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Condo Amenities That Improve Quality of Life--From Thoughtful To Playful

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BLT Architects

Resort-style luxury has to balance with everyday creature comforts in developments such as Lincoln Square (now leasing)-- a Philadelphia luxury tower that's installing a TV lounge and a dog run on the rooftop.

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In cities where developers are engaged in a "luxury amenity race," a homebuyer's victory is not necessarily about buying into the building with the most over-the-top amenities. This isn't what the marketing materials would have you believe, but think about it: Is the key to happiness a curated art collection in the lobby? Is it a robotic car elevator? Probably not. Look past the glossy photos and fulsome ad copy, and figure out what matters to you in the long run. Probably it relates to your health, safety, and everyday convenience.

Many articles have covered luxury amenities, but the amenities in this post provide value beyond bragging rights,
and disproportionate to what they cost to build and maintain.

For Your Kids

Most parents dream about a house with a big, secure yard and also an indoor playroom for their kids – but for city-dwelling families, this usually isn't in the cards. Living in a city, the only play areas for children may be the common spaces in the building and then whatever parks or playgrounds are nearby. Thus, every amenity that's geared toward children, whether it be a playground or a game room or a fully staffed and licensed onsite daycare, is potentially a huge plus for parents.

Estates at Acqualina

Ice skating in July, in Florida? This is just one of many amenities that Acqualina founder Jules Trump masterminded to keep kids happy at his Sunny Isles luxury collection.

What people are looking for in child-friendly amenities varies according to the city, of course. In Los Angeles, where people worship creativity and bestow plum jobs based on personal connections, the peak kid-friendly amenity just might be Heather Village's on-site Montessori pre- and elementary school. In the booming highrise enclave of Sunny Isles, where people can buy a $3-$5 million dollar condominium as a weekend getaway, the Mansions at Acqualina has a private cinema (with popcorn service), a golf simulator and a Formula One racing simulator. The Estates at Acqualina, an even more luxe development catering to established Acqualina clientele, will have its own bowling alley and ice skating rink.

For Your Pets

Finding a pet-friendly building is a challenge in itself, but there are countless moments of difficulty and downright grossness that dog owners in particular have to endure for the sake of their four-legged friends. And most buildings put up with it grudgingly if at all. As a pet owner, you really feel the stares when your dog tracks dirty footprints across the lobby—or shiver along with them in winter sleet. So when a building offers a truly pet-friendly extra, like the pet washing rooms in Philadelphia complexes The Alexander and Bridge on Race, it's oftentimes enough to close the deal for a pet owner. (Some places have gone so far as to offer "pet spas," but a simple wash and dry station is all that most owners really need.)

Rinse your dog down after a walk around Old City, Philadelphia. Even simple facilities like this are used--and appreciated--every day.

In city neighborhoods that are less than friendly to dogs, pet owners often get screamed at by angry neighbors if the dog accidentally relieves itself on a “no dogs” lawn – something that owners can't always do much to prevent. To keep the neighbor situation friendly, an onsite dog run—or better yet, a rooftop dog park such as City Market at O in Washington, DC boasts — is the smartest amenity a condo dweller could provide. Doggy day care and weather-protected dog runs on-property are prized enough to sell a home-seeker on a building on that merit alone.

For Your Stuff

321 at Water's Edge

In Fort Lauderdale, new development 321 at Water's Edge is one of many new high-end developments to create storage space with a lounge atmosphere for residents to keep their private wine collections.

The downside of city living is that condos and apartments usually never feel that big to begin with, and soon enough you'll outgrow them just by living a normal life. Essentials like baby strollers and bicycles end up parked in front of a door by default. Storage for luxury items like vintage wine or furs might not be anywhere near the unit. For homeowners at nearly any price point, this isn't ideal – you want your belongings nearby, in a secure and climate-controlled place. Thus, thoughtful storage offerings like wine lockers, a bike room and stroller storage offer outsize convenience and security.

Now under construction, Long Island City development GALERIE will boast not only designated bike and stroller storage areas, but also a library – a smart offering in New York City, where square footage can be so limited that even book collections have to go.

For Your Job

More and more, people don't necessarily have to work at the office. And we've long since discovered the problems with café working (i.e. bad WiFi connection, loud neighbors, the lunch rush). The co-working space as a residential amenity is a brilliant evolution of the business center or common room, and you can expect to see it take off in popularity as more people move into the remote workforce.

For the Fresh Air

If you pay a premium to live in a place with beautiful weather or gorgeous waterfront access, it's a grimly ironic reality check to note you haven't spent any time outside in weeks. This happens to everyone if you live in a place long enough. But it isn't anyone's ideal. More fresh air, more sunrises, more afternoons with the whole family as company—those are the benchmarks by which many people measure quality of life.

Geoffrey Lyon

At Residences at Kirby Collection, resort luxury (pool cabanas) and pet-friendly green space can be found in the heart of Houston.

Pool terraces and gym areas have become standard, but the smaller recreational amenities often put a sparkle in people's eye. Croquet, bocce, firepits – or on the luxe resort side, developers are adding putting greens, bocce courts and outdoor kitchens.

Hyde Midtown

Though it seems whimsical, the putting green at Hyde Midtown evokes a luxury outdoor mindset that people want from a Florida dwelling--even one in the heart of Miami.