

# HD Living

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**+** Opulent Homes,  
Hot Technology





# An Uncommon Common Area

How Electronics Design Group made the tech-loaded two-story amenity space in a NYC luxury high-rise tech-friendly for all its residents.

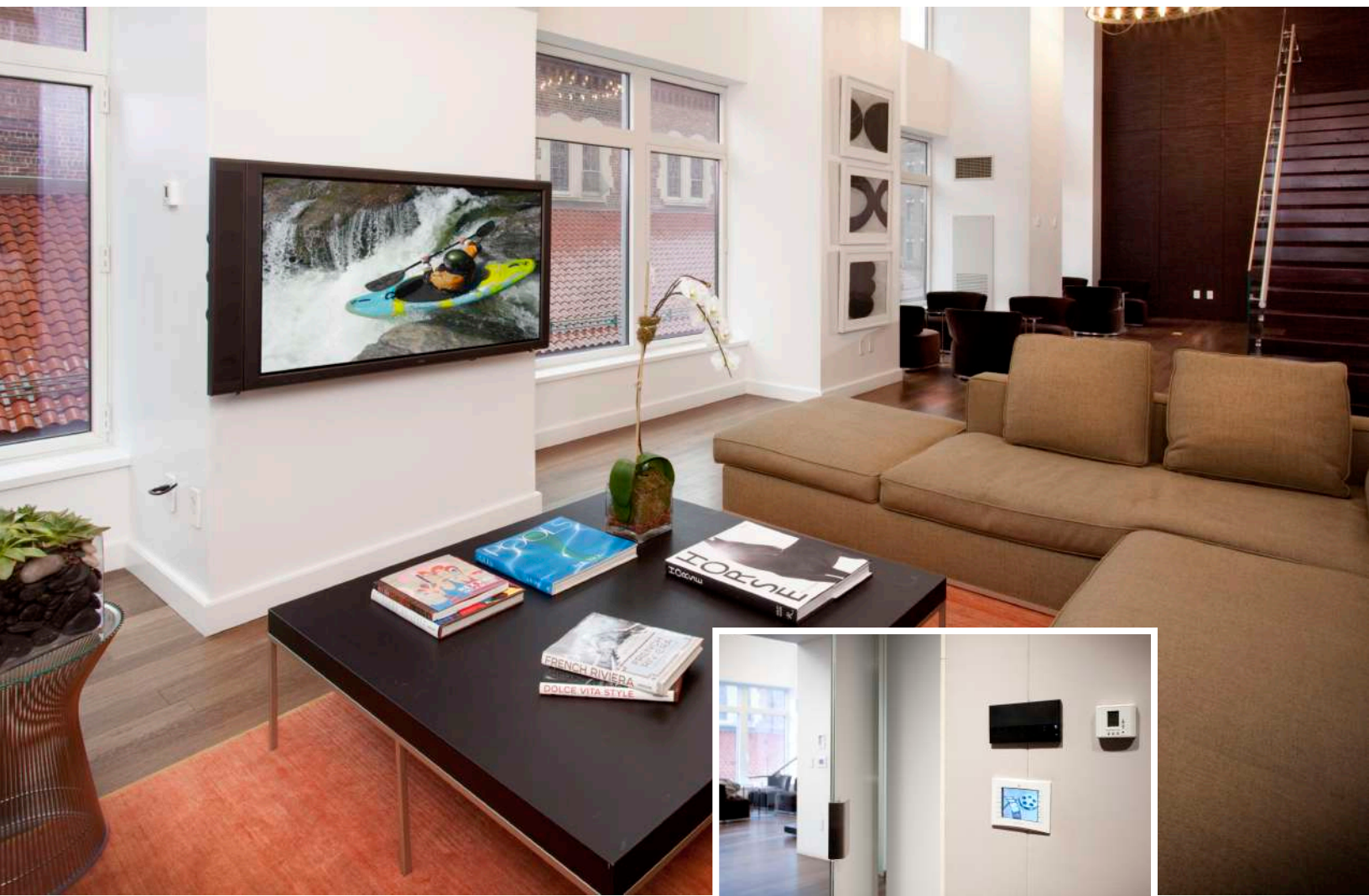
**E**lectronics Design Group, the award-winning New Jersey-based custom house, used its considerable expertise in both commercial and residential installation to create what senior project manager John Montgomery describes as a state-of-the-art amenity space – the activity anchor of The Laurel, a tony condominium complex on Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

“The best descriptive word for the project is ‘cross-over,’” explains Montgomery. “It uses the best elements

of both commercial and residential installations.

“To have a space like this in an apartment complex is almost a necessity,” adds Montgomery. And with consumers’ technology-access needs multiplying exponentially by the minute these days, EDG’s mandate at The Laurel was to make the space easy to use, but also as fully loaded as it needed to be.

