

# The New York Times

## Real Estate

### Dog Yoga and Electric Guitars: Amenities, at a New Level



Henry Hall, a new building on West 38th Street, has a music rehearsal space that comes with a drum kit and an electric guitar.

LINDA JAQUEZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

By C. J. HUGHES  
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Lights dimmed. An instructor spoke Sanskrit. And a collective howl went out from a group on mats.

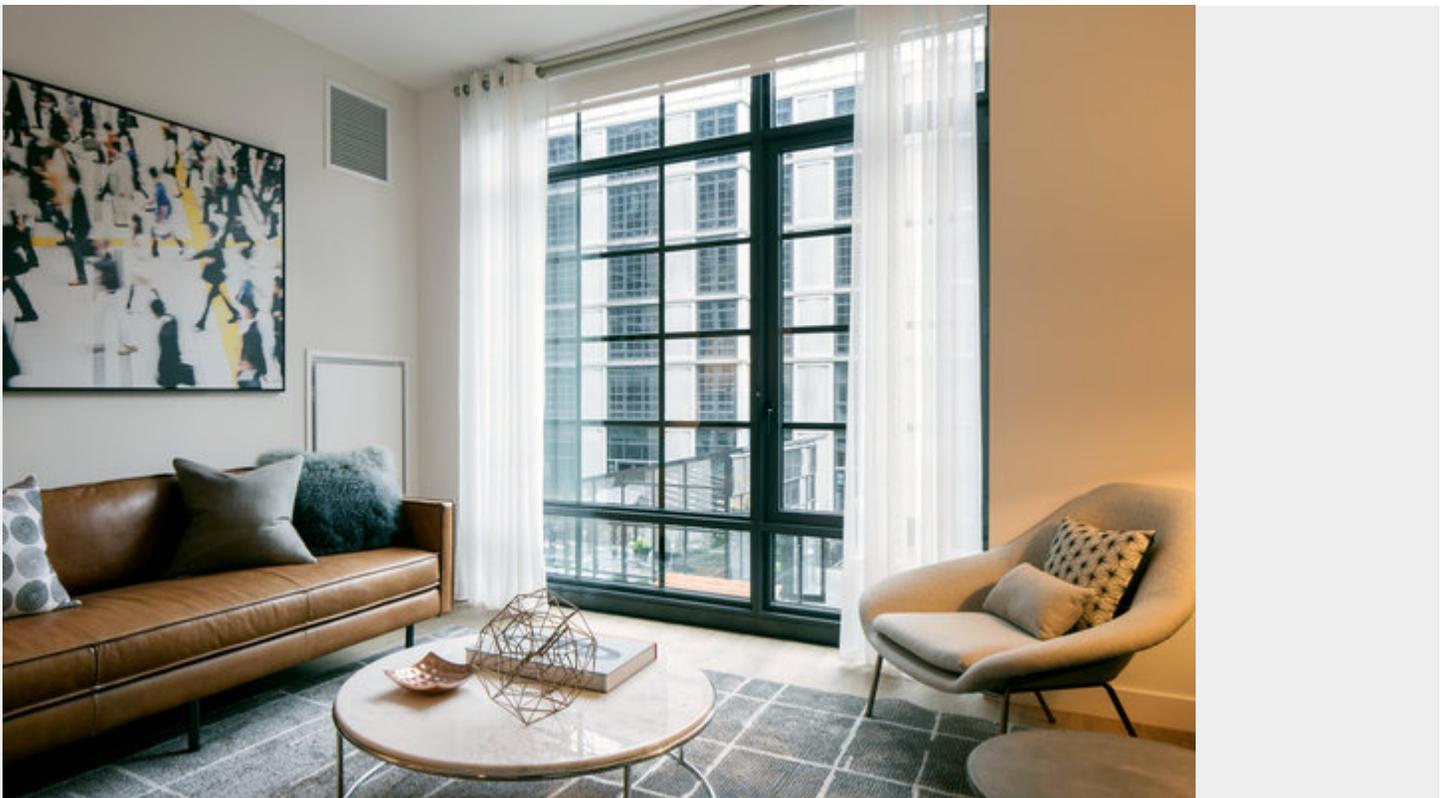
The dog yoga, or doga, class offered as a free perk earlier this year just to those who live in any of the 62 rental buildings owned by the [Brodsky Organization](#), was a wrap.

“I kind of laughed when I first heard about it and said, ‘Is this really a thing?’” said Amanda Navarra, 27, who attended a class, held at Chelsea’s [D Pet Hotels](#), with her Shih Tzu puppy, Gigi.

“But once you understand it, you think: ‘This is so cool,’” added Ms. Navarra, who rents a studio apartment in a Brodsky building in the Turtle Bay neighborhood. At a doga class, dog owners assist their pets with different stretches and positions.

