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Why Plants are the New Art in Architectural Development



Back in the 80's, it was *de rigueur* for architects to incorporate huge, showy and highly pricey works of art in lobbies. For many of us, the first time we had direct contact with works by the likes of Mark Rothko Julian Schnabel or Mark Tansey was in the foyers of banks, expensive condos, or company headquarters. The works were designed to impress, awe and even intimidate a bit.

But times have changed, and today's architects' goals are different – they want us to feel centred, calm and healthier when we enter a building. And what better way to induce those feelings than through the use of green walls?

Green walls, also called living walls, have been installed in company lobbies for businesses as diverse as Lululemon, Google, Airbnb and Air France, and no wonder: studies have shown that in the workplace, green walls make an enormous positive impact. Just some of the benefits include:

- Reducing urban heat island effects and smog
- Cleaning outside air of pollutants and dust
- Offsetting the carbon footprint of people and fuel emissions
- Removing VOCs and other harmful toxins like benzene and formaldehyde from the air
- Soundproofing
- Insulating and cooling buildings
- Creating habitats for birds and beneficial insects, increasing biodiversity
- Growing food in urban settings
- Increasing foot traffic in retail spaces

But it's not only companies that are applying living walls to their constructions – residential developers

who once invested heavily in statues and paintings to adorn their work have discovered adding green walls and other plant based features increases real estate value, residents' well being, and of course, aesthetic value of a building.

Here, we take a look at 7 beautiful developments that demonstrate how plants are the new art in architectural developments.

1. 507 West Chelsea

The lobby at 507 West Chelsea combines natural elements and design motifs of the High Line to create a welcoming first impression, inclusive of a living green wall. The neighbourhood famous for its elevated park, that becomes the summer stage through site specific art and entertainment, has inspired the building's interior and exterior decor. The playroom recreates grass indoors with a set of chaise-longues will allow your children to enjoy themselves without confronting outdoor perils. If you want to teach them a game of chess, the rooftop garden will be utterly inspirational!

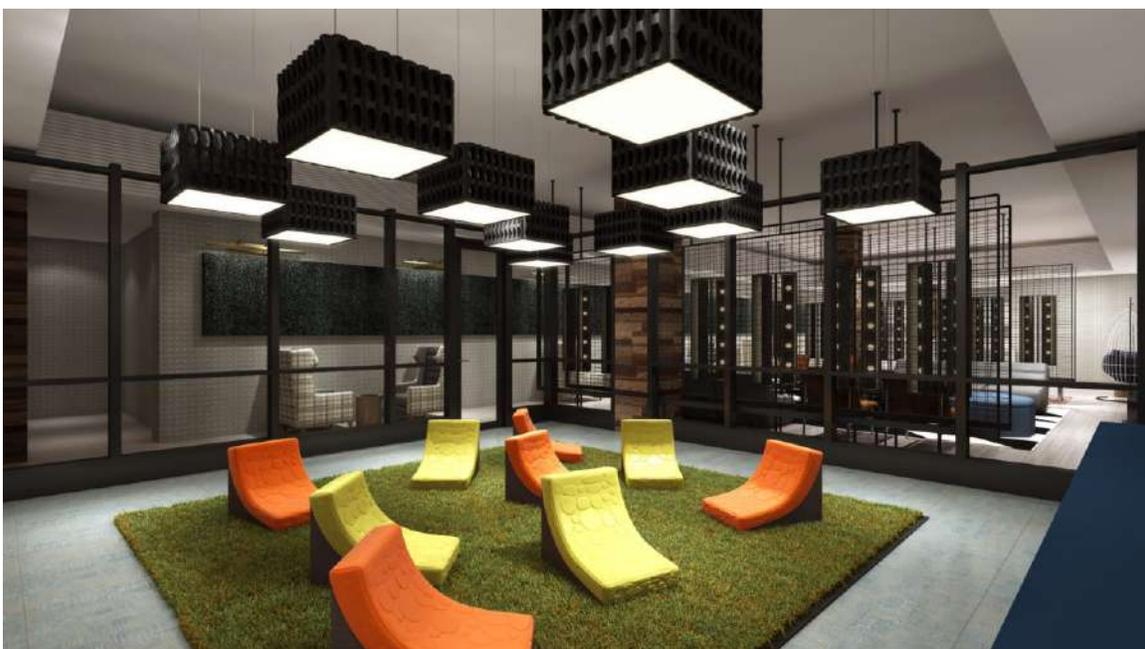


Photo Credits: Ismael Leyva Architects

2. 520 West 28th Street

Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid was the mind behind 520 West 28th Street. This development has the ability to entice plants to grow in unlikely places such as in pockets of a sculptural courtyard walls. The boutique condominium building has striking curves, highly curated amenities, and a distinctive chevron façade that embraces the property's interlaced levels.

