Lennar chair and Zillow CEO talk predictions for near-future homes

In 15 years, built-in home Wi-Fi — no need for a separate router — and speaking door locks could be as common in a typical house as the refrigerator.

On Thursday, Zillow Group CEO Spencer Rascoff sat down to chat with Stuart Miller, the executive chairman of Lennar, for the latest installment of Zillow's Office Hours podcast. Miller, who oversees the largest home construction company in the United States, offered his forecast for home technology in the coming decades.

"We have to think about the Uberization of the homebuilding world — how are we going to better utilize the assets that people have?" Miller said during the 20-minute interview.

Lennar leadership team, with executive chairman Stuart Miller in front | Credit: Lennar

As digital technology plays a larger role in home construction, the "points of intersection between customer-homebuilder or customer and Realtor are going to change," Miller said. Things that are currently regarded as "high-tech" — built-in Wi-Fi, smart speakers and home appliances synched to the cloud — are likely to become standard for all new homes in the near future.

Earlier this month, Lennar announced that all of its new homes would have built-in Wi-Fi and smart locks, video doorbells, thermostats and lights after partnering with Amazon to showcase a series of Alexa-powered model homes. According to Miller, home automation is the next step in the future of home construction.

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Amazon Echo Plus | Credit: Amazon

“To the extent that, whether it’s Wi-Fi distribution in the home, home automation, energy efficiency or a myriad of other things, the home will give way to technology innovation that makes older

homes more obsolete," said Miller. "And people will be looking for new styles, new technologies and new ways to live, and I think that will benefit the homebuilding industry, as long as we're able to adapt."

Zillow CEO Spencer Rascoff | Credit: Zillow Group

Miller added that it is far more difficult to adapt current homes to fit new technology. Instead, the turn toward automation and built-in smart appliances will primarily affect the construction industry. New home and interior technologies will come into the mainstream not by the homeowners who install them but by real estate developers, Miller said.

"You will see innovations around the edges, whether it's truss plants or wall plants or some manufacturing components," said Miller. "But ultimately, cost structures, and shortages of labor, and labor costs will mitigate in favor of finding new ways to build homes."

Miller's comments are not a surprise, given Lennar's recent focus on tech. The homebuilder has provided funding for a number of real estate tech startups, including the all-digital, instant offering homebuyer and seller Opendoor and digital notarizing company Notarize.

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