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## ***WORKING WITH OTHER TRADES***

Raising Awareness and Forming Relationships With Builders, Designers, and the Like



**Review:** Bowers & Wilkins  
Panorama 3 Dolby Atmos Soundbar



# The CI as a Realtor's Best Friend

Boston Automations and Control4 team up to create the smartest home development in New England.



**I**magine for a second that you're in the process of buying a brand-new home in a new community in 2022. Besides the traditional concerns of appliances, finishes, countertops, and other aesthetic features, what might you include in your list of wants?

If your interests include any items related to modern technology, such as app-controlled lighting or a robust wireless network, you're likely to benefit from a professionally installed home control system. Hopefully, you'd be able to find a community like The Preserve at Mill Pond, a 92-home development in Massachusetts where every new home comes equipped with an enterprise-grade wireless network from Access Networks and is pre-wired for whole-home automation through the Control4 system.

## Set Up for Success

The first priority of any new community is to sell homes, and, according to Mike Palmer, sales executive for The Preserve at Mill Pond, including smart home technology in the design and buying process not only differentiates the homes from others, but also simplifies the selling process itself.

“Technology is crucial to daily life today, and our buyers understand that,” says Palmer. “They want access to smart home tech, even if they don’t want to do it all at once and getting to test it for themselves in the model home can be a transformative experience. In addition to grabbing buyers’ attention, the tech actually makes my job easier, too, because I can remotely unlock the doors on the model home and turn on lighting and music even if I haven’t arrived yet. Our buyers aren’t early adopters testing out bleeding-edge technologies, they are simply opening their eyes to possibilities that haven’t been offered to them before.”

According to the tech experts at Boston Automations, the custom integration firm responsible for designing and installing the homes’ technologies, many buyers are surprised and excited by what’s possible through current smart home systems, and virtually none of them question the need to plan ahead.

“I consider buyers at The Preserve at Mill Pond to be lucky, because the builder, Meridian Homes, is ahead of the curve in regard to home technology,” says Adam Zell, founder of Boston Automations. “There are still many builders and communities that ignore technology and leave it entirely up to the buyer to deal with after the home is built. The thing is, it’s more intrusive and expensive to add house-wide technology once the walls are up and the paint has dried. Our process of pre-wiring every room in the construction phase is both affordable and simple, making it much cheaper to add desired features such as multi-room audio, security systems, or smart lighting controls.”

Since the homes may be in various states of construction by the time they’re sold, it’s vital that basic technology infrastructure like wiring, networking, and a centralized equipment rack are included from the very beginning.

“One of our core values in this community is to avoid doing a hard sell to homeowners, so instead we focus on gauging their interest and needs and then work with them to achieve what they actually want, whether it’s a full automation system or simply pre-wiring for future possibilities,” says Zell. “Overall, the owners love that we are thinking about what they might want in five or 10 years, and they recognize that having the home wired increases its value and makes it more sellable in a future where buyers are likely to expect or request homes with smart home capabilities. It’s vital to tend to individual needs and build positive relationships, because we could be involved with these families for years to come.”

Thinking ahead gives buyers greater opportunity to customize their home with add-on systems over time and encourages deeper thought about how they hope to use each room in the home.

## Building the Backbone

“For starters, every home today deserves a strong, reliable wireless internet network that works in every room and can keep up with the needs of multiple simultaneous users,” says Zell. “Whether you’re streaming HD content, conducting conference calls, or asking Alexa for the weather forecast, it all relies on the network. This extends to any additional systems as well, including video doorbells, wireless surveillance cameras, and any app-controlled devices.”

Buyers at The Preserve at Mill Pond go through a streamlined process for choosing home technologies as part of the discussion about electrical and lighting decisions, which are intertwined. For instance, buyers interested in Control4 home control and smart lighting may replace traditional light switches with custom-engraved lighting keypads that feature multiple buttons and can be programmed to perform multi-system actions.

“Everybody benefits from integrating this into the homebuying process,” says



Zell. “The builder is effectively providing better customer service, the salespeople have an extra custom benefit to promote to buyers, the integrator doesn’t have to schedule separate meetings with clients, and the buyer gets a low-pressure introduction to what’s possible through modern smart home technologies.”

Part of the process is a simple A/B test where buyers are shown images of rooms in two styles: the first has banks of light switches, self-installed TVs, speakers, and more with accompanying wiring and clutter, while the second image shows professionally integrated rooms with in-ceiling speakers, wall-mounted TVs, and perhaps a chic touchpanel on the wall that controls everything in the room. According to Zell, every customer prefers the professionally integrated solutions.

“Not only do most people want uncluttered spaces, they also want to ‘keep up with the Joneses,’” he says. “The first few homes were built before I became involved, and once those buyers saw the lighting, security, and AV capabilities of the later builds, they all came to me looking to upgrade their home technology. The reality is it’s hard to say no when you see that your whole house can be shut down for nighttime with a single button or notice that your neighbors window shades and lights automatically adjust based on ambient lighting.”

The community also has a model home that is fully outfitted with all the available technologies, so each buyer gets a no-pressure walkthrough where they gain hands-on experience with the available technologies. This includes centralized smart lighting, multi-room audio and video, security, surveillance, climate controls, electronic door locks, motorized window shades, outdoor lighting and AV, multi-system events, and more, all controlled through the Control4 app and touchpanels.

## The Fear of Missing Out

Now imagine you’re buying a newly built house in 2022, and no technology was considered or discussed before you moved in. What might you be missing out on? Are you going to have bulky speakers and cluttered wires throughout the house? Will you end up with a dozen different apps on your phone to control store-bought “smart” devices? Will your Wi-Fi work in the backyard? When you see a friend’s new home that does have these things, will you be willing to spend up to double what they did because it wasn’t planned ahead?

These questions affect the long-term enjoyment of home life, and in an age where technologies can simplify home operations and improve comfort, it’s important to speak with experienced professionals who can lay out the facts and deliver expert solutions that are easy to use and improve daily life. Since not all builders are so forward-thinking, buyers who want their new home to deliver all the conveniences of modern technology must get involved early on to ensure they can benefit from the most cost-effective and robust smart home solutions. **Res**

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