

## Condo Amenities on The Rise

by Kelly Cray



Fitness Studios

Illustrations are artist's concept. E. & O. E.



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From kids' playrooms to rooftop infinity pools, more than ever before condo amenities are becoming key spaces to enhance livability in the city. Kelly Cray, founding partner of U31, has been designing residential spaces for Toronto's condo market since the beginning of the boom in 1998 and has been a significant player in helping shape the market. He is also the lead interior designer for River & Fifth. Cray shares with us how changing demographics and lifestyle trends over the last few years are influencing the way amenity spaces are being envisioned and designed for the end-user.

Historically, condo units were larger to accommodate traditional residential lifestyles, where all your lifestyle needs were met within your own private space. There was less of a need to invest in the design of amenity spaces. Developers were required to include amenity spaces in the plans, but discovered that they were under-utilized by residents.

Today the average size of a one-bedroom condo suite in Toronto is approx. 650 sq. ft. To put it in perspective, condos built in the 80s averaged just over 1,000 sq. ft. As the city continues to grow and intensify, unit sizes are decreasing, resulting in an increased focus on functionality and inviting shared amenity spaces. Residents should have the option of stepping outside their suite to experience a variety of recreational amenities. This helps to enrich and elevate their lifestyles on many levels.

At the same time that condo suite sizes began to shrink, a rise in health and wellness consciousness took hold in our communities, along with the idea of incorporating more outdoor amenities. Couple this with more millennials occupying condo units and expecting more of their homes, the demand for new and improved amenities was being heard by developers. This younger social media savvy demographic love the idea of having their amenities at their finger-tips; they also want the experience of being in a swank, LA or Miami boutique inspired environment. As a result, outdoor pools with cabanas, suntanning areas and overall resort-inspired designs are becoming a huge hit in condos. The infinity pool at River & Fifth is a great example that really captures the essence of what millennials are looking for.

Fitness studios are also a big trend in the city, aligning with the millennial-led health and wellness culture. New condo gyms are not just rooms with treadmills; they look and function as professional gyms. They are expanding to include a broader range of professional equipment with personal training areas. For instance, boxing equipment, spin bikes and yoga studios with ballet barres have become really popular. The idea being if you have a fitness amenity like this in your building, you won't need to spend extra money on a monthly gym membership.

The growing tech boom and entrepreneurial spirit of Toronto is another influencing factor in amenity design, and not only in the downtown core, but throughout the GTA. Developers recognize this and are starting to inject that kind of culture within their buildings. As a result, co-working spaces are huge right now.



Co-Work Working Space

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You may have seen kids' playrooms and lounges popping up around the city over the last three years as well. This is to address the reality that more people are raising families in condos in the city versus moving out to the suburbs. These urbanites cherish all that the city has to offer and prefer being close to restaurants, cultural amenities, their place of work and accessibility to transit. The most elaborate childrens' rooms we have designed have included jungle gyms, climbing structures and life-sized dollhouses. It's important to keep in mind though that all condo amenities being conceived today, from swimming pools to party rooms, are beneficial to families with young children.

Condominium lobbies and party rooms are evolving as well. They are becoming less formal and designed to feel more like public social spaces that connect to their surroundings, much like a hotel. We are starting to design lobbies with future programming in mind, such as a barista or juice bar. They are also the main point of entry to the co-working space. Flexibility and connections to natural light and outdoor space are a key factor in the design of party rooms, which today act more like social lounges that can be used anytime.

It's interesting to see how current lifestyle trends are translating into residential design. Developers are eager to provide something the competition isn't, which means there is now a bigger investment in the design and finishing of amenity spaces, so that people will be enticed to use them in their everyday lives.



Kids' Playroom

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