

The home of tomorrow, today

In one of North America's best-connected communities, Kanata buyers can choose the latest wired and wireless features along with granite and hardwood, **VITO PILIECI** writes.

Technology titans are using a new housing development in Kanata as a laboratory to develop a blueprint for "smart" communities of the future.

Firms such as Cisco Systems Inc., Best Buy, Commscope

Inc., Rogers and others have been quietly working to turn the Eagleson Road housing development called Sohowest into one of the best-connected neighbourhoods in North America.

Wired and wireless home

networks are a standard feature of each house, and buyers can choose from a plethora of tech upgrades — from centralized home-theatre systems to iPod-controlled TV, lighting and climate-control systems — at the same time

they select such standard upgrades as hardwood and granite.

Eventually, such technology will be available in new homes everywhere. But careful co-ordination is making it work right now in Sohowest, says William Karam.

"Bringing in the right players was key," adds Karam, one of the project's lead developers.

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Wired: Find out who's buying in Kanata's Sohowest, Page B1



JANA CHYTILOVA, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Developer William Karam has made it a priority to tackle any technological demand that a Sohowest buyer comes up with.

Smart: Industry leaders on board

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Like other communities, this development has teamed with telecommunications companies to pull fibre-optic cables — which can carry Internet signals at speeds far faster than traditional copper cable lines — to each doorstep. In others, however, that is where the technology has traditionally stopped.

Sohowest is different. Karam and his team have made it a priority to tackle any technological demand that a buyer may come up with.

"We bring them in and ask them what it is they want to do and what their budget is. Once they start talking about what they want, we pull together a solution that fits that."

"They don't have to get all bogged down in the technology and how it works."

Dermot O'Carroll, senior vice-president, network engineering and operations for Rogers Cable, said Rogers isn't interested in a system-wide upgrade to fibre-optic cable anytime soon. But the company realizes that fibre-optic cable will become the norm and a chance to evaluate what people will do with a high-speed fibre Internet connection was too good to pass up.

"We've worked with this technology in the lab, but having this technology in the lab is very different than having it in the real world. You need to understand this well, before you start deploying something like this at scale," said O'Carroll.

The opportunity to gauge how technology will be deployed in the home of the future is something that also caught the attention of networking giant Cisco. The company acquired the Linksys Group home networking company for \$500 million in 2003 and is installing Linksys wired and

wireless network routers in all of Sohowest's homes.

"Connected communities are definitely one of Cisco's priorities going forward," said Peter Bates, vice-president consumer operations for Cisco.

Best Buy is providing all of the home electronics — items such as iPods, Apple TVs and home media servers — and Geek Squad is on site for installation. Commscope has provided fibre-optic cable and custom-made metal boxes that sit next to the electrical panel in the basement of the house and contain all of the home's electronics and wiring. Many other companies are also involved.

Homebuilders in Sohowest include Tartan, Valecraft and Monarch and prices range from the low \$200,000 range to around \$320,000. The tech packages run from several thousand dollars to \$22,000.

The tech-heavy development will eventually see 1,200 homes spread out over 120 acres.



Located in the heart of Kanata, Silicon Valley North, sohwest is Ottawa's leading Smart Community involving the construction of 1,200+ Smarter Homes on 125 acres by a team of Ottawa's best builders, including Monarch Homes, Tartan Homes and Valecraft Homes.

Each home in sohwest is built as a futureproof Smart Home that includes a Rogers fibre optic connection, a complete Cisco home network, and an array of additional Smart Home technology options to simplify daily life. Each home also includes a fantastic Savings Bundle from Rogers, Best Buy, Geek Squad, and RBC.

Since launching in April 2009, sohwest, experienced very strong sales and public interest. The first homeowners moved into their Smart Home in July 2009.



www.sohowest.ca

'It just makes sense to do it as the house is being built.'

MELISSA HILLARY, Sohowest buyer



wired IN KANATA'S SOHOWEST

BRUND SCHLIMBERGER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Melissa and Bryan Hillary are among the techies buying at warp speed in Sohowest, a smart new community in Kanata.

BY VITO PILIECI

These days buying a new home isn't just about getting four walls and a roof, it's about investing in cutting-edge technology tucked behind the drywall and under the floor joists.

Which is exactly why many Ottawa buyers are turning to a new development called Sohowest, located off Eagleson Drive in Kanata, where technology is being blended with new construction to produce one of the world's largest and most advanced "smart communities."

Wired smarts have become standard fare in pricey, custom homes, but never offered as a community standard for affordably priced housing aimed at younger professionals on a tighter budget.

In Sohowest, three Ottawa builders — Monarch, Tartan and Valecraft — have six decorated model homes, and are taking direct aim at young, first-time buyers with a lineup of townhomes, semi-detached homes and a novel concept of linked singles from Tartan.

There is also a demonstration centre where technology reigns and buyers pick and choose wired options after they settle on their builder and home.

