

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## The Latest Luxury-Apartment Perk: Alexa Everywhere

New York developer Tishman Speyer is making a bet on voice-activated smart-home devices at its Long Island City rental-apartment complex



Model apartment at the Jackson Park complex in Long Island City, Queens. Developer Tishman Speyer is installing voice-activated smart-home devices at each of the 1,871 rental apartments there. PHOTO: TISHMAN SPEYER

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Dec. 6, 2017 10:00 a.m. ET

Alexa, can you make a splash in the New York City luxury rental-apartment market?

That is the question being asked by the developer of Jackson Park, a huge new apartment complex in Long Island City.

New York developer Tishman Speyer is making a bet on voice-activated smart-home devices at each of the 1,871 apartments there, in what it sees as a blueprint for the future of rental housing.

The effort is unprecedented in New York City rental housing and will raise the bar for other buildings, real-estate experts say. It shows the rapid pace of adoption of smart-home technology—now offered in some new residences on the market—as well as the growing popularity of devices by Amazon, Alphabet Inc. and others.

Jackson Park brings a new scale and considerable ambition to home automation. Its apartments are built around a private park in three glass towers, the tallest topping out at 581 feet, adjacent to Long Island Rail Road tracks.

In the 120 apartments in the “Penthouse Collection,” which consists of luxury units on the top four floors at Jackson Park, home-automation features will be built directly into outlets, light switches and a smart thermostat that could be used to raise and lower the heat or air conditioning through word commands.

The penthouse units will go on the market early next year, with rents topping out at close to \$10,000 a month for the largest penthouse.



Rendering of Jackson Park development in Long Island City, Queens. Its rental apartments are built around a private park in three glass towers, the tallest topping out at 581 feet. PHOTO: TISHMAN SPEYER

The smart appliances would be connected through a hub to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)’s Echo Show, a device with a video screen, activated by calling out to “Alexa.”

Alexa can answer questions, play music, turn on the TV, provide a weather report, or show a video of a baby sleeping in another room. A typical command might be: “Alexa, turn off the kitchen light.”

The other apartments, now on the market, will get a scaled-down version with the Echo Show and an outlet that can plug into an existing receptacle and be used to turn on a coffee maker or a lamp. Renters would be able to add features as well.

The extra hardware for the penthouse units costs slightly more than \$1,000 per unit, and significantly less for the other apartments in the building, according to Tishman Speyer.

Nancy Packes, a rental consultant not connected with Jackson Park, said the home-automation feature was the first of its kind to be offered in the New York City rental market.

The draw of the devices for developers goes beyond giving tenants the ability to utter words that turn on a lamp. By next year, Tishman Speyer is planning to offer a customized Alexa application known as a skill that would allow renters to query Alexa and connect to services in the building and in the neighborhood.

After asking Alexa or saying “OK Google” for home automation, renters in the apartment building of the future might be able ask about a yoga schedule or pool hours. Jackson Park and other buildings already offer connections through smartphone apps.

Rob Speyer, the president and chief executive of Tishman Speyer, said the project would bolster the social infrastructure in the building and help renters feel they are part of a community.

“When we started we were focused on the physical environment and the physical amenities of the building,” Mr. Speyer said. “Now we are focusing on the digital environment.”

The smart-home project at Jackson Park began with an internal Tishman Speyer “Idea Olympics” last year, in which six teams of junior executives and analysts competed to develop innovations to rethink residential amenities to match the current lifestyles of renters.



The new Amazon.com Inc. Echo device. PHOTO: DANIEL BERMAN/BLOOMBERG NEWS

The winning team proposed smart-home features, Mr. Speyer said, and as the system was being designed, voice-activation was added, because of a surge in adoption by consumers.

Leasing at Jackson Park began last month, and the first building is due to open in January.

The development, which occupies nearly an entire block along Queens Plaza South and Jackson Avenue, includes a 1.6-acre private park, two pools and other amenities.

Rents, after including a free month on a 12-month lease, start at about \$2,180 a month for studios, \$2,600 for one bedrooms, and \$4,400 for two-bedroom units.

Tishman Speyer is planning to introduce home automation at new apartment developments in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, Mr. Speyer said. The rapid pace of technological developments, however, might result in the installation of different components.