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High-Tech Media Centers Redefine 'Home Movies'

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As audio and video technology options continue to grow in scope, yet decline in cost, more homebuyers are asking their builder to create a home theater system for them. One of the most popular options is to transform a finished basement into a cozy media center.

For home owners who have no limit to their budget or imagination, a home theater can closely echo the ambiance of a movie theater, with such film-buff features as sloping floors, sound-deadening curtains, huge screens, stadium-style seating, popcorn machines and soda fountains.

Peter Mocco, developer of Liberty Harbor, says many tech-savvy buyers seek an integrated package of amenities that includes a home theater system. Liberty Harbor is a master-planned, mixed-use community being built along the Jersey City waterfront.

"Our technology department meets with



(Above) Liberty Harbor, a high-tech, mixed use community rising along the Jersey City waterfront, will offer home owners the ability to create (right) dream home theaters, with cozy seating and state-of-the-art equipment.

buyers to help them choose the features they want," Mocco says. "Their home theater can be just one aspect of our technologically advanced package of smart-home features."

Mocco says a home theater can come in many shapes and sizes.

"Depending on the floor plan, you can dedicate one entire room to your home

theater, which many people choose to do with their multipurpose room. Many people add a sports bar to go along with their big-screen TV. Some people will transform a second bedroom or a loft into a media room," he says.

Many home theaters feature a large flat-panel TV, while others combine a projection TV with drop-down screens exceeding 100 inches.

Mocco says residents will soon be enjoying their home theaters at Liberty Harbor, with the first move-in scheduled to occur next month. These will take place within the first phase of the community, a 667-unit mix of for-sale condominiums and rentals.

"We're getting ready to start construction on the second section, which will be 900 condos and rentals," Mocco says.

Liberty Harbor will eventually comprise as many as 10,000 homes and feature approximately 250,000 square feet of retail space. The mixed-use community, located between the Jersey City historic districts of Paulus Hook and Van Voorst Park, will be spread out over a 28-block site.

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"Sales have been phenomenal," Mocco says. "It's very exciting to see the community taking shape. We have a new hospital, grammar school and middle school right across from the community on Jersey and Grand streets. Commuters can use the nearby PATH station or the ferry service to get into Manhattan. The Light Rail system also has two convenient locations within Liberty Harbor."

Mocco describes the community as one the most technologically advanced residential communities ever created.

"We will absolutely have the largest superhighway of bandwidth and capability, which will be brought into every housing unit we build here, whether it's a studio apartment or a five-bedroom townhome," he says. "Buyers who have grown up



with computers, use the Internet daily and enjoy the conveniences of modern technology are looking for home features that integrates everything into one easy to use control center. That's what we're offering here."

Mocco says everyone who lives at Liberty Harbor will have views in real time.

"They can see computer views of what's going on inside and outside their home, from any place in the world," Mocco says. "We've also made it possible that when you're away on vacation and someone rings your doorbell, your cell phone will ring, letting you know someone is at your door. You can then talk to them just as if you were in your home."

Mocco says a security system also can be used so that when a child returns home and enters their code, the parent will be able to receive notification.

"There are really no limitations to what this system can do," Mocco says, adding that heating and cooling equipment, lighting, computers, televisions and other appliances all can be remotely controlled from outside the home. "More importantly, it will not become obsolete. This technology will be current 30 to 40 years from now."

Michael Skea, vice-president of marketing and sales for K. Hovnanian Homes, says a theater room provides an added incentive for relaxing within the friendly confines of home.

"More than ever, people are finding that there is no comfort like the comfort of home, and that goes for entertaining as well as staying in, whether you're alone or with family," he says.

Skea says K. Hovnanian is offering a complete home theater package at one of its new communities, Four Seasons at the Promenade. The community, located in Somerset County's Warren Township, is designed for residents age 55 and older and features French country manor homes and spacious luxury townhomes.

Skea says the home theater package offered to residents there includes a 106-inch, wall-mounted television screen and projector, with wall-mounted, ceiling-mounted and floor-mounted speakers.

"The result is a fully surround-sound speaker system," says Skea. "We also include an integrated rack system to house the package's components. It's all neatly tucked out of sight in a nearby closet."

Other components of the home theater system includes a scene control, dim control, lighting package and premier leather lounge chairs.

"It's a high-tech but user-friendly system tied to a programmable remote control, which lets you control everything you need, from lighting, sound and images," he says.

Four Seasons at the Promenade offers single-family homes with five floor plans. Homes range in size from approximately 2,900 to almost

4,900 square feet. Even more space can be added with a finished basement. Interior features include a master bedroom suite on the first floor, along with three additional bedrooms, three-and-one-half baths, a full basement, a two-car garage, volume ceilings and an abundance of storage space. An elevator is offered as an option.

The community also features townhomes that range in size from approximately 3,500 to more than 3,700 square feet of living space. Each townhome design include a large first-floor master suite, three bedrooms, three-and-one-half baths and a two-car garage.

Skea notes that the common grounds of the community are distinguished by a pathway that winds through 22 acres of open space within the community. The outdoor setting includes a series of themed gardens. These include the waterfall garden, the gazebo garden and the stone wall garden. ♦

