

TONY Kids Issue 14: September–October 2006

Movin' on up

New luxury buildings are offering top-notch, kidcentric amenities.

By Rory Halperin

Now that certain architects have become fashionable brands (Richard Meier), and have been given their own museum retrospectives (Zaha Hadid at the Guggenheim), it's no surprise that the luxury building boom has ratcheted up yet another level. Developers, who once mostly targeted affluent singles and young married couples, are setting their sights on families. "We're seeing everything from larger apartments with four and five bedrooms to babysitting services, outdoor play spaces and well-known gyms opening right in the building," says Toni Haber, executive vice president at Prudential Douglas Elliman Real Estate in Manhattan.

The wooing of families to both condos and rentals, it seems, has only just begun. "We're planning a toddler-sized wading pool and an outdoor playground with grass, slides and swings," says Edward Baquero of Coalco International, the development team working on the Element building on West 59th Street, where prices for two-bedroom condos start at \$1.33 million. On the Upper East Side, 170 East End Avenue recently went so far as to sponsor a Laurie Berkner concert for prospective buyers. And in Brooklyn's Carroll Gardens, the swanky Court Street Lofts (starting at \$670,000) will offer a nanny concierge option for parents. "It's a traditional concierge service, but with a twist," says Jane Gladstein, president of Gladstein Development Group. "If you're booking a trip to Florence, they'll be able to help you find out where to rent a stroller."

Some buildings are even partnering with city institutions: The kid's activity room at 10 West End Avenue is being designed by the Children's Museum of Manhattan. At the Avery, on Riverside Drive at West 65th Street (opening in 2007), musicians from Lincoln Center's Meet the Artist program will occasionally perform for kids. (Parents will benefit, too, with access to Lincoln Center's patron desk, where they can reserve tickets for sought-after shows.) Also, upscale activity center Kidville NY will design the children's playroom at the Rushmore on the Upper West Side, and offer on-site art, music and dance classes; families will receive free memberships to both Kidville locations. There's no end to the frills, it seems: The Avery also has a screening room kids can use for movie viewings. The Solaria in Riverdale, set to open this fall, will appeal to budding astronomers by sporting a miniplanetarium with a rooftop observatory and telescope. Although many of these high-end benefits will be free to residents (developers are absorbing the costs), some buildings, like Court Street Lofts, will offer premiums complimentary only for the first year.

Well-to-do parents, meanwhile, seem to be falling for the kinds of cushy perks not typically available to urban dwellers, many of whom live without washer and dryer access. "I've done the suburban thing and I didn't find it that enticing," says new mother Julie Dixon, who recently moved into the Octagon, a full-service rental building on Roosevelt Island with its own outdoor pool and park. "Yes, this has some of the same feel as suburbia, but at the end of the day, you're still living in the city."