

## Never leave the office: Why owners are adding “third spaces” to the workplace

*Developers are incorporating outdoor spaces and cafés for their tenants*

By [Kathryn Brenzel](#) | December 15, 2017 08:00AM



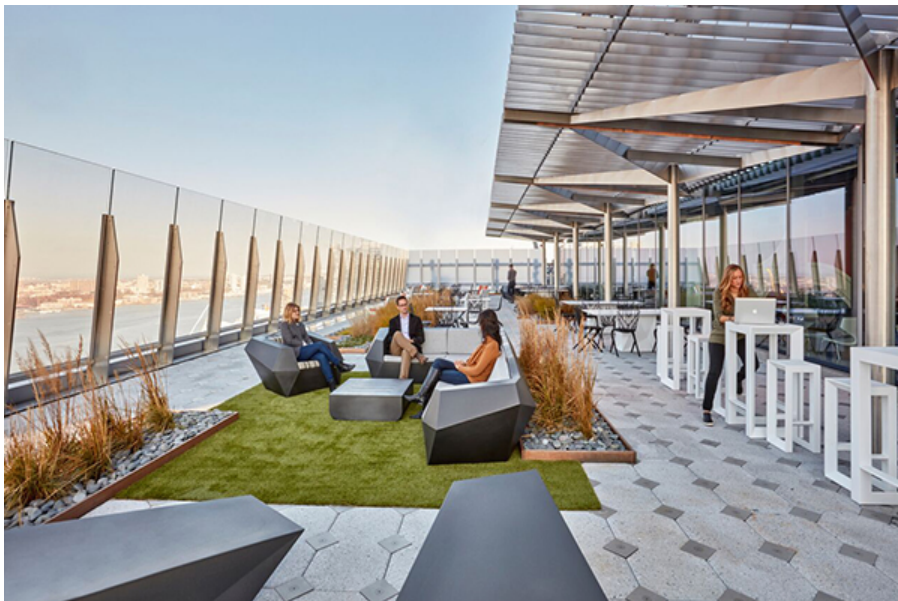
*The indoor basketball court at 855 Sixth Avenue*

When completed, the massive mixed-use development known as Hudson Yards will be a city within a city. It's designed with the idea that residents can live, work, exercise, dine, lounge and admire public art within its 28 acres.

“It's literally a city that you do not have to leave,” Stephen Winter, Related Companies' vice president of commercial leasing, said.

That concept is being replicated — albeit at a much smaller scale — throughout the city. Property owners and businesses are incorporating features like cafés, bars, billiards tables and other types of amenities within their workplaces. These perks function as a sort of “third space,” a term coined by critical theorist Homi Bhabha (in a different context) and commonly used to describe a place between the office and home. In practice, it's your version of a Cheers bar. So, essentially, a place that you frequent regularly but in which you don't live or work.

As people spend more time in the office and as commercial design evolves, the demand for such spaces has grown.



*L'Oreal's outdoor space at 10 Hudson Yards (credit: Gensler)*

Third spaces have taken myriad forms. [Nike's NYC headquarters](#) at the Durst Organization's [855 Sixth Avenue](#) , for example, has an indoor basketball court and a rooftop terrace. RXR Realty's Starrett-Lehigh is positioned as a community within a building: It has a Twitter account that announces neighborhood news and the schedule for rotating food trucks stationed on certain floors. Industry City, a 16-building campus of 450 businesses, has a food court, a mini-golf course and a vodka distillery. Designers include these features in their own offices: for instance, has a billiards table and bar in its office in the Woolworth Building. Snøhetta has a separate room for ping pong at its [80 Pine Street](#)  digs.



*Mini-golf course at Industry City (credit: Industry City)*

Jean Anderson, a principal and design director in Gensler's New York office, said that Boston Consulting Group's office at 10 Hudson Yards includes a large café with an in-house barista. The idea is to give employees who don't normally interact somewhere to introduce themselves and chat.

"It's not just about having a sofa," Anderson said. "It's about the culture. But sometimes the space helps

create the culture.”

Related redesigned [10 Hudson Yards for Coach](#), creating a 15-level, column-free atrium for the company. “They wanted to work in a connected place. They wanted it to feel loft-like,” Winter said.

The company also created an outdoor area for L’Oréal.

Douglas Hocking, a principal at KPF who worked on Hudson Commons — an office building being redeveloped by Cove Property Group and Baupost Group — said developers and property owners aren’t just incorporating these features at the behest of specific tenants: They are also including them in spec office buildings.

At Hudson Commons, for example, KPF designed outdoor spaces that connect to “grand” indoor areas whose use will be determined by the future tenants.



*Rendering of ninth floor terrace at Hudson Commons (credit: Neoscape, Inc. 2017)*

The key, though, is not just “flotsam and jetsam floating around a floorplate” in the name of cool, he said. Hocking said he’s seen companies litter their offices with game tables and other gimmicks without considering how these perks will function within workspaces. Positioning a café too close to cubicles can mean smelling food all day. Placing a ping pong table a few steps away from workstations can annoy workers or clients who are in earshot of the game, he noted.

“Thinking about sound, thinking about smell is an artform, but it’s not rocket science,” he said. “If you design the ping pong table central to where everyone is working, it may never be used because people are too afraid to play. Or you’re going to see the same people playing ping pong all day long and that says something else.”

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