Providing residents with access to the latest fads has always been important but it seems to have become a priority for city landlords, who are offering increasingly inventive (if occasionally silly) extras to attract buyers and tenants to their buildings, and to keep them entertained while they are there.

Whether rock ‘n’ roll rehearsal rooms, Imax theaters, bike-repair stations, stargazing sessions, woodworking shops, greenhouses for growing herbs, or those doga classes, out-there amenities are in some ways an attempt to compensate for shrinking apartments, according to amenity planners, developers and brokers.



A model apartment at ARC, a 428-unit rental building, overlooks the building’s courtyard and greenhouse.

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Indeed, since the mid-1990s, the average size of rental units has dropped to about 900 square feet from more than 1,000 square feet, according to [Miller Samuel Real Estate Appraisers and Consultants](#).

“Having these auxiliary spaces allows someone to think, I may not have this giant living room, but I do have a climbing wall and basketball court downstairs,” said Collin Bond, an associate broker with the firm [Triplemint](#).

Others seek wine cellars, like a client keen on storing a \$25,000 collection of about 200 bottles that is currently stacked high in a bedroom, said Mr. Bond, who took this buyer to One Hundred Barclay TriBeCa, a condo in Lower Manhattan that offers a climate-controlled storage area. For \$20,000, owners can purchase a locker with a 100-bottle capacity to hold their reds and whites.

This \$500 million development, from Magnum Real Estate Group and the CIM Group, also has a sommelier from a nearby wine shop on call, to suggest which dishes and vintages go best together. One Hundred Barclay has sold 95 of its 156 units since 2015, at an average price of \$2,300 a square foot, a project spokesman said.

Indulgent amenities like wine cellars “are also something you can bring up at cocktail parties,” Mr. Bond said. “They’re like a badge of honor.”

Other times, parties themselves seem a focus, like at [Henry Hall](#), a new red brick, 225-unit rental from Imperial Companies and Shorenstein Properties that opened this spring at 515 West 38th Street in the Hudson Yards neighborhood.



ARC, a new building in Dutch Kills, Queens, has a a greenhouse, where residents can try their hand at growing herbs and vegetables.

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A slew of rooms that seem to be designed with night life in mind are reached from the lobby, where rattan chairs sit amid jars of candy and portraits of men in cravats. There is Legacy Records, a seafood-centric restaurant to open in November, and a separate sprawling as-yet-unnamed bar, as well as a liquor store and a graffiti-tagged music rehearsal space that offers use of a drum kit, karaoke machine and Fender electric guitar.

Tenants in the building, where studios start at \$3,000 a month and one-bedrooms at \$3,600, will mingle with the general public, who also have access to these multilevel common areas. On some nights, developers say, these areas might have the cocktail-fueled buzz of a scene-setting boutique hotel.

“I was sitting in the Bowery Hotel one night thinking that if I was 30 years old, how cool would it be if I lived upstairs? And the thesis emerged from there,” said Eric Birnbaum, 43, a founder of Imperial, which hired the designer Ken Fulk for the interiors.

“We purposely didn’t want to do screening rooms, because we didn’t think people want that,” Mr. Birnbaum added. “They want to be anchored by food and beverage, in a very cool space.”

He admitted though, that some may not like threading through wobbly crowds on their way to the elevator.

What sets the latest wave of amenities apart from their predecessors, developers say, is their emphasis on experiences instead of just how many gimmicky add-ons one can pack under one roof.



The lobby at Henry Hall, on West 38th Street, is designed to feel like a bar at a boutique hotel.

ARC, a 428-unit rental building at 30-02 39th Avenue in Dutch Kills, Queens, expected to open next month, offers now fairly standard options like a gym, library and golf simulator.

