



The latest and greatest in smart home technologies

Today's smart home has blossomed to near Jetson-esque capabilities. The applications for home automation are racing ahead, fueled by the near-ubiquitous availability of wireless technology and the growth of the Internet of Things.

The actual smart home gadgets and technologies continue to evolve, but the mobile app seems to be taking the lead. Let's catch up with the advances in some key areas.

Smart thermostats deserve top billing, as they were truly the first smart device to become mainstream. They focus on convenience, energy savings, and peace of mind.

Geofencing is one of the best enhancements in this category. Link your smart thermostat to your smartphone, set a radius around your domicile, and whenever you cross that boundary, your thermostat goes into away or return mode, depending on which way you are heading.

Smart security is growing, with smart door locks the first entrants in this category. More recently, video doorbells have entered the fray, allowing you to see who is at the door from anywhere in the world. Wireless cameras allow you to keep an eye on things anywhere, and apps can send alerts if they detect something going on at your home.

Smart smoke and CO sensors can send alerts to your phone, allow remote status checks, and silence alarms from the app.

Smart appliances are a help for everyday chores. Refrigerators with cameras allow you to check for needed items while at the grocery store, for example, and dryers sense when electric use is highest and turn themselves off. Even HVAC systems, including window air conditioners, are sporting mobile apps these days.

Smart lighting has become a convergence of mood, efficiency, convenience, and security, where a smart hub and its software might make sense to coordinate lighting from a single interface.

The smart home circa 2018 is getting closer to the cartoon vision of the Jetsons. With the ease of installation, programming, and use enabled by wireless technology and smartphone apps, anyone not already engaged with smart home tech should at least consider dipping a toe in the water.

Hub or a la carte?

Wired devices simply don't offer the convenience and luxury of wireless devices.

When it comes to wireless, you can invest in a hub to which a range of proprietary devices connect before going onto your network, or go a la carte and buy whatever you want that can connect via Wi-Fi.

A hub locks you into those devices designed specifically to communicate with it. It is limiting, and the hub manufacturer may not provide the best-in-class product for every application. But generally speaking, overall management is easier with a single interface.

A la carte allows you to pick the best of each category and connect directly to your network. No self-respecting smart home device is sold without an app, so you get all the bells and whistles that entails. You just have to navigate through a host of apps to control everything.





MAPPING MINUTE

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH

IT'S GOING TO BE A RUFF ONE!



Michael Griffith
GIS SPECIALIST

It's official, the dog days of summer are here. And boy, are they ruff! It's on hot days like these I secretly curse my leather seats after they have been baking in the sun all day at the office. I know that those are first-world problems, but this month I've got some all-world solutions for you to help beat the heat!

First off, make sure your air conditioner is up to snuff.

This is usually done by having it inspected and maintenance performed at the beginning of the summer season. Does your air conditioner seem to run all the time while your house doesn't seem to stay cool? Well, you might not have the right-sized unit for your home, or you could be having issues.

Next, close blinds/drapes on your east- and west-facing windows. Blocking the sunlight from entering your home greatly helps keep your home cool. Letting the light in through those sides of the house allows for a greenhouse effect on your home. Invest in some nice blinds or a few sets of heavy drapes to block the heat and light from entering your home.

Don't cook! Well, indoors at least. This gives dad extra incentive to fire up the grill in an effort to keep your

home cool. We've all been there — it always goes like this: It's 90 degrees outside and your mom has to bake a cake for Aunt Barb's cookout. The kitchen is as hot as the surface of the sun, and you just sweat and stick to everything while everyone is huddled around the window A/C unit for a quick breath of fresh air.

You've got to get those numbers up, kid! Set your thermostat as high as possible: 78 degrees Fahrenheit is often recommended as a reasonably comfortable and energy-efficient indoor temperature. I'll be the first to say that I don't follow this. I'm a big guy, and big guys plus hot air equals nuh-uh-no-siree-bob. So, what I personally do is program my thermostat to be much warmer (76) during the day when I am at work and cool it down just before I get home (72). My basement also stays cooler, so like a polar bear I just go downstairs to my cave where it stays around 66 while the main floor of the house stays 72.

