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THE APPRAISAL  
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## To Compete, New Luxury Developments Are Arming With Amenities

At 200 West 72nd Street, where rents for two bedrooms start at \$8,000 a month, tenants can impress their guests on the common rooftop with views taking in Central Park, the Hudson River and the George Washington Bridge. They can send their children to burn off energy in the building's high-tech playroom, and expend their own in its well-equipped gym.

That last perk might be the most essential one, because of this perk: Every morning, there is a free breakfast buffet.

At 7 a.m. one day last week Juliet Rotondo, 3, bounced into the third-floor common room to pick out a blueberry muffin as other residents snapped up juices and fruit. Her father, Joe Rotondo, grabbed a sesame bagel and strawberries, passing up yogurt parfaits and egg sandwiches. The Rotondo family eats on the landlord's dime at least three times a week, a welcome benefit, since the family also includes a 9-month-old, Jonathan.

"Breakfast is a huge convenience," his mother, Kim Rotondo, said. "It's something I don't think about."

In the last few years, developers began trying to woo buyers and renters to their cookie-cutter properties with such amenities. But what started with gyms and concierges quickly sprouted into an amenities arms race, with developers offering full-blown hotel services like spas, breakfast and even room service to draw from the relatively small pool of high-paying apartment hunters.

Now New Yorkers who have moved into these buildings are learning which aspects of hotel living they actually find useful. Some have watched pounds melt away because they use their buildings' lavish gyms, while others have had to work so hard to afford such add-ons that they can barely use them.

At the rental building Truffles Tribeca, residents have been flooding into the building's public rooms, collectively called Truffles Privé, which include a library, a gym, a screening room and living room-type spaces where coffee is served in the morning and a neighborhood wine store offers



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tastings during happy hour.

Kate Hovey, who dreamed of living in a hotel when she was growing up, said she had spent a lot of time in the club when she was job-searching. Now that she is working, she stops by each morning for coffee and to read

the newspapers. In her free time, she tries to work out at the gym, attends the wine tastings and sunbathes on the roof deck. Even though Ms. Hovey's rent rose by roughly \$100 in April and she has less time to take advantage of these resort-style amenities, she

Kate Hovey, above, who dreamed of living in a hotel when she was growing up, got coffee in the lounge at her building, Truffles Tribeca. Kim Rotondo, with her son, Jonathan, 9 months, and her daughter, Juliet, 3, took advantage of the buffet breakfast offered to residents of 200 West 72nd Street in Manhattan.

is staying.

"When you get to a certain age and you're busy, you need these services," she said. "Everyone likes to be catered to."

Her neighbor Norma E. McGrody has used the common rooms to run her small businesses. Ms. McGrody's meeting management business dried up when the economy slowed in 2008. So she closed her Midtown office, asked her five employees to work from home and now holds weekly staff meetings in Truffles' club and rooftop.

"If I kept my old office and stayed in my old building, I would have let quite a few of the staff go," Ms. McGrody said.

Some residents are using different amenities than they originally expected. Courtney Flint and her husband, Andrew, moved from a walk-up to a one-bedroom at Truffles, which has the same ownership as the Parker Meridien hotel, the Jack Parker Corporation. The couple are paying more than \$3,000 a month because they wanted services like a doorman and a gym. But as Ms. Flint has been working more in the past year, she has missed some 7 p.m. yoga classes she would have liked to attend and does not get to exercise as much. She has used more services like the concierge's cleaning company, since she has less time on the

weekends for errands.

"You definitely have to pay for all of these amenities," she said. "But I think it's worth it."

When residents of new condominiums take over a building's management from the original developer, they have the power to decide which amenities are kept.

In 2008, Gideon Stein, his wife and two children moved into a \$3.2 million, five-bedroom apartment at Ariel West, which has a swimming pool and a fitness center by La Palestra. Mr. Stein, who is the condo board's president, said his neighbors asked to keep the building's gym, even though it accounted for 10 to 15 percent of the building's common charges.

**Free breakfast?  
What about room  
service? Anything to  
stand out in a crowd.**

"I have not heard a single person complain that we have a gym, a couple of porters and all of the amenities that we have," Mr. Stein said. "Most people are heavy users."

Residents are aware they can live without these kinds of services. For the past two months, Karolina G. Berglof has lived in a one-bedroom condo her father's company bought for \$835,000 at the Smyth Residences. The condominium, which literally sits above the Thompson Hotel, offers residents full access to everything the hotel offers. Ms. Berglof enjoys perks like being greeted by the doormen and being able to people-watch in the lobby.

But there are many things about hotel living she has not gotten used to. She still takes her clothes to the laundromat and cooks her own meals. She has never used room service, though she and a friend once considered ordering a bottle of wine. When she returns to her native Sweder she suspects she will be fine.

"I will miss my smiling guys opening doors for me," she said. "It's life. You adjust to what you get."