

Case Studies in Multifamily Amenity Design



Atelier has 53 loft-style and 364 high-rise units ranging from approximately 500 to 2,300 square feet with panoramic views of Dallas. IMAGE COURTESY OF ZOM LIVING

COVID-19 has accelerated residents' desire to live, work, play and shop at home. Here's how two buildings are responding to heightened demands.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced residents to stay close to home, rather than feeling confined, many residents found they preferred working, playing, and even shopping, within the confines of their buildings.

Multifamily properties are constantly evolving as developers and designers implement amenities that respond to residents' changing needs and demands. One amenity trend that has been expedited by the pandemic is work from home spaces.

According to a Pew Research Center survey released in December 2020, 20 percent of employees worked from home all or most of the time prior to the pandemic. By October 2021, 71 percent were doing their jobs from home all or most of the time.

While some employers have opted to open their offices since then, many, such as Apple and Amazon, are delaying the return of employees to the workplace. Others have shut some smaller offices or are allowing a percentage of employees to remain home permanently

Apartment landlords, therefore, are updating their designs to include larger, more aesthetically pleasing workspaces.

Another multifamily design trend being quickened by the pandemic is the inclusion of dining and food options within the community itself, whether it's a coffee shop, restaurant or even a grocery store. These dining amenities are a benefit to busy tenants who just want a quick meal or to pick up a few groceries. Moreover, they add value to the apartment project, increasing its rental rates and lease-up pace.

According to an analysis by real estate consulting firm RCLCO, the presence of a ground-floor Whole Foods, Trader Joe's or other premium grocer can yield rent premiums. Apartments with Whole Foods and Trader Joe's each earned 5.8 percent premiums over comparable apartment communities in the immediate area, while other premium grocers achieved smaller, but still significant, premiums of 3.3 percent.

"The pandemic has changed and accelerated the multifamily design and planning process, most likely forever," said Michael Zaransky, managing principal of MZ Capital Partners in Northbrook, Ill. "Today's renter is looking for different amenities as a result, and they need to be well-designed, because they will be making their rental community choices based on these amenities."



Atelier, a 41-story apartment project located in the Dallas Arts District, has co-working space on the building's 11th-floor amenity deck. There are three plug-and-play tables with TVs that can be synchronized to phones or laptops. There are also two conference rooms that can be rented by residents. The co-working space is close to an open area with an oversized harvest table with built-in outlets, to allow residents a choice of places to work. IMAGE COURTESY OF ZOM LIVING

Functional and connected workspaces

Atelier - Dallas, Texas

Atelier, a 417-unit apartment community in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, provides a host of amenities for its residents. The building's 11th-floor amenity deck is home to an infinity-edge pool, a fitness center and a resident market. And, in response to demand from an increasing number of apartment residents who work from home, the 11th floor also includes a formal co-working area, as well as nearby space that offers residents a more casual, flexible space suitable for working.

"We continue to enlarge these co-working areas and program more private spaces, in addition to open areas that are less formal for people who want to interact with other people," said Jason Haun, a senior vice president at ZOM Living, the developer.

Atelier's co-working space was intentionally designed for a variety of different work preferences, whether a resident wants privacy or to collaborate with others. The co-working area, which totals 1,000 square feet, includes two conference rooms that can be rented if residents have an important meeting, and they are designed with full-height glass windows to maximize the natural daylight, as well as built-in wood veneer credenzas and TV screens that can sync with phones or laptops for Zoom videoconferences. Each conference room is 140 square feet.

A nearby 3,350-square-foot lounge is suitable for a more casual working experience, but allows for flexible uses as well. It features a white-oak harvest table with built-in power outlets, shelves and modern artwork. Above the harvest table is a custom eight-foot wrapped drop-down linear pendant light fixture to provide lighting. The lounge also includes a kitchen area for the convenience of residents.

Maureen McLaine, an interior designer at Stantec, who designed the space, noted that the design of co-working space has come a long way from the old-style business centers previously found in apartments building, often hidden in a corner of the lobby, that were merely tables with computers on them.

"They have evolved into a destination," she said. "By connecting the co-working spaces to the other amenity areas through both location and design, the residents are drawn in by the aesthetics and stay for the ease in functionality."

By including wine lockers in the co-working space, ZOM encourages tenants to spend more time in the space and to interact with others. "You may be working in that space during the day, and come early evening that may turn into a social environment, with food and drink," Haun said. "That is an extension of having flexible space for people to work in those areas but also socialize when they put their work down."

Atelier's overall design is a reflection of the Dallas Arts District in which it's located. Its modern architecture and interior design are a nod to the performing and visual arts venues nearby. The building lobby serves as more than a reception space; it's an art gallery as well, with large rotating walls. The first floor is also home to retail space and amenities such as a pet spa and package lockers.

Haun said that he expects the design of co-working space to continue to evolve in multifamily properties. "We're seeing a continued trend of enlarging these areas and adding more space, both private office and open areas, for residents in new projects we're in design on right now," he said.



In a nod to its location in the Dallas Arts District, Atelier's main lobby serves dual functions as an art gallery and reception space.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ZOM LIVING

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