

## Business

UP CLOSE / VESMONT, LC. Vested in the future. Today.

### The Future Is Here

#### Technology makes home command central

By C.W. CAMERON

When it comes to technology in the home, there's something new every day. And just because one home buyer wants a flat-screen TV in every room, wireless Internet access inside and out and a programmable system with a lighting plan for everything from a cocktail party for 25 to intimate dinner for two doesn't mean his neighbor has the same interests.

When builders are asked what they're doing to plan for technology in new construction, the answer comes down to choices. They're providing the infrastructure so home buyers can tailor a new home for their own technology needs, both now and in the future.



Photos by CHRISTOPHER OQUENDO / Special

#### Technology in single-family homes

Vesmont, LC and its subsidiary, Highlight Homes, LLC do residential and subdivision development and construction all over metro Atlanta. Their homes range from the \$200,000s in the Cottages at Stillwood in Newnan to the \$600,000s at TerraSol in Gwinnett County to a \$1.84 million mansion in Buckhead on North Stratford Road.

"The technology principles are the same whether it's a \$200,000 home or one in the millions," Lawrence Kasmien, principal of Vesmont, says. "What we believe people are looking for is choice and opportunity. Maybe they want to buy a home with a basic entry-level technology package with wiring for a plasma TV above the fireplace. Maybe they want a premium technology package with individual keypad controls for sound systems and security, security cameras, touch pad video screens and all the wiring run to one location so it's easy to upgrade the systems. Either way, we want these options to be available to our buyers today and to help to increase resale value for the future."

#### Wiring

**Basic** – Run telephone, networking and cable wiring to each bedroom and living area; all wiring runs back to a structured wiring location, also known as the home run location. Prewiring for telephone and cable in five rooms would cost \$1,200 to \$1,500. Adding home run and networking connections would total \$2,000 to \$2,300.

**Premium** – Basic package plus run conduit from the basement to the attic for future upgrades; wireless access points, at least one on every floor; high-definition video distribution to select rooms; and multiple cable and telephone lines to the utility company access point. Total cost for this level would be between \$8,000 and \$10,000.

#### Security

**Basic** — Basic security system on main floor doors and windows with two keypads. Cost is \$300-\$500, plus a monitoring contract.



A control panel at the Echelon house in Cherokee County displays the temperature and other information for the homeowner.



"A control panel can handle the lights as well as audio, and make the whole thing convenient," says builder Tim Ryan.

**Premium** – Complete security system with heat sensors, fire and carbon monoxide detectors, sensors on all doors and windows, motion and glass break detectors on main and upper floors, and wiring for exterior cameras with remote monitoring via Internet access. Cost is \$2,500-\$3,000 for equipment.

### Entertainment

**Basic** — Prewiring for flat-screen TV. Cost is \$190 per location.

**Premium** – Media room, family rooms and even bedrooms wired for 5.1 channel surround sound; prewired for whole-house audio distribution system with individual keypads (for volume and source control) in each bedroom and main indoor and outdoor living areas; prewiring for plasma TVs in multiple rooms and outdoor living areas, all wired back to the home run location. Two-zone whole-house audio systems excluding prewiring would cost \$8,000-\$9,000.

### Aesthetics, comfort and ease

- Microwave drawers to make the appliance disappear: \$900-\$1,500
- Warning drawers to keep dinner piping hot: \$1,100-\$1,800
- Luxurious showers with multiple water heads or steam: \$5,000-\$6,000
- Air and water whirlpool jet combination bathtubs: \$2,250-\$7,000
- Elevators: \$25,000-\$40,000
- Video intercom system: \$1,200 per room
- Central vacuum system: \$4,600-\$6,000

### Environmental consciousness

- Low-E windows: available in many price range
- Dual flush toilets: \$300-\$600
- Tankless water heaters with hot water recirculation: \$2,500-\$5,000
- Dishwasher drawers to run smaller loads: \$1,600-\$3,000



A master control panel in Echelon centralizes connections for miles of wiring.

## Technology in multifamily buildings

Condominium buildings are often the ones pushing the edge of the technology envelope. "Most of our business is targeted to the entry-level buyer, 25 to 34 year old, which is probably the most technologically savvy buyer in the market," says Jim Borders, chief executive officer of Novare Group, a high-rise condominium developer with communities throughout the South including Viewpoint, Gallery, 3630 Peachtree and the Atlantic.

