

Home security lowers high profiles to keep occupants safe

Valli Herman



Electronically activated privacy glass changes opacity. (Innovative Glass Corp.)

If you're rich, famous, scandalous or, as often happens in Los Angeles, all three, privacy is hard to come by.

With awards season underway, the paparazzi will be out in force as celebrities ferry between red carpets and their homes.

However, keeping a residence free of prying camera lenses, nosy tour buses, deranged fans — or, in Kim Kardashian's case, brazen jewelry thieves — requires a new level of home design and security savvy.

Here's a look at some high- and low-tech privacy solutions that even the non-scandalous may appreciate.

— Electronic glass. When a celebrity had privacy concerns about the bathroom skylights in his clifftop Malibu home, he sought a high-tech solution, said Aron Abadi, vice president of Innovative Glass Corp. The company makes eGlass, an electronic glass that changes tint or opacity with the flip of a switch.

The client's skylights were outfitted with his company's LC Privacy glass, which remains frosted white until electricity causes internal particles to rearrange and turn the glass transparent. Abadi also installed eGlass in his own home's front door.

“If someone rings the doorbell, the glass goes clear for five seconds, then it frosts back up,” he said. “It’s like a life-size peephole.”

— Smart elevators. At the under-construction Four Seasons Private Residences in Beverly Hills, condo owners in the 59-unit, ultra-luxury building won’t have to share an elevator.

An electronic fob or smartphone can summon an elevator that won’t stop to let anyone else on or off, said Jonathan Genton, chief executive of the Genton Property Group, the project’s developer. Genton said most of the units will have a dedicated elevator that travels from the garage to the owner’s unit.

— Garage within a garage. “There is a way to get into your unit without being seen by literally anybody,” Genton said. Focus groups of high-profile would-be buyers revealed that they wished to drive unassisted into a secure garage.

“Then it’s like the Bat Cave,” he said. “You drive into the garage, pass through gates ... that sense your fob or license plate. A door opens to your private garage, and you step out and go directly to your elevator or an elevator lobby. It’s all concealed and private.”

— Electric shades. Motorized shades are becoming a must-have, particularly in homes with a lot of glass — or a lot of neighbors.

“They have sensors or timers that can make them go up and down,” said Beverly Hills real estate agent Jade Mills. “If you’re not home during the day, they can automatically lower to deflect the heat, too.”

Whole house surveillance systems can remotely control the shades via smartphones.

— Living fences. Though Los Angeles building codes can limit wooden fences to six feet, that hasn’t stopped homeowners from growing tall walls of trees on all sides — even though they may violate building codes, said Greg Verabian, an associate principal with HKS Architects in Los Angeles.

— Double lobbies. Increasingly, high-end hotels and residences are making ground-floor entry lobbies smaller, while upper-floor lobbies with more amenities become accessible only by key card, Verabian said. “It’s like a valve that reduces the number of people who can be there,” he said.

— Security guards. Whether it’s an entourage or a big, scary person at the gate, old-fashioned intimidation still works, too. Just make sure they’re actually around — we’re talking to you, Kim.

The original article can be found [here](#).