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REAL ESTATE

Drinking With the Neighbors

By ALYSON KRUEGER JUNE 10, 2016



The Kava Cafe, a restaurant and coffee shop on the ground floor of MiMA on West 42nd Street, is a popular gathering place. Credit Benjamin Petit for The New York Times

In the heart of [WeLive](#), a new apartment tower in the financial district created by the office space provider [WeWork](#), is a communal area known as the Whiskey Lounge.

The intimate space — in a prime spot off a communal kitchen, lounges and a central staircase — looks like an old speakeasy, with warm lighting, leather seats and a polished bar. Bartenders from a rotating list regularly take over the space, which seats 15 people but can pack in as many as 25.

One week this spring there were three events: a curated whiskey tasting held by WeWork’s own bartenders, a wine tasting by a vineyard, and a caipirinha night hosted by Leblon Cachaça, an artisanal liquor brand from Brazil. When bartenders aren’t in residence, tenants can bring bottles and mix their own cocktails using a number of supplies, from shakers to bitters, stocked in the bar.

Residents gather there after a long day at work or before going out, often inviting friends from outside the building. “You tell your friends this is my little unique space, and people love it,”

said Quinton Kerns, a 31-year-old WeLive designer who lives in the building. “It’s not something you see very often in a residential building.”

While such places are still a novelty, more and more new residential buildings nationwide are offering creative bars — for coffee or alcohol — for their residents. The tenants and owners get an exclusive place to relax and unwind; developers can gain an edge on their competitors.



Amy Nardi and Pamela Peeters, residents of Abington House, at Think Coffee in their building, on West 30th Street. Credit Benjamin Petit for The New York Times

Some of these bars operate like members-only clubs and are reserved strictly for residents. One of the amenities of [111 Murray Street](#), a luxury condominium going up in TriBeCa, is the Patisserie, a coffee bar where residents will be served complimentary breakfast every morning. The food and coffee will be made by Baked TriBeCa, and the architect David Rockwell is designing the space, from the custom pots and artsy trays to the display area where the food will be served.

“Every detail matters,” said [Winston C. Fisher](#), a partner of Fisher Brothers, which is developing the building with [Witkoff](#). “When you walk out of your apartment, you have something to look forward to. You have Baked TriBeCa every morning waiting for you. You have the smells.” This will not be the kind of place where bagels are put out as “an afterthought,” he added.

Beyond [New York City](#), Auberge Beach Residences and Spa, a condominium expected to open next year in [Fort Lauderdale](#), Fla., will have an exclusive wine bar curated for tenants by a master sommelier. Auberge Residences and Spa Miami, also with a wine bar, is expected to open in 2019.

Palazzo Del Sol, a condominium development on Fisher Island, Fla., that opened in March with only 43 residences, has an in-house aperitivo bar that serves Italian snacks, cocktails and coffees daily. The space, which has front-row views of crossing boats, is staffed daily by a butler from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Residential bars can offer more personalized service, said one of the butlers, Ernesto Graniero, who has worked in the restaurant business for 25 years in [Italy](#), [France](#), England and the United States. “I know when they come at 9 o’clock in the morning, who likes a glass of water sparkling, who likes it still, who likes a macchiato,” he said. “I know when they come back to me at 12 o’clock who likes the ham with cheese and a touch of mustard.”



The M Club on the sixth floor of MiMA, on West 42nd Street. Credit Benjamin Petit for The New York Times

People living in residences connected to hotels like the Plaza, the Carlyle, and the Four Seasons in New York City have always been able to use the lounges as their own. But that’s not the same as having one for just you and your neighbors, said Jim Ferraro, a lawyer who is in the process of moving into a penthouse at Palazzo Del Sol. “It is like what you would get at a top hotel, a five-star hotel,” he said, “but the beauty to this is it’s not a hotel so you don’t have all these random guests going through the place. It really is an extension of your home.”

Park Grove, a 5.2-acre residential complex opening across from Biscayne Bay in the Coconut Grove neighborhood of Miami, offers a bar and lounge area called the Oak Room near its pool decks. When designing it, the developers David Martin, a founder and the president of Terra, and Carlos Rosso, the president of the Related Group’s condominium development division, considered the needs of families moving there from single-family homes. With smaller living and dining rooms in which to entertain, Mr. Martin said, they needed places where they could “spend time and invite friends and enjoy and entertain and meet their neighbors.”

Mr. Fisher of Fisher Brothers said these bars are the result of an increasing focus on lifestyle. “The experience of your customer has become more important than ever,” he said. “You can’t take it for granted because your competition does not.”

This is especially true in a place like New York, where apartment buildings are exploding with amenities, from bowling alleys to climbing walls.

Some apartment buildings are trying to appeal to residents by welcoming public cafes and bars into their lobbies. Pike & Rose, a residential complex in North Bethesda, Md., will have a beer garden, with 40 to 50 beers on draft, open to the public.



The Whiskey Lounge, in a new apartment tower in the financial district called WeLive. CreditMichelle V. Agins/The New York Times

[Abington House](#), at the High Line on West 30th Street and Tenth Avenue, opened an independent coffee shop, Think Coffee, last year. In September, the shop will be joined by a Whitmans restaurant with a full bar.

Landlords used to look for the best retail tenant that would give them no problems and pay the highest rent, said Larry Kramer, an owner of Whitmans. “Now, they are adapting to what is going to drive renters to the building, and I think a good restaurant, a good bar operation, really brings value to where people live,” he said.

Amy Nardi, a 30-year-old talent acquisition manager at CrossCountry Consulting, lives in Abington House and visits the Think Coffee near the lobby at least three days a week. “I don’t often have the time to go for a half-hour walk to get something,” she said. She says she especially enjoys running into neighbors in the coffee shop.

Many of these suppliers offer perks to the residents who live in the same property. Kava Cafe, a restaurant and coffee shop on the ground floor of [MiMA](#), a residential tower on West 42nd Street, gives residents a free cup of coffee every day when they show their key. There is also free Fika coffee for residents at the M Club on the building’s sixth floor.

Benjamin Joseph, a senior vice president of the Related Companies, which developed MiMA and Abington House, said the company was “always trying to improve what we can offer to people, and the ways we can offer residents additional experiences beyond just their apartments.”

Ms. Nardi is especially excited about having a bar in the new restaurant downstairs at the Abington House. “To people in Manhattan, the dream is having things close by, and it really doesn’t get closer than the lobby,” she said. “And who doesn’t like a good after-work drink? And if you have too many, it’s really not a problem getting home.”