

The smart way to live

Integrated home automation can do everything from switching on lights and air-conditioning, to sensing your mood.

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In a city with a love of superlatives, and which always comes up with something bigger and better, it shouldn't come as a surprise to learn residents are looking for much more from their homes.

Not only do homes need to look good, they need to be intelligent too.

Imagine owning a property in the UAE where you could link the view from your window to the scenery of New York's skyline, or perhaps download a piece of art to adorn your wall at the click of a button. Feeling down and missing your loved ones back home? No problem, bring them to your apartment via a video conferencing link that can be projected into your dining room. These may seem futuristic possibilities, but thanks to intelligent home technology practically anything is now possible.

Bird's eye view

While these options are available at The Pad development, which is being brought to life by Omniyat properties, these are only some of the features on offer at the project. One of the buildings being constructed with intelligent technology fitted as standard, the 231 apartments at The Pad come with a barrage of features.

Rotating living and dining rooms (iRotation) in the two-bedroom apartments, for example, provide 360 degree views of Business Bay, where the ambitious project is located. Meanwhile the iAmbience feature lets the colour of your apartment reflect your mood — ideal, perhaps, if you have had a bad day at the office.

A spokesperson for Omniyat properties says, "Many real estate developers are building residential properties with smart home technology incorporated. The latest trends in smart home technology today are fully integrated 'intelligent systems' with a centralised control that streamlines different aspects of home life. In essence, technology is used to enhance the way people live. It makes life more enjoyable, more comfortable, easier and more secure."

While smart technology can help make the residents' life more content, it also plays a pivotal role in reducing our carbon footprint, which can only be good news for the planet. "Technology definitely helps to reduce the carbon footprint. Centralised control enables mobility, efficiency and simplifies life as we know it. This ultimately conserves energy," says the Omniyat spokesperson.

Maricris Perez, Marketing Manager for leading home technology company, Digitcom SmartHome, says using home technology is definitely the way forward if we want to help the environment.

"According to recent surveys, there has been a great increase in energy consumption worldwide during the last few years as technology develops. However, also on a parallel line, technology provides ways to save energy. Making simple changes not only helps the earth, but will also save money and add convenience to your home. With many new concepts and solutions, it's now simpler than ever to automate your home and go green at the same time."

Fully integrated system

But for those of us who already own our home, how difficult is it to install smart technology? It does entail more costs initially, suggest Omniyat Properties, as ideally it's better if the technology is incorporated before the MEP [mechanical, electrical and plumbing] stage.

Fortunately, though, companies such as Digitcom SmartHome are experienced at installing smart technology in existing homes, along with new properties, and they have already done so for many properties around the city.

Perez says, "Major residential smart projects include Emirates Hills, and several palaces in Nad Al Sheba, Jumeirah and Mamzar. In addition, we have worked on hundreds of other villas and homes in different areas such as Springs, Meadows, Arabian Ranches, Palm Island Jumeirah, Dubai Marina and others."

So what sort of technology are people choosing? Perez says, "We provide a fully integrated smart living solution. Lighting systems can be connected to the audio, video, security and all other systems in your home. For example, the door sensor is now also for triggering lights when you enter at night, switching off your air-conditioning when you forget your door has been open for a long time, or even alert you via speakers when a dust storm arrives. Elsewhere in the home, sprinkler systems can be used not only for irrigation now, but also to spray and deter intruders the moment they jump over the fence."

Although this will undoubtedly be a great deterrent, many other intelligent systems are also evolving and it's only a matter of time before they too are available to homeowners. Perez says, "We're currently researching changing the 'home mood' according to the personal and emotional status of the owner to help them calm down."

While prices for intelligent technology start from approximately Dh4,000 and increase to Dh17,000 for a more substantial system, changing the mood of the homeowner is something that would most certainly prove priceless.