

# Lifestyle Architecture

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Our headlines are filled with news of the latest state-of-the-art residential buildings in Manhattan that are creating self-contained, high-rise neighborhoods within existing city neighborhoods. Amenities in these buildings range from core offerings such as fitness centers, children's playrooms, public lounges, and parking, to luxury hotel-like amenities such as pools, roof decks and terraces, gardens, yoga studios, spa/therapy rooms, media centers, libraries, business centers, basketball courts, and more. In some, new restaurants are located on the ground floor.

These amenities have become a crucial component in marketing luxury residential developments and establishing a brand identity for the complex. The end result is a carefully curated environment, offering every convenience that a resident might want or feel that they must have without stepping out the front door.

From a designer's point of view, I would like to focus on three amenities that contribute not only to the value of the building and the individual units but, if well-designed, will foster a sense of community and wellbeing.

Fitness centers are high on the list of amenities that prospective homeowners look for in a new residence, as they promote wellness while providing numerous opportunities to socialize. They are a major draw and ideally are a key element in the design of the building. As such, they are much more effective if placed on an upper floor with access to views and an abundance of natural light. If you cannot provide a full floor, then make the most of your space by providing a variety of distinctly defined areas for free weights, fitness equipment, cardio, stretch, and private studios for yoga and other classes. Locker rooms, saunas, and massage/therapy rooms should be adjacent.

Good lighting is essential to creating a healthy invigorating space. In addition to natural light, provide high ceilings and multiple levels of light. Up-lighting or bouncing light off the ceiling to the space below, direct lighting focused on areas of activity, and accent lighting are all key to creating a dynamic, energetic environment that encourages activity. Good lighting has also been shown to increase the health and wellbeing of the occupant.

Mirrors are a must in any fitness center. Not only do they allow each individual to check their own performance while working out, they also create a more interesting environment by expanding the sense of space, reflecting light, and creating new views within the space. Beyond that, other wall finishes include wood paneling, stone or ceramic tiles, and specialty wall coverings. All materials used in the space must be durable and able to withstand hard use. Special consideration should be given to the flooring, which should be resilient and able to absorb shock and vibration from the equipment.

Lounge areas and other public spaces in a residential complex provide opportunities for residents to socialize or to relax in their self-contained vertical neighborhood—often these areas serve as an extension of individual private residences. Whatever their purpose, good design with quality finishes and furniture and good lighting are key to creating comfortable and inviting spaces that enhance the life of the residents.

In a city of concrete, stone, and glass, homeowners love to have proximity to nature and the outdoors. Outdoor gardens at the ground level or rooftop gardens and terraces enhance a sense of wellbeing and offer a respite from hectic schedules and the demands of city living. Living green walls in lobby spaces provide dramatic natural works of art that are not only calming but clean the air, creating a fresher environment. Fountains incorporated into these spaces further enhance their calming effect, and outdoor pools provide popular opportunities to stay fit and socialize.

A building with a variety of well-landscaped green spaces provides multiple opportunities for residents to socialize with friends and neighbors or just enjoy being outdoors in the sun. Combined with state-of-the-art fitness centers and well-appointed public spaces, they create a unique vertical neighborhood that produces value both for the building and its residents while contributing to the environment in the City in a healthy sustainable way.