"It's pretty cool. It's getting close to the Star Trek kind of stuff where the doors will be opening for us. It's crazy," says Jeff Imbeau, an early Sohowest buyer. "My wife loved the house and that sold it for her. The tech stuff is what sold it for me."

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Jeff and Chrystal Imbeau spent more than \$20,000 on wiring to control blinds, their heating system and a sophisticated entertainment network.

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JEAN LEVAC, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN



THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2009

SATURDAY IN THE CITIZEN



Wired in Kanata

Techies, developers and builders are building the smartest, most sophisticated community in the world. When completed, 1,200 homes will be hooked up for work, play and environmental advantages.

HOMES

COVER STORY

Sohowest: Smart homes with a touch

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As the technology wave rolls on, buyers are eager to pull cable through their walls to network their TVs and computers, setup stereo systems to play music in virtually every room and connect their lights or furnaces to the Internet to allow them to make adjustments while out on a Saturday.

According to William Karam, one of the technology developers at Sohowest, the emerging community is drawing people in droves and sales of the technology-laden homes are brisk.

"The foot traffic has been staggering," says Karam. While the core demographic of techy buyers is between 35 to 40 years old, he is seeing all ages come to Sohowest's demonstration centre to see the smart offerings.

Each of the development's 1,200 homes, including 300 in the first phase, will have standard features including fibre-optic cable pulled to their front doorstep, providing buyers with some of the fastest Internet connections in the country. Sohowest will be developed across 69 hectares of land that is only a few kilometres away from high tech offices on March Road.

A home networking centre is being put in the basement of each home, to keep all of the electronics neat and tidy. The centre, which is basically a large steel box that sits next to the electrical panel, houses all of the home's electronics and allows for wired networking in each room (much like coaxial cable and phone jacks are available in traditionally-built homes), as well as a wireless computer network that is pre-installed and turned on the day

Getting there

Visit Sohowest, six model homes and the demonstration centre at Eagleson Drive off Cope Drive.

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

Visit www.showest.ca

the owner moves in.

Buyers are also given a year's worth of free TV, phone and Internet services from Rogers Cable, a discounted mortgage from the Royal Bank and discounts from electronics retailer, Best Buy.

Karam is pushing the technology boundaries and Sohowest is his star child.

"It's really about listening to the customer. They come in and we figure out what it is that they want to do," he says. "We can do just about anything. Full home control, multiple room video gaming, lighting and audio, remote energy control, even putting up flat screen TVs."

Technology upgrades being offered in the development include everything from home automation and big-screen TVs to iPod remote controllers that allow homeowners to control all of the electronics.

Packages for technology upgrades, which buyers contemplate much like regular home upgrades, including hardwood floors and granite countertops, range from several thousands of dollars to \$22,000 and a full complement of technology smarts.

Imbeau chose to pretty much pimp-out his home. "We went pretty nuts."



(SARAH LORIC, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN)



The Imbeau package:

- The ability to play MP3 music files, satellite radio, and CDs throughout his home and patio.
- Being able to watch Blu-Ray movies, HD Cable TV and download home movies and photos on the home theatre in their great room and in the master bedroom.
- Having his video game console display on both televisions.

- Completely clean and wire-free home theatre setup in the great room with a 52-inch TV mounted over the fireplace and 5.1 surround sound, rear channel speakers mounted in the ceiling.
- All components, including a DVD player or PDS, will go in a custom cabinet in the kitchen island. Less used electronic components such as a dig-

- ital set top box or receiver, will get stored in the basement.
- Climate controls allow the Imbeaus to enter the house into an energy-saving mode as soon as they leave for work or to change the temperature while relaxing in bed.
- Wireless iPod touch and iPhone controllers allowing control of the home's electronics.



(BRUNO SCHLIMMER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN)

Melissa and Bryan Hillary purchased a smart home in Kanata where they will be able to control all electronic devices with an iPod Touch.

The Hillary package:

Bryan and Melissa Hillary took a more middle of the road approach with their Sohowest home, spending about \$11,000 on technology upgrades.

"We weren't even suppose to get as much as we did," she says. "It just makes sense to do it as the house is being built. It would cost a lot more if we were to do it afterwards."

Pulling cable to various rooms within a home after the walls have been finished and drywalled is an extremely difficult task. In many rooms, it can be nearly impossible, (without dragging unsightly wires along the home's baseboards) if the proper allowances have not been left by a builder.

It includes:

- Multi-room smart lighting and dimmers.
- Integration of their big-screen TV in the home theatre, along with surround-sound speakers, a digital set top box and concealed wiring.
- A new TV mounted above the fireplace in the great room, as well as a wall-mounted TV setup in the master bedroom.
- A multi-room music system, including surround sound in the basement and in the master ensuite bathroom, with all music on-demand from two centralized iTunes music libraries.
- The ability to control all these devices with an iPod touch.

