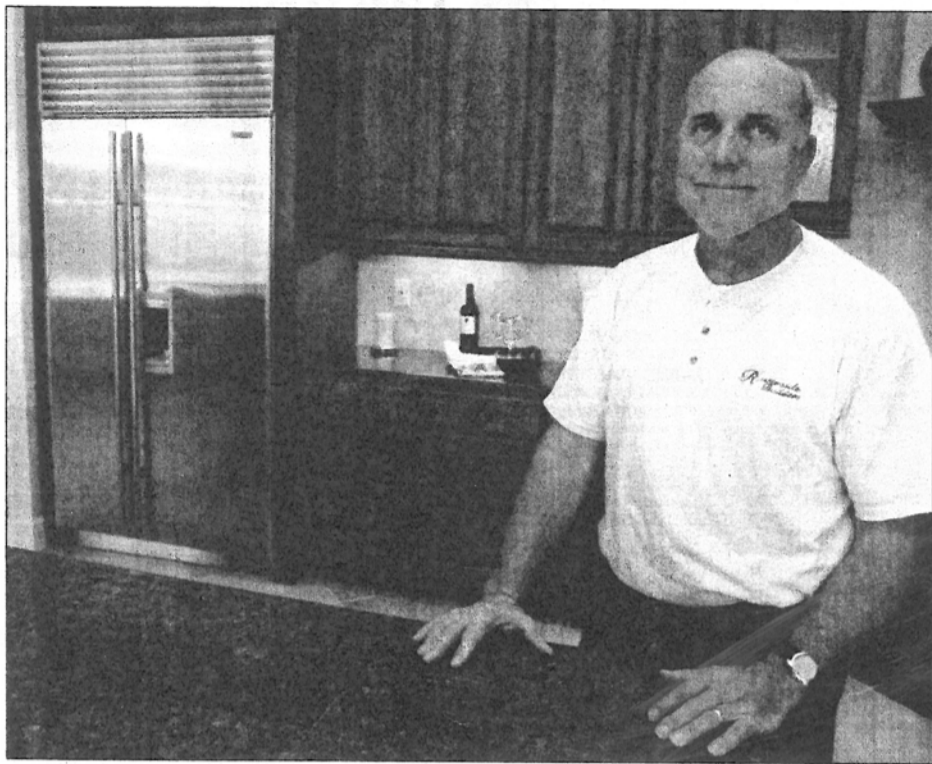


REAL ESTATE

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Photos by Kathleen Hinkel, FLORIDA TODAY

Model of tomorrow . . . today. Chris Perry of Riverside Builders of Brevard Inc. has a complete home automation model in Indialantic.

Wired houses moving in

Electronics no longer a luxury

BY ANNE STRAUB
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

Picture a typical night at home: The family is watching a DVD in the media room, when Dad decides to go to bed. He taps into the movie on the TV in his room and keeps watching.

A high-schooler takes a break to use the family room computer and signals the printer in the upstairs office to print out a book report.

The doorbell rings, so Mom uses the video screen under the kitchen counter to check who's at the front door. All's well; it's the pizza guy.

It's not the home of the future. It's the home next door.

"What it really comes down to is lifestyle," builder Chris Perry said. His company, Riverside Builders, recently completed a model packed with features designed to accommodate the high-tech habits of buyers.

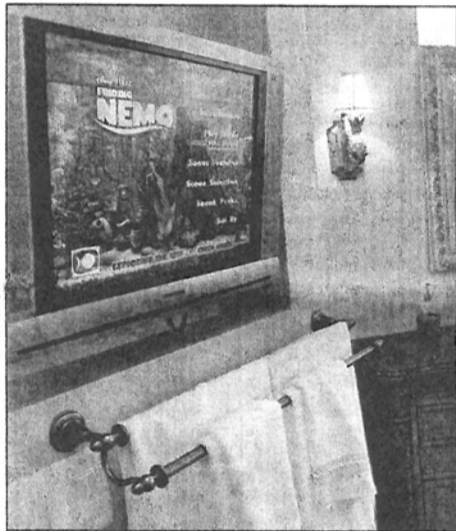
Wired model

Riverside Builders model in Indialantic showcases a variety of high-tech features. The home is located at 1080 E. River Oaks Drive, in the River Oaks East subdivision, off Riverside Drive north of Fifth Avenue. It's open from noon to 5 p.m. today.