The challenge, he says, was to craft an efficient layout within the allotted square footage and still fully meet the divergent recreational, entertainment, and confer- >>



encing needs of the building's residents.

The lower level includes an atrium lounge, a screening room complete with theater seating and a high-resolution front projection system, a dining/teleconferencing room and a catering kitchen. Upstairs, there is a children's play area/game room, access to arcade-style video games, a craft area for young children, and a multimedia computer room.


Blending all of this into a harmonious whole that works well for everyone sounds like a daunting, nearly impossible task. "Having prior experience at several amenity spaces was a big plus in helping develop the scope and scale of the project," explains Montgomery. "It was a lot more labor-intensive than a standard residential job," he observes, pointing out that a deep degree of coordination with other disciplines involved in the construction and design was an imperative. "With multiple trades impacting the space, it was important to have very regular communications and follow-up on the site," he says – and his team's attention to detail was key in what was ultimately achieved.

The top priority for EDG, says Montgomery, was to make the usability of all the built-in systems a no-brainer for residents of any age – and any technology skill set. "All the touchpanels are intuitive enough so

that where multiple functions need to happen, they happen with one button. It's not at all intimidating. If someone wants audio, they touch a button and – boom! – it's on," he explains.

Another important consideration when EDG selected the gear it ultimately installed was the pedigree of the electronics, and their reputation for being bullet-proof. While ease of use was a paramount consideration, said Montgomery, so was low maintenance. He says the latter was "a key trait of this system. Since downtime would adversely affect all residents, the equipment had to be top quality and resilient for day-to-day use," because the area is accessed by many people.

EDG's ability to discern the caliber of the electronics component and control systems it selects is based in the firm's experience of having worked on hundreds of projects – a fact not lost on the building's owners and management. "We have an excellent rapport with the facilities we work on," says Montgomery.

The overall goal was to "create a synergistic balance between complex electronics and a system that is easy to use," says Montgomery. While the project took one year to complete, end to end, it takes a Laurel resident all of five minutes to be "wowed," in this extraordinary space. 

## | ELECTRONIC DESIGN GROUP

# Electronics Design Group's New Web Site

TheArchitectsEdge.com brings resources/education to architectural community.

**E**lectronics Design Group (EDG), Inc., located in Piscataway, N.J., functions primarily as a home theater room design and engineering contractor. They specialize in the integration and installation of ultra high-end home movie theater and home automation system technologies for private residences, as well as being a provider of complete theater, light control and automation services for businesses.

For almost 25 years, the company has been developing a solid reputation as a leader in media room design and installation. Now they are taking that expertise in a new direction with TheArchitectsEDGe.com, a Web site, they explain, that provides the architectural community with the resources needed to make educated decisions about electronic systems.

Dave Randolph, Managing Director of Consulting for EDG, explained how market changes over the last few years helped develop the unique concept behind the site. "As the market got more and more competitive and the margins dropped, there were lots of customers that were asking for free proposals," he began, "and the industry would provide that, and in the end the client would oftentimes end up receiving an apple, an orange and a banana, and could never really make sense of what the product was."

Randolph explained that a customer would be left with three different companies that would provide three different manufacturers with three different philosophies. "In the end they'd end up with nothing, gamble and just pick one ... a situation that wasn't really good for anybody," he added.

Randolph further explained that the site isn't about presenting a new set of speakers or showing pretty install pictures, "this is a design resource site for designers interested in developing an AV system. You can go to the site for any aspect of that system and our clients can look at consulting solutions—example systems of different aspects of a project."

He was also quick to point out that the site doesn't stop there. TheArchitectsEDGe.com also has a section dedicated to properly budgeting a project, as well as a page EDG calls "Ask Yourself" that also helps set the site apart.

"The Ask Yourself page differentiates us even further, as we present a look at why this approach is different from others," Randolph said. "It's illustrating what most of our clients have experienced throughout the process in deciding which AV firm to go with or what level of technology to put into a particular house."

Some of the questions the Ask Yourself section poses include "Have you ever been held hostage for information while the negotiations between the client and an Electronic Systems Contractor were still going on?" and "Have you had a client that was interested in electronic systems for their new home and you could not provide them with any information?" The point here is the fact that most installers will answer yes to these questions, and the site helps provide the much-sought-after solutions.

EDG has also added roughly 30 AIA (American Institute of Architects) -approved courses to the site that break down very specific aspects of the home theater installation process for installers. "A great tool to broaden our horizons and really work with the architectural community," Randolph pointed out.

Randolph believes that EDG clients will embrace the TheArchitectsEDGe and take advantage of all the tools the site has to offer: "This site ultimately provides a means to level up the other competitors. We have the client's ear for many months while talking about the project and we've earned their respect. This site furthers that respect."

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