# NYC developments get smart: A look at the latest residential building technologies

by Michelle Colman
February 22, 2018

In a refreshingly non-"Black Mirror" way, many NYC residential developments are taking advantage of new technologies, like keyless door entry systems and digital concierges, not to replace humans but rather enhance them. These building technologies are making residents' lives easier while prioritizing the importance of face-to-face interaction.

According to a joint cnet/Coldwell Banker survey, "81 percent of current smart-home device owners say they would be more willing to buy a home with connected tech in place." Clearly, developers got that message. Many new buildings in NYC are incorporating technology into their developments to enhance service as well as increase residents' personal security and privacy.
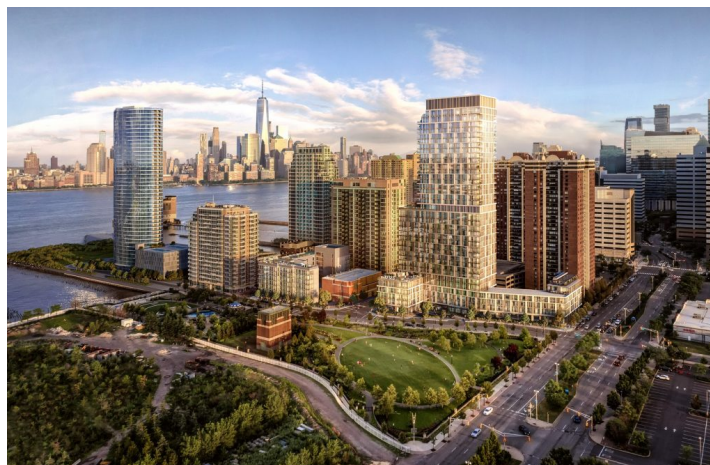
Newport's Park and Shore

Phillip Gesue, Chief Development Officer of Strategic Capital, explains that the Newport, Jersey City condominium development Park and Shore uses technology not to replace humans but rather to allow humans to be human.

"We use technologies to take mundane tasks that don't require a person. We standardize that task and let the building staff do what they do best: customer service. If someone wants to get a package from a doorman, they can but we want people free to do what they do best. If the concierge/doormen have the task of letting people in the front door, then they can't focus on their lifestyle enhancement duties. We don't want to automate experiences but automate the services that technology can do and free up humans to enhance the services only they can provide."

Park and Shore use a few different building technologies: LATCH, ButterflyMX and Package Concierge.

LATCH

LATCH designs with the M series in the center

LATCH is a smart access system for homes (aka a smart doorknob/key entrance system). It was developed by two former Apple employees and, as is common with Apple products, is very sleek.

Gesue says one of the main reasons he chose the LATCH M system is because of its look and feel. "People are very design-oriented. They want something that looks good and is the same level of quality to match rest of their home's interior design and architecture. Your door handle is the first thing people see in a condominium. Design was very important to us."

LATCH operates via the cloud, saving battery power, and enables residents to manage their guest flow through a mobile app that creates temporary access codes for them to share with any individual entering their home (delivery people can get access with time-limited door codes). LATCH devices are also installed on the building entrance doors and amenity spaces which allows the building operators to use the system as well. In addition to temporary access codes, each LATCH device is installed with a small camera that takes a photo each time someone enters. As a security measure, LATCH documents each entrant and shows each homeowner, or staff member, who exactly has come into the building, residence or amenity space.

ButterflyMX
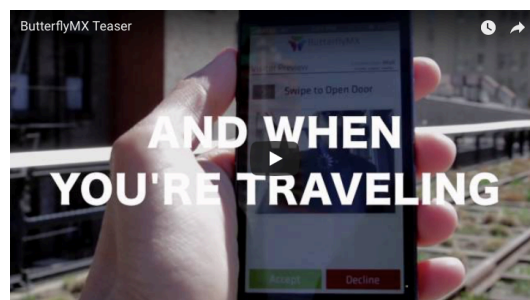
Park and Shore and Urby both use ButterflyMX, "a smart intercom solution." Urby, a Staten Island development, is a residential concept with a focus on experience and community that offers specially curated social spaces. Because the Urby experience is very appealing to the younger crowd, having the latest technology is essential.

According to their website, ButterflyMX "was built from the ground up with developers, property managers, and tenants in mind. Our cloud-based smartphone intercom format is efficient, customizable, and cost-effective, providing game-changing functionality to existing and new construction projects." The system allows residences to see who is at the main door, grant them access from their smartphone app, and logs visitors.