Media-rich lives and demanding careers are fueling demand for homes wired for sound, movies, Internet and more.

Buyers in upper price ranges increasingly expect whole-house wiring for audio and surround sound in the main television viewing area, said Kevin Hill, a ReMax real estate agent. She's also seeing more upscale homes that offer programmed light settings.

For example, one setting might set the mood for a romantic evening and another See WIREd, 2H



As essential as a towel. Residents won't stray far from a television in a house wired for multimedia throughout.

2H SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2007

Internet access crucial in homes

WIRED, from 1H

could light up indoors and out for a party.

Controls for the various functions are contained in a structured wiring center, a sort of low-voltage breaker box. The box simplifies troubleshooting if problems arise, and enables quick upgrades and switches that might be needed as technology evolves, said Marty Rosen, a low-voltage integrator with his own company, Sunshine Satellite in Melbourne.

Homes now being built should have Internet wiring in all main areas, he said.

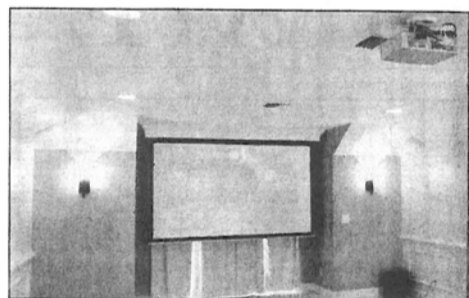
"Internet is basically a utility now," he said, on par with services like cable television, or even telephone. "Some people do more online gaming than they talk on the phone," he said.

Prices on video cameras have dropped enough that many people can afford a camera at the front door, and another at the pool for added safety, he said. A homeowner can check the view from the camera by looking at a particular channel on a television.

With structured wiring integrating the home's electronics, a gaming enthusiast could hook a game console to a wide-screen television and play larger-than-life video games.

Wire when the house is built, and the television cable outlet can be placed about 50 inches off the floor, so a wall-mounted screen hides all wires.

The cost of structured wiring is in reach for most buyers, Rosen said: About \$600 to \$900 for a typical tract house. Equipment can add as much cost as a buyer would like. Wiring for multiroom audio might be just only \$100,



Kathleen Hinkel, FLORIDA TODAY

Projecting the future. More homes are built with wires strung throughout inside the walls to allow for new technologies such as projection televisions and surround sound.

High-tech must-haves

Homes are becoming packed with automated features and specialty wiring, a trend that shows all signs of continuing. Utz Baldwin, vice president of the Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association offers these top 10 trends for homes:

- Home theater-media systems with automated controls in a dedicated room.
- Home health-care products, including patient monitoring systems, medication compliance tools and telemedicine tools to monitor vital signs and communicate with professionals.
- Media center computers that offer surround-sound processing, one-touch recording of TV shows, Internet radio ac-

cess, entertainment services, family movies and photos.

- Microdisplay-based televisions, including liquid crystal display, digital light processing, liquid crystal on silicon and LCD-based rear-projection TVs.

■ Lighting automation that allows the homeowner to control lights from a central location.

- Security systems that record up to two weeks of activities.

■ Media servers to store thousands of hours of music that can be shared among devices throughout the home, games and systems.

— National Association of Home Builders

but speakers can cost \$150 to \$1,500 a pair.

No matter the budget, Rosen recommends getting wiring in place — even if you're not sure if or how it will be used — during the construction phase, as retrofitting always will cost more.

"Put the money now into the prewiring and worry about the actual electronics down the road," he said.

What homeowners think will be a guest bedroom could end up being used as an office.

"As long as they prewire, they're covered," he said.

The Riverside model incorpo-

rates several popular features, such as a flat-panel television in the bath near the spa. There are three spots for high-definition flat-screen televisions, including one in a media room with surround sound and a ceiling-mounted projector.

Speakers throughout the house are connected to a central CD player, and each room has an individual volume control. Computer networking outlets in several areas allow various workstations to be connected.

Perry continues to gather ideas at conferences and by watching developments in the field.

"This is something I really enjoy," he said. ■