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## Condo project goes state of the art

Fiber-optic network adds to amenities at Park Lafayette

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - by [Kathy Bergstrom](#) Special to The Business Journal

With a state-of-the-art fiber-optic network at their disposal, residents of the Park Lafayette condominium project on Milwaukee's east side will be able to keep up with technology demands for years to come, the project's developers say.

**Renaissant Development** of Oak Brook, Ill., has entered into a contract with **Connexion Technologies**, Cary, N.C., to provide the fiber-optic network in the project now under construction at the corner of North Prospect Avenue and East Lafayette Place.

The \$105 million, 280-unit project includes two 20-story condominium towers and 10 townhouses. The first units are scheduled for completion in fall 2008.

Developers believe they're the first to offer the technology in a downtown Milwaukee condominium project and believe it will pay off in sales for the project.

"One of the most important things that we offer is state-of-the-art technology for the building in addition to providing a quality building at a good value for all the buyers," said Warren Barr, Renaissant's president. "Our company is constantly looking at trends in the marketplace and the direction products are going. We want to make sure that every system that we put into the building is going to be state of the art."

Barr said the company didn't want buyers in a few years to regret living in a building that didn't have the system.

"It's a proven technology. It's allowing even higher and faster speed access, more reliable, more dependable," said Jim Carroll, Renaissant's chief financial officer.

The Park Lafayette has already differentiated itself with its location, design and proximity to retailers like Whole Foods, Barr said.

"This is just one more feature which we think separates Park Lafayette from other projects being offered in Milwaukee," he said.

The advantage of installing fiber optics over traditional copper wiring is a huge increase in available bandwidth, said Carter Steg, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Connexion Technologies.

Connexion provides fiber-optic infrastructure for residential developments across the country.

"Fiber optics allow residents to experience greater bandwidth, which allows them to access applications that require a lot of bandwidth," she said.

Applications include movies-on-demand, high-definition television, high-speed Internet, security monitoring, teleconferencing, Internet protocol television, voice-over Internet protocol phone service and interactive gaming.

The number of North American households with direct connections to high-speed fiber optics has reached about 2.14 million, or about 2 percent of households on the continent, according to recent figures released by the **Fiber-to-the-Home Council** and the **Telecommunications Industry Association**. That's more than double the estimated 1.01 million in September 2006.

Fiber-optic backbones exist across the country, but most people don't have fiber optics going directly to their home. They connect to a fiber-optic system through copper wiring to get high-speed Internet access, so the bandwidth is not as large as a direct connection provides, Steg said.

Copper transmits electricity, so it can be subject to lightning strikes and more outages than fiber optics, she said. It's also corrosive and eventually must be replaced, she said.

Fiber optics are essentially glass and do not have those challenges, she said.

Connexion spends about \$2,500 per unit to install fiber optics, which means it will spend about \$700,000 at the Park Lafayette.

The company has a 10-year contract with Park Lafayette to provide residents with telephone, television, Internet, security and other services. The company negotiates deals with other providers to offer the services.

Under Renaissance's deal with Connexion, Park Lafayette residents will pay \$45.95 per month for high-speed Internet access and basic cable television, Carroll said.

The cost of Internet and television service will be included in owner association dues, while telephone and security services will be available by subscription, according to Connexion.

"We negotiate and get the best service, best price and best products for the residents on their behalf," Steg said.

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Fiber optics also can be a marketing tool for developers, she said.

"Obviously, Generation X and Y buyers are starting to purchase condos and new homes," she said. "You're developing a better product and it's definitely a way to increase sales for a developer," she said.

Fiber optics also take up less space than copper wiring, Steg said.

The transmission quality of copper wiring starts to deteriorate after about 250 feet, so companies use an intermediate distribution facility or telecommunications closet to maintain that quality, Steg said. Developers often put those closets on every floor or every other floor.

Fiber optics only require a third of those closets, which means the developer has more leasable space, she said.

Connexion installed fiber optics in about 170 projects across the country, representing about 140,000 units. This is its first project in Milwaukee.

The company provides fiber-optic networks for single- and multi-family projects as well as hospitality and resort properties.

Prices for units at the Park Lafayette start at \$240,000 and go up to \$1.4 million, with sizes ranging from 744 to 3,000 square feet.

**Hunzinger Construction Co.** of Brookfield is the project's general contractor.