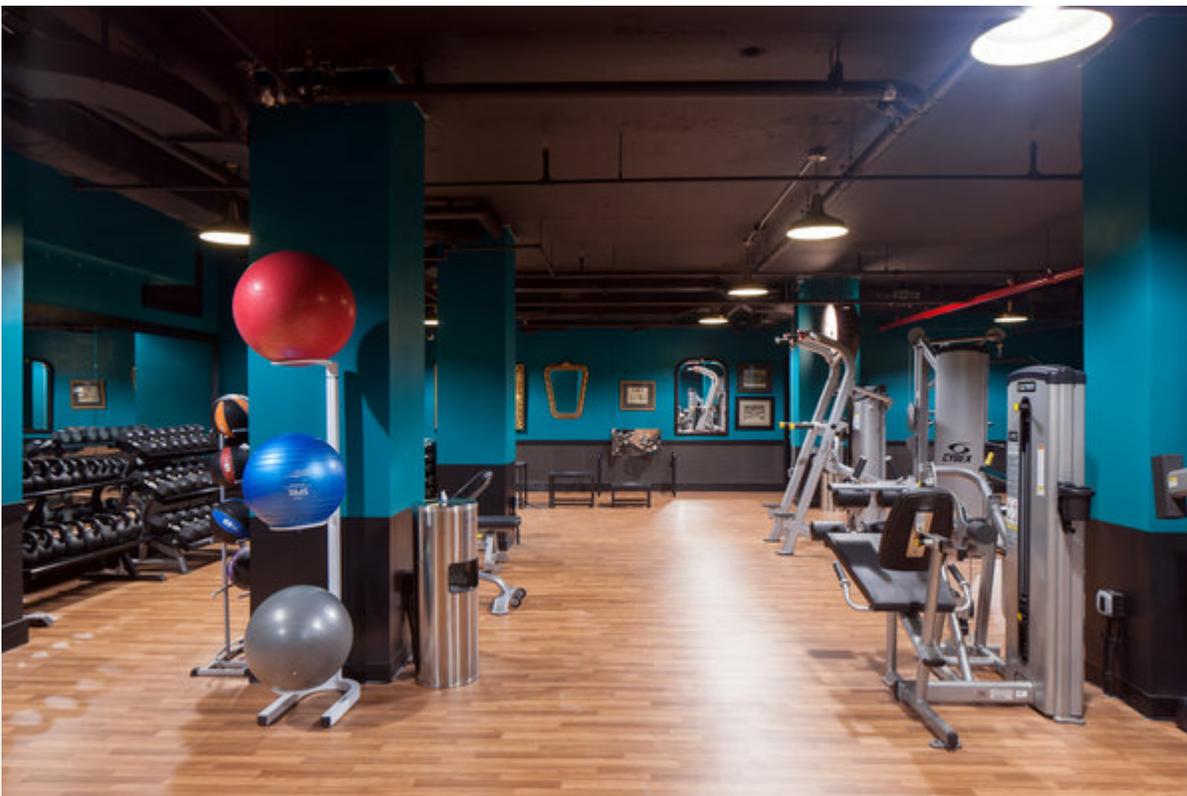
But as at other properties, the [Lightstone Group](#), ARC's developer, has also hired a "lifestyle director" who intends to book rock bands and comedians for in-house performances, in addition to planning other get-to-know-your-neighbor activities, said Mitchell Hochberg, Lightstone's president.

"It's about a holistic lifestyle as opposed to just room and board, and shelter," said Mr. Hochberg. He said he adopted this approach from the hospitality business. Lightstone develops hotels, and Mr. Hochberg once served as president of the Ian Schrager Company, the hotelier.

Successful hotels also do a good job of making guests overlook smallish rooms, he added, and ARC, which stands for "Arrive, Renew, Create," has created its own 50,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenity space with that strategy in mind. The biggest two-bedroom in the building, for instance, is less than 1,000 square feet.

Many of the apartments overlook a 26,000-square-foot courtyard that reveals that Lightstone has not totally given up on tactile amenities. Rising from its center, like a periscope, is a glass-walled greenhouse, where tenants are encouraged to try their hand at growing herbs and vegetables.

Often, amenities aren't the best use of a particular space, developers say, as they can eat up valuable square footage that could instead be used for a few more revenue-producing condos.



Gyms are now a pretty standard amenity in new buildings, including this one at Henry Hall.

But under city code, about three percent of a building's total indoor amenity space does not count when calculating a total zoning footprint, meaning that space is essentially extra, so developers can do whatever they want with it. Similarly, basements, and outdoor areas like courtyards and roofs, also don't factor into the allowed size of a building, making them a good place to stick play areas since apartments couldn't be built there anyway.

Fifty West, a 64-story condo in Manhattan's financial district from the developer Time Equities, is even looking beyond its building and its roof for entertainment.

Starting this fall, when the building, among the tallest in New York, is completed, it will kick off a series of evening stargazing parties, with the hope, planners say, of spotting Saturn or Jupiter.

"As New Yorkers, we're always looking down. Why don't we look up for the first time?," said Thea Wittich, the co-founder of Axiom Amenities, a nine-month-old firm that operates the common areas at 50 West and is also one of several amenity-focused firms now working with New York developers.

These events, which are expected to take place once every three months, will be hosted by Marcelo Cabrera, the former president of the Amateur Astronomers Association of New York, who will offer the use of two high-tech telescopes, a Celestron reflector and Tele Vue refractor.

The building's 32,000-square-foot amenity package, covering indoor and outdoor spaces, includes a 20-seat movie theater, a 60-foot indoor pool and a 2,000-book library. Fifty West also has four Porsche bicycles that can be borrowed for rides of up to 12 hours.

"A lot of buildings have beautiful amenity spaces, but they don't get used," which is why creative programming is key, Ms. Wittich said. "People are always changing, always wanting exciting new things."

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/realestate/amenities-new-level.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Frealestate&action=click&contentCollection=realestate&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=7&pgtype=sectionfront&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/realestate/amenities-new-level.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Frealestate&action=click&contentCollection=realestate&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=7&pgtype=sectionfront&_r=0)