Novare's condominiums are prewired for iPod docking stations and to make it easy to add flat-screen TVs. Viewpoint, Novare's newest condominium in the Atlanta market, is wired so satellite service is available throughout the building. "There's no need for a satellite dish on every balcony. The same wiring provides Internet access at 10 megabytes up and down, and it's all covered in your association fee," says Borders. There's even Wi-Fi available at the pool.

One of Novare's recent innovations is HALO, Home Automation Lifestyle Organization, a customizable Web-based application that, among other things, allows residents to program their home's climate control, monitor their energy usage and view visitors on an entry camera, as well as providing access to shopping services and local restaurants.

HALO uses proximity cards. "Swipe your proximity card when you leave the building, and your thermostat will set to your away-from-home setting, saving energy and money. Swipe your card on your return, and your thermostat will reset again and, depending on the building, the elevator lobby artwork and TVs will set to your personal preference," says Borders.

Novare's HALO system allows programming for climate control, monitoring of energy usage and security. It also provides access to shopping services and local restaurants.





New Technology is essential for homes of a certain size, where complicated lighting systems would make regular switches inconvenient and difficult to figure out.

## Technology in the high end

Ryan of the Paddocks Group has built a 17,000-square-foot home in Echelon, a luxury golf and tennis community in Cherokee County. There's been new technology incorporated into every aspect of the home, from the engineered trusses to the lifetime-guaranteed asphalt shingles to the 26 miles of electrical wire hidden within its walls. For homes of a certain size, new technology – such as control panels for lighting – is becoming essential. "You'd have to have rows and rows of switches to manage all the different lighting options in just one room. A control panel can handle the lights as well as audio, and make the whole thing convenient," says Ryan. Owners of these premier homes expect resort-type amenities and the latest entertainment options. Ryan walked through a few of the features in his latest new home, on the market through Jenny Pruitt & Associates at just over \$4 million.

**At the front door:** The doorbell is a door phone. Pushing the bell rings all the phones in the house. A camera sends an image to all house TVs and touch screens. A 7-inch touch screen inside the door provides access to the security and lighting systems and activates music anywhere in the house. The security system can also be monitored anywhere in the world via the Internet, as can the heating and air conditioning system.

**The wine cellar:** This is actually a state-of-the-art storm room, built with Kevlar walls and an 800-pound steel door – one of the first such rooms in Georgia. The room will stand even if all the walls around it fall away. Great way to protect an expensive wine collection as well as the family, says Ryan.



The Echelon home's theater cost \$250,000 and features a 150-inch screen. Everything is controllable with one remote. The projector provides the best picture now available.

**The health wing:** This suite of rooms includes a gym, bathroom, massage room and sauna to provide a complete resort experience. The motion-sensor urinal uses less water. A luxurious steam shower leaves everyone feeling relaxed and renewed. The audio system is programmed to provide music for an invigorating workout or a calming massage.

**The bathrooms:** Technology is making bathrooms more sanitary, easier to clean and more luxurious. TOTO toilets feature centrifugal flushing action, an ion barrier glazing for easier cleaning, front and rear warm water washing, and an automatic air dryer and deodorizer. The "champagne" bathtubs have a purge system that blows air out of the jets to clean out the tubes so there's no bacteria growth. Rinnai tankless water heaters provide hot water only when needed and in limitless quantities.

**The theater:** This home features a quarter-million-dollar home theater including a 150-inch screen with everything controllable via one remote. The 1080i projector gives a true high-definition TV picture, and – combined with Lexicon receivers, digital speakers for 7.1 channel surround sound and a Blu-ray DVD player – provides the best picture available right now.

**The catering kitchen:** This galley-style kitchen is great for keeping the main kitchen entertainment-ready. You can hide the dirty dishes from a dinner party or use it as a separate area for a party caterer and his staff. Everything here is designed for high efficiency, including the Bosch dishwashers that beam a laser light to let you know they've finished running, and a convection microwave oven so smart that it shuts off when your



Among the capabilities on this whizbang TOTO toilet is an automatic air dryer and deodorizer.



The Echelon kitchen has a serious range and a dishwasher (left) that uses a laser to let you know when the cycle is finished.