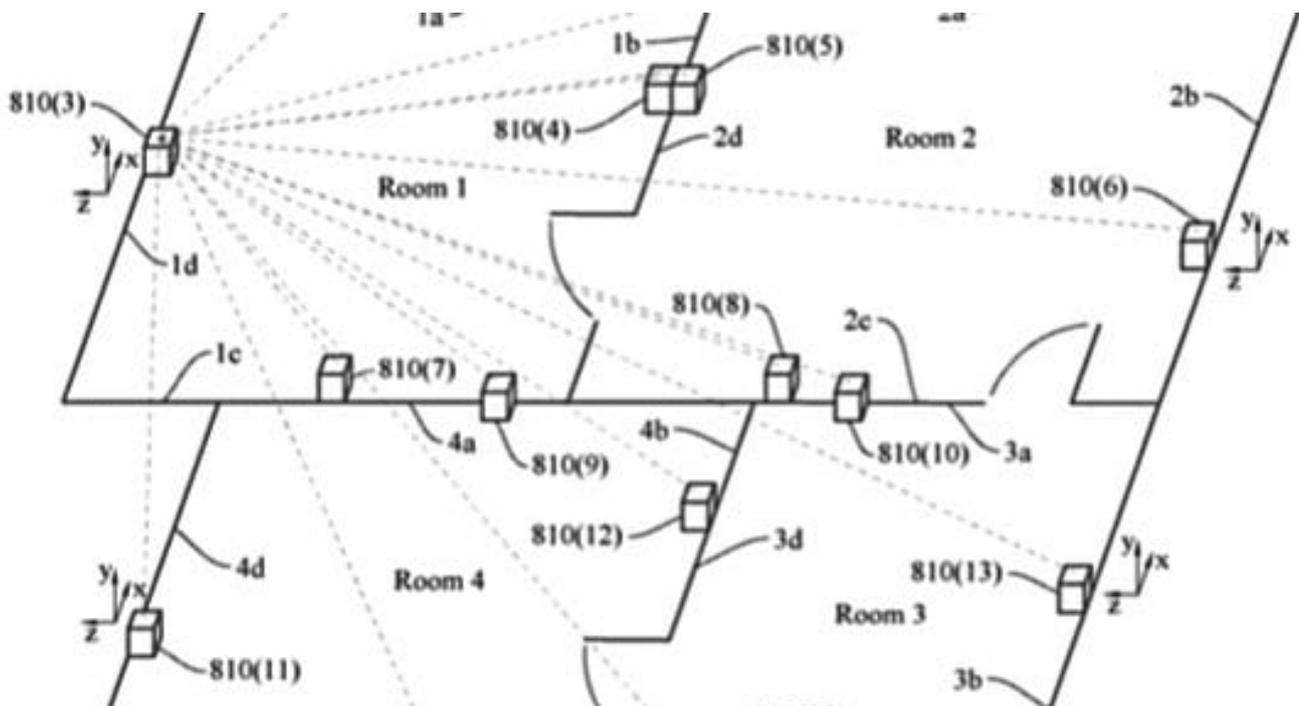


Apple Patents Self-Configuring Smart Home System

Written by Frederick Douglas
24. 02. 2020

A recently published Apple patent describes a modular wall unit system able to automatically configure smart homes and buildings, allowing customers to painlessly add and remove connected devices as they require.



Simply named the "Modular Wall Unit System," the patent points out smart home configuration involves multiple challenges. After all, many connected devices from different vendors might not be compatible, since they involve different connection and communication protocols. And even if they are compatible, the various hardware and software configurations, not to mention system setup, can prove daunting to the average customer.

Enter the Apple proposal. The patent describes a system able to automatically generate a building floor plan complete with inanimate objects such as furniture, before determining the connected devices in use and their purpose. For example, the system would auto-configure a smart switch to control a lighting element in the room after working out the switch is in a room without any other lighting elements or control switches. Following automatic configuration, the system simply asks the user to confirm the selections put in place.

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The system also involves a number of standard base units, like power sockets or light switch housings, able to slot in a variety of hardware units. A hardware device simply slides into the unit, allowing the smart home to easily figure out what it is and what it should do.

Of course, the patent is extremely ambitious, and putting it together as an actual piece of hardware requires collaboration with multiple smart home vendors. As such, it makes for very interesting reading, especially for more technically minded installers wanting a peak at a possible future for home automation.

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