If your A/C is broken and you need an emergency way to cool down, grab a large bowl of ice and place a fan blowing over it toward yourself. Or you could freeze a washcloth and lay it on the back of your neck, go to a swimming pool, or head to a movie (they keep movie theaters pretty cool).

I hope these tips are of some use to you. For those who always ask, I'd rather be cold than hot, because you can always add layers, and removing too many layers results in a misdemeanor for public indecency. So all of you two- and four-legged friends, keep cool and have a heck of a good time.

This has been your Mapping Minute!



Shining light on energy savings

With LEDs, the future of bulbs is bright

When it comes to lighting, the potential for energy efficiency is just too great to ignore. Around the home, changing bulbs can change your electric bills, and the monthly savings can add up quickly.

“Lighting efficiency upgrades have long been the poster child of energy efficiency,” says Alan Shedd, director of energy solutions for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives.

Consumers regularly use dozens of bulbs in fixtures, out of necessity and convenience. According to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration, nearly 130 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity are consumed by residential lighting each year, representing about 9 percent of all home energy use.

As light-emitting diode (LED) design options increase, prices are coming down, and more consumers see LEDs as an alternative to the incandescent bulbs first popularized by Thomas Edison in the 1880s.

“The economics make sense,” Shedd says. “When LED lamp products were \$20, it was a tough sell. Now for a couple of bucks you can get a lamp that uses as little as one-tenth of the energy and lasts 10 times longer.”

To get an idea of your potential for energy savings, complete a home inventory. Don’t just count fixtures — count bulbs, and note the type of bulb now in use: incandescent, halogen, compact fluorescent lights, or straight or circular fluorescent tubes.

There’s a good chance your total bulb count for the average single-family home will be between 50 and 75, including hallways, garages, and storage areas, and that savings can add up.

Lumens, not watts

Cashing in on lighting efficiency can get easier if we rethink the way we buy and use the lighting products — thinking lumens instead of watts makes sense, because it could save you money.

Cool white, soft white, dimmable, decorative, three-way, and color are now among the options, with LEDs taking up an increasing share of shelf space in the lighting sections of hardware, discount, and home improvement stores.

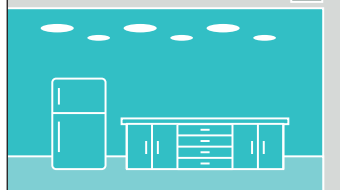
Save Energy with LEDs

LED lights last up to 30 times longer than incandescents, reducing the need to replace bulbs in high or hard-to-reach places. Below are LED lighting suggestions for your home.



Living Room Lamps

Table or floor three-way lamps using LED bulbs provide 620, 1,600, or 2,150 lumens of soft white light and deliver up to 25,000 hours of light.



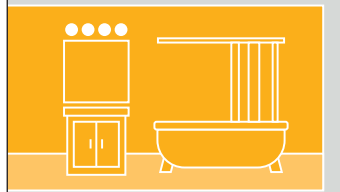
Kitchen

Dimmable recessed LED conversion lights add a warm glow of up to 1,200 lumens for kitchen workspaces and add far less heat to your kitchen. Each bulb could last 10 years.



Bedrooms and Hallways

Long-life LEDs are ideal for ceiling fixtures. A 9-watt LED produces the same 800 lumens of light as a 60-watt incandescent and uses about 80 percent less energy.



Bathrooms

Omnidirectional LED globe bulbs are designed to provide a warm glow ideal for bathrooms. A 6-watt bulb produces 450 lumens and lasts up to 15,000 hours.



Outdoors

A 6-watt, 500-lumen LED bulb can replace a 40-watt incandescent bulb. Designed to last up to 30,000 hours, it could be a one-time switch.

Replacing compact fluorescent lightbulbs with LEDs also provides energy savings, though perhaps more like 30 to 50 percent rather than as much as 90 percent from replacing incandescent bulbs, but consumer preferences have driven a shift away from CFLs, in part because of color and lighting quality.



5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines, and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging.



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18 to 24 inches on all sides, depending on the state laws), consider moving your project location.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Look for LED products and fixtures for outdoor use, such as pathway, step, and porch lights. Many include features like automatic daylight shut-off and motion sensors. You can also find solar-powered lighting for outdoor spaces.

Source: energy.gov



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