Hello Alfred
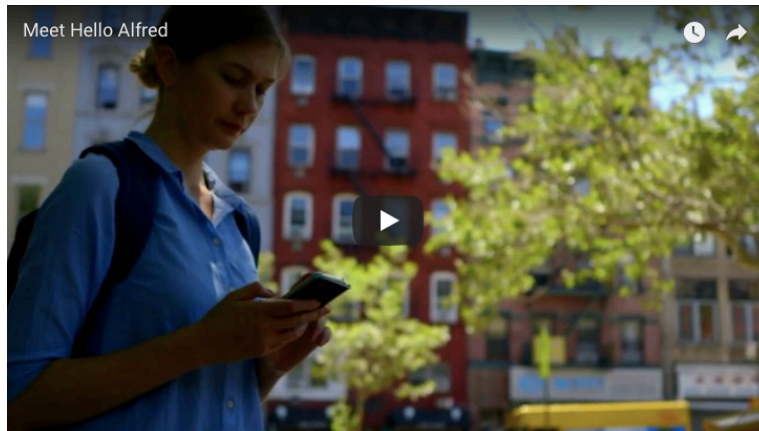
Journal Squared, the luxury rental tower in Jersey City's historic Journal Square neighborhood, offers the app-based service Hello Alfred. The Hello Alfred platform provides a suite of services that residents control via a mobile app. A dedicated "Home Manager" then visits the user's apartment each week to complete the tasks, which can include home cleanings, errands, and special requests, and learns to anticipate their needs over time.

Residents of Journal Squared can even experience Hello Alfred's services before they live in the building. The platform offers digital move-in coordination, where "Home Managers" assist with sourcing movers' quotes, arranging telecom services set-up, and packing and unpacking. Once they move in the building, residents can rely on Alfred's digital hospitality platform for last-minute planning and errand assistance, or its daily in-home package delivery to lighten the burden of carrying boxes after a day's work. For a premium membership, residents can receive a weekly Alfred visit, which includes apartment tidying, grocery shopping, laundry, dry cleaning, clothing/shoe repairs, prescription pick-ups, and shipping packages or outgoing mail.

Journal Squared's sky lounge

Jeremy Kaplan of [Kushner Real Estate Group](#) says, "We looked thoughtfully at all the of many technology offerings available, not just to see how they might work on their own but how they integrate with our management philosophy. For us, we look to see if the fit in right so that we are able to concentrate on other areas where we're enhancing the tenant experience."

According to Kaplan, with technology offerings like Hello Alfred the building management are free to offer events like music nights, wine and cheese evenings, and potlucks. Journal Squared also houses visiting musicians and in exchange for rent and then the musicians offer shows to the residents at no cost.

Kaplan believes a combination of old and new school offerings for tenants work best for their buildings, i.e. pairing building technology with and the friendly and informative exchanges with concierges make residents happiest.

Package Concierge

[Package Concierge](#) is another service Park and Shore offers. Similar to Amazon lockers, Package Concierge is a wall of lockers with a scanner on it. A resident is notified of a package delivery and when that resident comes home, she puts her phone to the scanner and the locker opens with her package. Gesue explains what a time saver this system is for the building staff, "it gets rid of someone spending the entire day categorizing, delivering and retrieving packages."

Amazon Echo

Amazon Echo

At [Circa Central Park](), a residential development located just north of Central Park, residents will each have their own Amazon Echo for a full smart-home environment.

Additionally, the developer installed features to be controlled remotely via a mobile app, including [Insteon lighting switches]() to set scenes, music to greet homeowners when entering and blinds that can be controlled via specific lights to open and close and set specific temperatures.

Smart Appliances

[Time Equities]() is converting a single unit at [315 East 88th Street]() into a fully connected smart home where the resident will be able to manage his or her living space via phone or voice command. Everything in this unit is controlled by Alexa (lowering shades, turning on the kettle, locking the doors, etc.). In addition, this unit has a [Samsung smart fridge](), which is described as being more than just a refrigerator but a "family hub." The fridge tracks groceries, kids' activities on a calendar, and plays music.

Other features in this digital condo include lighting with colors selected to fit any mood or occasion and an LED bathroom shower head that turns red, blue or purple depending on water temperature.

[50 West](), the downtown tower designed by architect Helmut Jahn with interiors by Thomas Juul-Hansen, and the [Grand at SkyView Parc](), located in Flushing, both have "experiential showers." Javier Lattanzio, sales and rentals manager at 50 West, explains that these showers offer different themes, ranging from jungle storms to light rain and mist. "They're purely experiential and we find people love them because they are unique and hard to find in the United States."

Via a touch screen, residents can choose from six different types of shower experiences and depending on your choice, you get an array of mists, showers, steams, and changes the temperature – the lights even change colors and sound effects related to your experience buzz through a speaker.

Virtual Tours

Nine on the Hudson

The sales team at K.Hovnanian's Nine on the Hudson in West New York, New Jersey use Opto Interactive and VR goggles for virtual tours of the 278-unit condominium building. The virtual tours have generated signed contracts from as far away as California.

Since the development is still in the construction phase, the in-house team at K. Hovnanian created, tested, deployed, and maintain a website of 3D renderings/images to be showcased via an iPad, remotely or via two large displays located in the sales gallery that pop-up a 3D model of the building and its units. The sales team provides prospective buyers with VR Google goggles for take-home packets, along with a link for an Opto tour – or they walk the building site with prospective buyers and allow them to imagine their future homeon-the-spot.

—

Although New York Times journalist Tim Wu just argued that too much convenience has a dark side that can enslave us (and here is where Black Mirror takes over), the purpose of these building technologies seems to be reducing mundane tasks, like looking for your keys for the thousandth time and filling your refrigerator, so that residents can go and spend time having meaningful interactions. If that is the case, then there is less evil enslavement and more time for the building social hour.

https://www.6sqft.com/nyc-developments-get-smart-a-look-at-the-latest-residential-building-technologies/