Future Green has created a seamless and optimistic landscape vision. On arrival, residents enter a lobby with views to a verdant garden lounge and event space, along with a massive sculptural wall with integrated planting troughs merging with a bi-level limestone terrace and water feature. The terrace planting palette features species with character, such as Bigleaf Magnolia trees, Witch Hazel and Japanese Mahonia shrubs, all of which are serviced by a highly efficient irrigation system to minimise maintenance and conserve water. The green wall and planted surfaces compose an utterly lush textural tapestry of ferns, grasses, horsetail and winter blooming hellebores.



Photo Credits Max Cohen, a designer at Future Green

3. 60 White Street

At 60 White Street, you'll be surprised and delighted by the way moss and vines colonise the brick and vertical cables, whilst brick salvaged from the site creates a backdrop for the bluestone and plantings. In this development, the green wall designed for the lobby will contain a selective mix of interesting textured plants that are guaranteed to thrive in interior environments. Furthermore, the plan for an interior grotto adjacent to a lounge area will undoubtedly evoke the sense of a found location unearthed from the ruins of the existing building.





Photo Credits Max Cohen, a designer at Future Green

4. 252 East 57th Street

While entering 252 East 57th Street, residents traverse a walkway between babbling pools of water to enter the lobby (designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Daniel Romualdez, and Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects), before encountering a floor-to-ceiling green wall and a long brass table brimming with plants. By incorporating these natural elements, project developers World Wide Group and Rose Associates have created the feeling of a serene oasis in a built environment.





Photo Credits: Mark Benjamin

5. Austin Nichols House

The Austin Nichols House was originally designed by Cass Gilbert in 1915 and is being reimagined by Morris Admji. Encompassing an entire city block, this iconic building boasts over 22,000 square feet of communal areas and one of the most comprehensive amenity packages in the neighbourhood. Updated amenities include a new lobby with a 500-square-foot green wall, incorporating 3,500 plants spanning 25 species, guaranteed to freshen the air and enchant all those who pass it by.

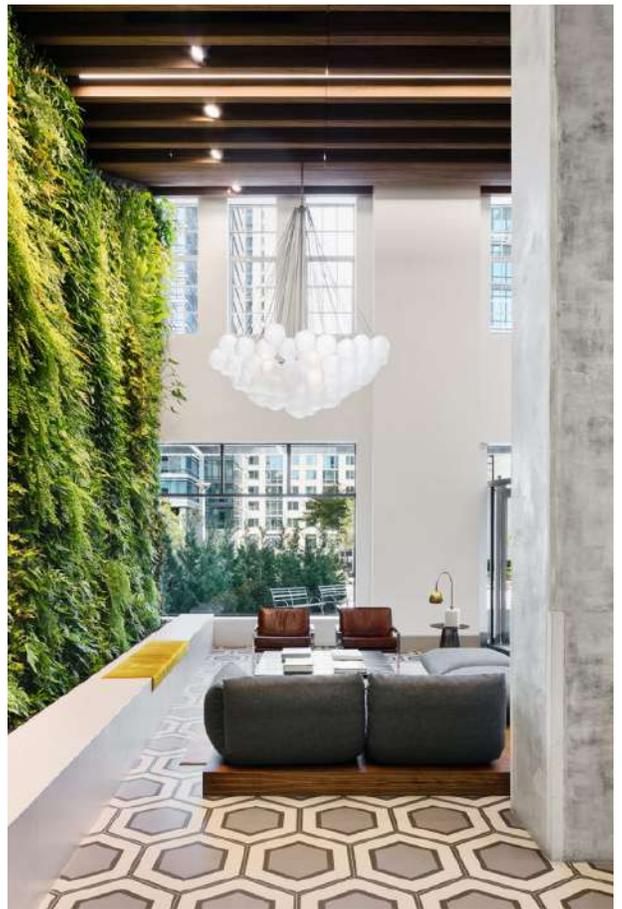




Photo Credits: Donna Dotan

6. 70 Charlton

Developed by Extell, this building features two wings connected by an enclosed breezeway overlooking a lushly landscaped courtyard designed by Workshop/APD. It comprises a sort of metropolitan Garden of Eden through a textured urban landscape with an enormous green wall, birch tree arbor, staggered boxwood gardens, water feature and integrated seating.





Photo Credits: Extell Development Group

7. 1 Great Jones Alley

This 12-story boutique condominium, discreetly tucked away on a historic Belgian block in NoHo, has a two-story outdoor green wall upon entrance to the building that connects to a private landscaped garden on the second floor designed by the renowned landscape architecture firm HMWhite. This design studio is known for the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens and the sky gardens at the Renzo Piano-designed New York Times tower, but 1 Great Jones Alley will distinguish itself with some sustainable flair – namely, several lush green walls to enable a calm mindset upon entry to the building.

