

Local News

Home is Where Your Hard Drive Is

Technology and Internet options in the home-buying process are quickly becoming as influential as square footage and stainless steel appliances. In fact, a recent study by Forbes.com ranks Chicago as one of the most “wired cities” in America, a trend that area developers are embracing by offering a selection of home technology solutions.

The Wave of the Future: Fiber Optics

One builder on the forefront of residential technology is Rolling Meadows-based Kimball Hill Homes, which has incorporated fiber optics into its Settlers Ridge community in suburban Sugar Grove. Base prices at the development of single-family homes range from \$234,990 to \$284,990.

Fiber optics, thin fibers that transmit signals through light, are less expensive to produce, yet faster and more reliable than traditional cable wires. Fiber optics allow for things like faster Internet connections; more cable channels to be transmitted; and clearer signals and phone lines. Furthermore, fiber optics can run off lower-power transmitters, which saves electricity.

"When you know that just about every home within a community is going to have at least one computer, creating a faster and more efficient Internet connection for residents is a big benefit. Settlers Ridge is among only a handful of communities with this technology," said Jack Wexelberg, regional president of Kimball Hill Homes (www.KimballHillHomes.com).

According to the National Association of Home Builders, buyers will be hearing more and more about fiber optics in the years to come. The NAHB predicts that by the year 2015, many communities will be connected by fiber optics.

Technology in Design

At Winthrop Properties' South Loop community Printers Corner (www.PrintersCorner.com), the growing number of personal gadgets played a strong role in designing pre-wired tech centers for every residence.

“The tech center is essential to the efficient use of space in the floor plans. That built-in area provides a ready-made, centralized station for all of the residents’ computers, PDAs, cell phones and MP3 players,” said Bob Horner, co-principal of Winthrop Properties. “All of the wiring has already been outfitted to support the technology, which gives buyers peace of mind knowing all of their hardware and software are taken care of.”

Printers Corner (www.PrintersCorner.com) is a 17-story high rise consisting of 88 condominiums that range from 743 to 2,290 square feet and are base priced from \$285,000 to \$487,000, and deeded parking is \$36,000. Floor plans offer one-, two- and three-plus bedrooms with one to three baths.

Losing the Wires

To meet the demand from high-end homebuyers and travelers for a more tech-savvy lifestyle, developments such as Trump International Hotel and Tower, Chicago, (www.trumpchicago.com) are moving swiftly toward a wireless future.

“Offering the best technology available was paramount when designing the building, because we knew buyers would expect nothing less from the Trump brand,” said Leah Harriett, sales manager for Trump International Hotel and Tower, Chicago. “Not only do we offer complimentary wireless Internet service in all of our hotel rooms, but also a Bose Sound Wave machine, iPod docking station, a 42-inch LCD flat screen TV and a DVD Player.”

A touch pad near the bedroom nightstand allows buyers of hotel condominiums to easily control their room’s lighting. Each hotel condominium also includes a DND privacy panel near its entrance that functions as a doorbell, room make-up and do not disturb signal.

Located on the Chicago River, between Michigan and Wabash Avenues, the building includes 486 super-luxury condominiums with studios to four-bedroom penthouse suites, and 339 hotel condominiums. Hotel condominiums range in size from 530 to 2,245 square feet and are priced from \$850,000 to more than \$3 million.

Residences, which are available on floors 29 through 89, range in size from 580 to 6,800 square feet and are priced from approximately \$580,000 to more than \$9 million.

For more information on Settlers Ridge, call (630) 466-1002; for Printers Corner, call (312) 880-1800; and for Trump International Hotel and Tower, Chicago, call (312) 644-0900.

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