and sustainability.

Home automation, once viewed as an unnecessary indulgence in super-luxury

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Savant provides integrated technologies that control temperature, lighting, audio, security and more — inside and outside — from the tap of a phone.

properties, has become mainstream. Not only do mass-market homebuilders promote smart home technologies, but the proliferation of Amazon’s Alexa and Google Assistant (as well as popular devices like Ring video doorbells) has made once-futuristic concepts commonplace, fueling a \$50 billion industry.

With the right infrastructure and accessories, any home environment can be seamlessly controlled from a mobile device hundreds of miles away. Entertaining becomes effortless and sophisticated as smart home technologies allow owners to create a distinct ambiance in every room. Lighting can be

dimmed to perfection and music customized for any occasion, all directed through the tap of a wall-mounted keypad, smartphone or tablet — or simply activated by voice.

“For decades, our industry has provided solutions to homeowners and business owners around the world that connect them, bring joy and create a safer environment,” said CEO John Heyman of smart home control system-maker Control4 during the pandemic. While the vast majority of experience with the company’s products previously occurred on evenings or weekends, the tech executive reported that COVID-19 dramatically changed the equation.

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For all homeowners, security is one of the highest priorities in home automation and new advancements not only provide remote arming of alarm systems but can enable keyless entry. Such spy-tech gear was once reserved for James Bond or Ethan Hunt, but biometric authentication has become standard procedure for unlocking millions of smartphones. While cameras

equipped with facial recognition are still in their infancy for home use, major manufacturers such as Honeywell, Google Nest and LG have already entered the market.

Emerging technologies utilizing fingerprints or facial recognition offer broader implications for the smart home, well beyond security. Photographic recognition of an authorized entrant can also be used to reset the thermostat to his or her preferred temperature, adjust the lighting or initiate a desired musical playlist to suit the identified individual's tastes.

One of the hottest brands in the audio industry is Sonos, whose state-of-the-art technology is tailored to the fully-integrated residence. "Homes have become movie theaters, fitness studios, gaming hubs and so much more, all supported by a streaming era that's no longer exclusive to just TV, music and film," explains Sonos CEO Patrick Spence. Ray, the company's affordable line of small wireless speakers with sound qualities worthy of much pricier systems, helps homeowners customize indoor and outdoor spaces. "Ray makes it easier than ever to enhance

those listening experiences, thanks to its smaller size and impressive sound," says Spence.

The HEOS streaming system and wireless speakers from Denon, a Japanese electronics company, optimize the distribution of specific music to designated rooms, and Mu-so from Naim is another smartphone-controlled audio system favored by home automation specialists. Bose offers products that consolidate an owner's musical library and streaming services onto a single app for convenience in the integrated home ecosystem.

The connected home is a regular theme at the massive CES (fka Consumer Electronics Show) held annually in Las Vegas. However, CEDIA (Custom Electronics Design & Installation Association) Expo — 15,000 to 20,000 attendees are expected at the 2022 event in Dallas this fall — is exclusively dedicated to home automation. Owned and produced by Emerald Expositions, CEDIA Expo is where manufacturers and software developers present innovations of interest to home system integrators, architects, interior designers and builders.



Lutron has pioneered smart home solutions, particularly in the field of lighting and window treatments.

Jason McGraw, group vice president of CEDIA Expo, reports that investment in smart home technologies has exploded since the onset of the pandemic, registering double-digit annual growth. "The system integrators that attend CEDIA Expo bring the art and science of home technology to residential projects, delivering solutions to homeowners," explains McGraw. "They make homes healthier, safer and more energy-efficient while allowing owners to entertain smarter," he says. Suggesting much of what was portrayed in *The Jetsons* is now reality, McGraw adds, "If you can dream it, it can be done today."

Lighting options are not only critical for entertaining but enhance every aspect of home life. A balance between natural and artificial light is addressed by automation system developers. Integrated systems from Crestron, Savant or Control4 not only manipulate lighting fixtures but can control window shades manufactured by Lutron, Graber or Hunter Douglas, or even match an occupant's natural circadian rhythms.



A kitchen at 7 West 57th Street, the Soloviev Group's Billionaires' Row development, where state-of-the-art Lutron lighting and shading systems are programmed through keypads or the Lutron app.

At One United Nations Park in New York, a tower designed by Richard Meier, residences are equipped with Crestron home automation systems.

Health concerns are now more fully addressed in the intelligent home, including adjusting air and water quality or regulating the warmth and firmness of one's bed to ensure a more restorative, healthy sleep. A system called COACH prompts dementia patients to engage in basic activities such as handwashing, and other devices dispense pills for homebound patients. CEDIA Expo's McGraw confirms that in addition to meeting the demands of millennials, the senior citizen market is particularly ripe for home technology advancements.

William Potts, chief operating officer at the Soloviev Group, a prominent New York City development firm specializing in high-end residential projects, reports, "Our buyers are attracted to turnkey smart home living at its finest — a home that's intelligent and capable of effortlessly adapting to their needs — and these smart residences stand out on the market as unique spaces." At 7 West 57th Street — the Soloviev Group's development on Manhattan's Billionaires' Row provides iconic Central Park and skyline views — condominiums are equipped

with state-of-the-art zoned Lutron lighting and shading systems programmed through keypads or the Lutron app.

One United Nations Park, another Soloviev Group project appealing to tech-savvy consumers, is a glistening 43-story residential tower designed by celebrity architect Richard Meier. Its 148 luxury residences feature Crestron home automation systems that regulate temperature, lighting and window shades from the touch of a smartphone.

The Pendry Residences, a collection of fully-integrated luxury condominiums from the Montage Hotels & Resorts on Los Angeles' storied Sunset Strip, reflects increasing demand for home automation on the West Coast. Further fueling the trend's mass adoption is a major initiative by Toll Brothers, a luxury homebuilder active in 24 states. The Fortune 500 company offers a package of integrated amenities — encompassing smart thermostats, keyless locks, WiFi-connected appliances and indoor-outdoor audio systems — in its new construction. **KW**

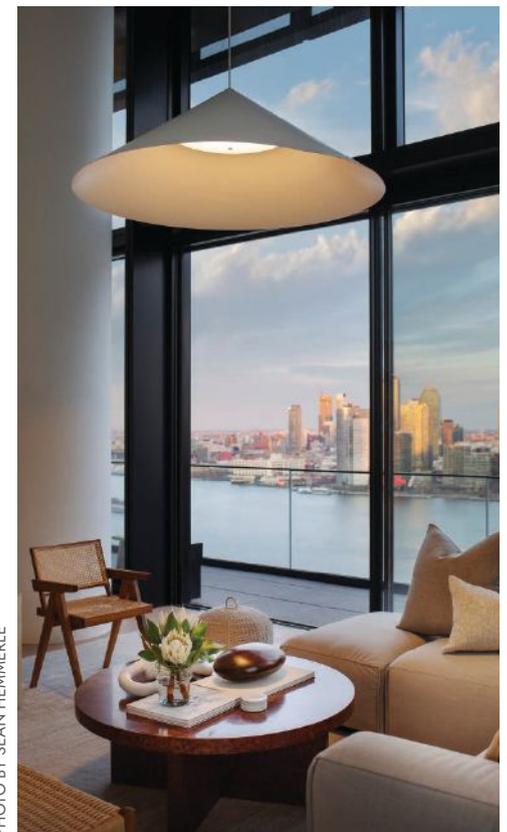


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