

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SUSAN WELLINGS



There's no place like the home page

Apartment buyers are now being lured by the latest in communication technology.

Smart-home technology has become the latest battleground for developers looking to gain an edge in a highly competitive residential property market.

Developments are making it a priority to keep apartment dwellers switched on.

A 309-apartment complex at Mascot, Avantra, for instance, will be built with the electronic-concierge service iButler, the social-media network iCommunity and other home-automation software.

"No one is offering this type of product yet in Australia, and people are very interested," says the managing director of developer Longton, Steven Yu. "Everyone now has iPhones, iPads and other smart devices and they want their homes to be just as advanced."

The \$300 million, four-building Avantra is being launched on Saturday. Its iCommunity feature – using Twitter and Weibo – will deliver daily updates on weather, news,

sport, cinema times as well as messages from other residents about neighbourhood barbecues and meetings, with a section also for classified advertisements.

iButler is a goods-and-services platform, an iPad app that allows residents to arrange things including groceries, dry cleaning, home-cleaning and massages, all debited to a monthly bill.

Service providers in the strata industry generally have witnessed a growing interest in new technology among apartment dwellers.

Murray Cameron, who operates Strata Real Estate Services, a strata-management company that includes options for residents to remotely keep track of every aspect of their building, says it's a marked trend.

"It's not just the age group of 25- to 35-year-olds who grew up with new technology," says Cameron, who has been nominated for this year's Real Estate Industry of Australia awards for his apartment-technology



Sky's the limit: An artist's impression the Avantra development at Mascot which will make the most of modern technology.

system. "We're also talking about 80-year-olds who have the time and the inclination to learn new things and keep themselves informed and up-to-date with everything that's going on. It's now completely across the board."

Longton has already found consumer appetite for technology in apartments. Its fast-selling 54-unit Futra, also in Mascot, has a system where an iPad can control most electronic functions within each apartment.

Even in areas that might traditionally be considered more conservative, developers are eager

to satisfy technology-savvy buyers.

At Virage, a block of 22 apartments being built in Mosman, every unit will be connected to the National Broadband Network.

"Technology like that is definitely a plus... we [also] have an excellent security system and have paid a lot of attention to acoustics with technologically engineered glass to ensure people don't hear traffic," says Ian Hashman, one of the developers in a partnership of his company, Claireleigh, and Chinese developer BMV Property.

But technology alone isn't the answer, Yu says. Avantra, designed

by architect MD+A, is being billed as the world's first high-density complex to give 100 per cent natural ventilation and light to every room.

"It's all about the quality of the building, too," Yu says.

Avantra, on Gardeners Road, Mascot, will have 64 one-bedroom and one-bed-plus-studies (60 sq m internally) from \$499,000; 152 two-bedders (77 sq m) from \$629,000; 30 dual-key two-bedders (103 sq m) from \$920,000; 39 two-bed-plus-studies (84 sq m) from \$749,000; 14 three-bedders (102 sq m) from \$849,000; and 10 four-bedders (117-156 sq m) from \$999,000.

NBN CONNECTION SEALS THE DEAL FOR TECH-SAVVY PHIL

When Phil Garside started looking for an apartment in Sydney, his priorities were clear: it had to be pet-friendly, it had to be new in a good location, and it had to offer up-to-date technology.

"That's important for a lot of people now," he says. "And when I found this apartment building was going to be on the NBN – unlike most of the other ones in the area – that settled it for me."

The new development Divercity in Waterloo ticked all the boxes for



Net gain: Divercity met Garside's tech and pet needs. Photo: Ben Rushton

Garside, 31, who works in insurance. Now he has internet services at a speed much faster than he'd ever imagined, being able to stream movies with none

of the delays he'd become used to elsewhere.

"Previously, I had cabled internet and I thought that was fast, but you'd download a film and have to leave it for up to an hour before you watched it," says Garside, who moved from the Gold Coast to Sydney. "Now you just press play."

He also loves the modern look of the 648-apartment Becton complex, as well as the shared facilities, which include a 20-metre heated outdoor pool, rooftop barbecue and cinema, gym and yoga studio.

"Everything you need from an apartment is close by," Garside says. "And in Sydney, there's always something happening."

OR TRY THESE ...



Futra, O'Riordan Street, Mascot

In what is set to be one of the "smartest" buildings in Sydney, residents will be able to program music to begin playing when they arrive home, while the system is preset to adjust blinds and airconditioning according to weather conditions. Six apartments, also designed by MD+A, remain for sale off the plan, all with two bedrooms (92-110 sq m) from \$590,000. Phone 1300 669 667, see futra.com.au.



Virage, Military Road, Mosman

A quality building with quality finishes, Virage will have its architect, Wolski Coppin, on site to oversee everything. Five apartments remain for sale: two one-bedroom terraces (50-53 sq m) from \$595,000; one two-bedroom (96 sq m) \$960,000; one two-bedroom-plus-study (100 sq m) \$1.01 million; and one three-bedroom terrace (109 sq m) \$1.1 million. Phone 9969 1500, see virageapartments.com.

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