

For New Luxury Rental Buildings, Bike Rooms are a Must

As U.S. cities—and luxury renters—become more bike-friendly, amenities follow suit

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Once upon a time, bike rooms were relegated to low-lit corners of high-rise basements and were largely considered an afterthought. However, with the rise of urban bike enthusiasts, all that has changed...even in the luxury sector.

Take YOO on the Park, a 25-story luxury rental property in Atlanta, with 245 residences rising above Piedmont Park, which begins leasing this fall. Developer Trillist carved out space for Bike CitySM, a bicycle storage area with potential for 50 spaces, equipped with security cameras, secure access, lockers for equipment, such as bicycle helmets, backpacks, etc.—all located adjacent to the service elevator for easy access in and out of the building.

The goal: To cater to Atlantans to whom a bike equals both a commutation vehicle and a recreational must-have.

“The demographic that is driving trends in the luxury residential market values the independence provided by bicycle transit to make the most of urban living,” says Scott Leventhal CEO of Trillist. “Cycling facilitates a more efficient commute, reduces transportation costs and minimizes the need for parking.”

Introducing the ‘bike kitchen’

How about a bike room with a view? That's just what's promised at City Tower, a downtown Brooklyn rental property from The Brodsky Organization.

The minute residents of the building's 440 studio, one- and two-bedroom residences want to take a bike ride, they'll just take the elevator upstairs to the 19th floor where the building's bike room boasts stunning views of the skylines of both Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan.

And, in Chicago's River North neighborhood, residents of NEXT Apartments, a 28-story, 210-unit rental building that opened this month, will have access to a "bicycle kitchen" that will offer storage for 89 bikes as well as a repair station with supplies, tools and air pumps. The bonus: All bikes will get one free tune-up a year.

And it's not just luxury rentals. AIRE Santa Monica, a brand new condominium building, is collaborating with PUBLIC Bikes to offer custom European-inspired bikes for homeowners to enjoy the bike-friendly neighborhood. The building will also offer a bike room where residents can go for tune-ups.

A sign of the times

This is reflective of a new trend: In major U.S. urban markets like Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City, where bike lanes have been multiplied and renters are more conscious about the environment, biking to work or for exercise and pleasure has become extremely popular, says Steve Fifield, chairman and CEO of Fifield Co., the developer of NEXT.

"Not only have we expanded the size and capacity for bike storage at our new buildings, our 'bike kitchens' have vending machines for tubes, patch kits, etc.," he says. "And, as an added bonus, for those residents with very high-end bikes, we offer specialized enclosed bike storage."

If stylish bike storage is a priority, perhaps a bank-to-rental conversion, like the Brooklyn-Roosevelt, at the intersection of Bushwick and Bed-Stuy, which offers boutique luxury rentals and, for discerning bikers, a "bike vault," will appeal.

"The Brooklyn-Roosevelt's necessity for a 'Bike Vault' was driven by our customers' undeniable enthusiasm for bicycling," says Joe Peretore, a real estate broker with Level Group, the marketing/leasing lead for the property.

And with Brooklyn sporting over 310 miles of bike lanes by the end of 2015, it only made sense for developers to make note of that.

"In a dense urban environment, the act of dealing with traffic and parking a car can take precious time out of our customers' already over-scheduled days," Mr. Peretore says. "Bicycles mean freedom and protecting those bicycles by storing them in a literal bank vault with three-foot steel walls affords them the comfort that it would take nothing less than an organized heist to take that freedom away from them."

And then, in addition to the building's co-working space, tenant club, café and yoga/dance/theater studio, there's this: "Rolling your bike into a vault just feels really cool at the end of your day," Mr. Peretore says.