

REAL ESTATE

How smart-home systems are transforming luxury real estate

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Smart-House Integration is a premier home automation and systems integration company based in southwest Florida. Image credit: Smart-House Integration

By NORA HOWE

NEW YORK While virtual assistants and artificial intelligence have been incorporated into home systems over the last few years, the technological evolution of luxury real estate has reached far beyond smart speakers.

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Due to the global health crisis, people are spending more time inside their homes than ever before and their standards for home technology continue to rise at a rapid pace. During a session at the State of Luxury Real Estate eConference on Jan. 14, residential technology integration experts discussed what services and features are becoming more commonplace among affluent homeowners.

"If a client likes to wake up and have their motorized shades open to gently wake them up with the sun, or perhaps have their favorite music playing as they open, that all happens automatically through our automation integration," said Michelle Guss, director of business development at [Crestron](#), Scottsdale.

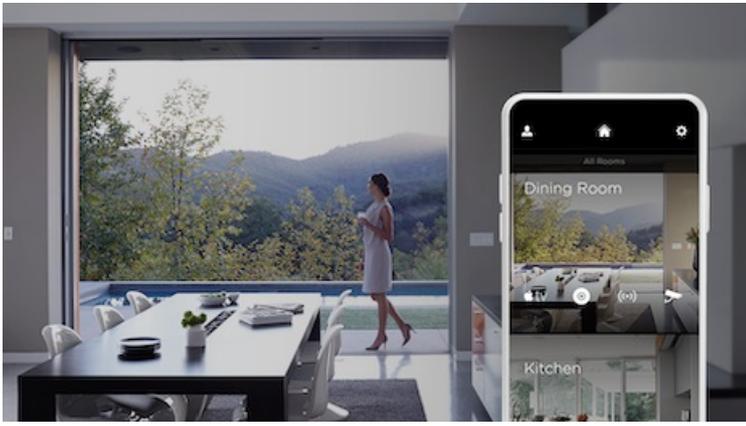
Home solutions of tomorrow

The most important elements across all home integration systems are simplicity and automatization, according to the panelists. Affluent homeowners seek systems that integrate harmoniously and do not require manual operation.

"Luxury clients love the art of hidden technology," said Joe Barrett, president of [Barrett's Technology Solutions](#), Lombard, IL. "It is so important for them to get the experience of advanced technology without actually having to see it."

In terms of specific technology gaining traction within the luxury real estate market, lighting is the new frontier for Barrett's Technology Solutions, and has become an integral part of what the company does every day.

"All interior designers and architects are incorporating lighting technology into their projects," Mr. Barrett said. "Lighting is everything to a homethe finished product, if you will."



Barrett's Technology Solutions specializes in the design and installation of smart home automation and control. Image credit: Barrett's Technology Solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic launched a universal work-from-home model, forcing individuals to spend a considerable amount of time in their homes, ultimately leading to an influx of home office needs.

"As offices have moved into the homes for many clients, we were able to leverage our relationships within the conferencing space, such as Zoom, to create solutions for the home office," Ms. Guss said. "As a company that works in both the residential and enterprise spaces, Crestron is able to bring the same technology that supports places like the Pentagon, hospitals and Fortune 500 companies into private residences."

However, with an increase in home activity comes concern regarding network capabilities.

"The amount of WiFi needed to support the number of devices and systems that work simultaneously in a home can cause significant stress on residential networks," Mr. Barrett said. "Our solution is to bring enterprise level networks into our clients' homes knowing how many devices rely on the network."

Health and wellness have also gained traction due to the global pandemic, therefore affluents have increased their demands for services and technology supporting this lifestyle.

"There are now so many apps and gadgetry surrounding the idea of health and wellness, so it has become huge in how we integrate technology into our homes," said Mark van den Broek, founder and president of [Smart-House Integration](#), Sarasota. "For instance, air purification and water purification are becoming quite reliable and scientifically proven, and now nanotechnology can provide feedback on air and water quality in the home."

"Additionally, there is a paint coming out that can actually clean the air, as well as heat the room using energy efficient technology."



Crestron Electronics is an American manufacturer and distributor of audiovisual automation and integration equipment based in New Jersey. Image credit: Crestron

Despite concerns over AI technology collecting and selling private information, companies like Crestron ensure their clients' security and privacy.

"The products that go into the home have the highest standards for privacy and security," Ms. Guss said. "Our products do not report out to third-party sources, despite concerns over products like Alexa."

Improving integration pre-pandemic

Even before the pandemic, consumers were increasingly adopting connected solutions in their homes, therefore

decor and technology brands have had to meet these demands.

Luxury bed maker Duxiana turned its headboard into a control center for smart devices throughout the home through Alexa connectivity. The headboard for the DUX Element includes a built-in speaker and smart module.

The bed can also be used to program automatic modes. A sleep mode, for instance, could lower shades, adjust the thermostat, play calming music and dim the lights ([see story](#)).

Danish electronics and audio company Bang & Olufsen launched a speaker in December 2019 seeking to blend powerful sound with a streamlined design. For the brand's first sound bar, it worked with design firm NORM Architects to craft a speaker that was simultaneously functional and decorative, with the audio piece intended to act as another piece of furniture in the home ([see story](#)).

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