



NYC Residential Buildings Take Family Amenities to the Next Level



by Lucy Cohen Blatter
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After seeing the stroller congestion in hallways and surrounding building amenity spaces, Hunter Frick, director of development marketing at Halstead Property decided to create a [stroller valet service](#) in a building his company is developing in Park Slope, Brooklyn, called 251 First Street. The idea is simple—to have a room right near the doorman’s station where condo owners and their guests could stow their strollers so as not to take up precious hallway or apartment space. It caught on and was reported on everywhere, mostly as a sign of the peak child-friendliness of the already famously baby-centric neighborhood. “We were strictly responding to a need, it wasn’t a PR push,” says Frick.

In fact, amenities geared toward little ones have been de rigeur in new developments in New York City for quite some time. The Upper West Side’s [Aldyn luxury building](#), which was built in 2008, has a climbing wall, a bowling alley, a full basketball court and a playroom designed by Kidville.

Set to open in June, the [Easton](#) on the Upper East Side will have a 3,000-square-foot indoor/outdoor children’s playroom decorated with an “under the sea” theme, complete with colorful murals and a custom-built submarine-shaped climbing apparatus. And it all opens onto a private, dedicated children’s outdoor space, “which is a very unique feature,” says Bryan Cho, executive vice president at Related Companies, which is developing the property.

At the just-opened-for-sales [Circa Central Park](#) at the northernmost tip of the Upper West Side, owners will be able to rent remote-control sailboats, bikes and picnic baskets before going across the street to Central Park.

Frick says that the “mommy set” is a huge driver in how they design their buildings, so much so that he holds a focus group with mothers every few months to get their suggestions.



At the very least, new buildings need to offer pretty impressive children’s playrooms. Halstead has teamed with companies like Kidville in designing the rooms. The Easton has teamed up with 92Y “to offer special programming, including group music classes for babies and toddlers in the playroom along with private and group lessons in the music rehearsal rooms,” says Cho.

“People are starting to go all out with children’s rooms—putting a focus on design and how kids interact with their spaces,” says Eric Benaim, founder of [Modern Spaces](#), a residential brokerage firm based in Long Island City. It’s all part of New York City becoming ever family friendlier.

“There was a time when some people thought the city wasn’t a good place to raise children, but that’s changed,” says Roberta Axelrod, head of the residential sales division with developer Time Equities Inc. “People realize that we have acres of outdoor space, bike paths, things like the new [SeaGlass carousel downtown](#),” she says, which not only explains why kids amenities have become so popular but also why larger apartments (of the three and four-bedroom variety) are more common in today’s newer buildings.

“More and more families are choosing to stay in the city, and they don’t want to compromise on quality of life for their kids, nor should they have to,” says Related’s Cho.

Time Equities’ [50 West](#) (which owners will begin moving into this fall) has apartments as large as five bedrooms—and amenities galore. The company has teamed up with American Leisure for its amenities spaces, who will organize sports programming, too. “It’s geared toward getting kids off their devices,” says Axelrod. But they also wanted a building that appealed to kids with varied interests. So there’s also a movie theater, and a stage for shows and recitals. There’s an arts and crafts room, too.

And, as is becoming increasingly popular: study nooks for older kids. “We wanted to include amenities that would meet the needs of kids of all ages, not just toddlers, which was the first breakthrough in amenities,” she says.



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