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The Pros and Cons of Renting in a Brand-New Building

Renting in a hot-off-the-presses, buzzed-about new building seems like nice work if you can get it. Who wouldn't want the bragging rights to a shiny new apartment with fancy amenities?

But even if you can afford to rent in new construction, being one of the first-ever residents in a building has its pros and its cons. Below, potential pluses and minuses to consider before you splash out on a flashy new building:

THE UPSIDES:

The novelty factor: One of the biggest selling points of new construction apartments tends to be that everything in the building is, well, new. "Usually you have the 'wow' factor of having something new," says CORE NYC agent Adie Kriegstein. "Everything is new and spotless, and it looks amazing. Often, the ceilings are higher, windows span from floor to ceiling, and the apartment has top-of-the-line appliances and fixtures." (Crucially, this usually includes an all-important washer and dryer combo, as well as a dishwasher.)

"Everything tends to be much more top-of-the-line and much more modern, with all the latest technology," adds Compass agent Scott Sobol, who himself rents in a new construction building. And for some, there are other upsides to being the first person to reside in an apartment. "I love knowing that no one has used [the apartment's] bathroom before," says Sobol.

Expect extra amenities: In order to generate buzz (and justify their sky-high prices), new buildings tend to go all-out when it comes to amenities, from the basics like gyms and package rooms to fun extras like social events and lavish outdoor common spaces. "There's a sense of one-upsmanship," says Platinum Properties agent Jade Min. "What can a new development offer to differentiate themselves?" Right now, expect lots of event programming and other social perks, and in higher-end buildings, extras like restaurants and on-site spas. (The better to make your friends jealous when they come over.)

Staff that's eager to please: While you'd always hope for a friendly doorman or super, in a building that's just launched, the staff are often friendlier, and very willing to go the extra mile. "Because it's a newer building, the staff tends to be a little more attentive," says Sobol. "They're just starting out, and want to go above and beyond. Our building's employees care about the building more than in previous places I've lived." Kriegstein concurs: "[New building staff] have just been hired, and want to do their best so it reflects on them well."

Lots of concessions: Though concessions aren't always all they're cracked up to be, in a new building that's looking to fill its apartments with renters ASAP, you can expect lots of extras like waived broker fees, and a free month (or two) of rent, among other perks. "Buildings want to entice as many residents as possible, so they offer creative concessions," says Min, citing the new building 70 Pine, which is waiving amenities for current residents, meaning they can use the gym for free while the rest of the building's amenity complex is under construction.

THE DOWNSIDES:

Technical difficulties: Even in buildings that are well-constructed (not always a given), there are likely to be some hiccups as things get up and running, and you, as one of the first-ever tenants, will bear the brunt of them. "All new construction tends to have issues in the first year," says Platinum's Kyle Scholz, citing common problems like burst or leaky water pipes, issues with electrical work, and glitchy new appliances that haven't been used prior to your move-in. "And if the building isn't finished yet, you may have to deal with issues like that along with continuing construction (noise, dust/dirt, etc.)," he adds.

"[The problems] usually aren't major things, but you are going to kind of be the guinea pig, getting all the wrinkles ironed out for the developer and the landlord," says Andrew Sacks of Citi Habitats.

A long schlep from the subway: This one isn't a given, but with so many waterfront areas being newly developed (think Hudson Yards, Greenpoint Landing, etc.) and prime lots already taken and built over, oftentimes, new headline-grabbing projects are a significant distance from the nearest subway. (Hence, the recent popularity of commuter shuttles as an amenity.) "A lot of these buildings are on the outskirts and have attractive river views, but this can be a con, too, because they're more difficult to get to," says Sacks.

Missing out on the amenities: While developers might give you a break on amenity fees (as mentioned above), it may be because the perks aren't exactly ready for prime time yet. "There's no guarantee that certain highly desirable amenities will be completed on the date when they're expected," Min explains.

Sobol has experienced this issue firsthand. "We had our roof deck shut down towards the end of the summer because of leaks," he says. "And now they're telling us it won't be ready to use until mid-June." A first-world problem, sure, but something worth considering if you're moving into a small studio on the assumption you'll be spending lots of your leisure time on your building's roof deck or lounging poolside.

Don't expect a spacious spread: And speaking of a small studio, with space in this city at more of a premium than ever before, most new development apartments are surprisingly small in spite of the rest of the building's grandeur. "You're not really going to get the prewar charm or size," says Sacks. "Developers have very savvy computer programs that can help them squeeze the maximum number of apartments into new buildings, so they're generally on the smaller side." But don't expect a price chop to come along with your downsize. "They're also pretty expensive," Sacks adds. "You do pay for everything being brand new, and you pay for the amenities."