

Multifamily Properties Dive Into Lavish Pool Amenities

Serving as a centerpiece for integrated lounge spaces, private cabanas, and al fresco dining, resort-style pools have become an expectation at multifamily communities.

By Leah Draffen



ZOM Living

The resort-style infinity-edge pool at Atelier in Dallas is flanked with cabanas along one side and inlay loungers along the other.

The rising summer temperatures are drawing residents out of their private apartments into the cool waters of their community pools. A long way from simple rectangular lap pools with standard steps or ladder entrances, resort-style designs have become a mainstay in today's multifamily water amenities.

Because the term "resort-style pool" is splashed on amenity lists and community opening news, MFE wanted to learn what defines resort-style pools and the extra—often extravagant—features that

surround.

Jason Haun, senior vice president, Southwest, for ZOM Living says, “I would really define it less by words and more by feeling. We intently strive to provide a pool environment and experience that gives you the same type of feeling you have when you are on vacation at a luxury resort.”

With ample seating and shaded areas, residents who relax poolside get more than just a refreshing place to take a dip. Paul DeFruscio, executive vice president of asset at AVE by Korman Communities, shares that a resort-style pool is more than just an amenity for swimming. “It’s a retreat where you can lounge in shaded cabanas, socialize with friends or neighbors, and swim for recreational or fitness purposes,” he says.

Christina Perez, senior regional manager of real estate at Greystar, agrees that it’s more than just about swimming. She adds, “A ‘resort-style’ pool is defined as a luxurious, meticulously designed pool area that offers more than just a place to swim. It features elements such as panoramic views, lavish landscaping, comfortable lounge and cabana areas, and relaxing water features. This creates an atmosphere akin to a high-end resort, allowing residents to enjoy a serene and upscale environment right at home.”

At Mast Capital, managing director Eran Landry echoes the same thought as DeFruscio and Perez. “In my opinion, a resort-stye pool is designed and built with a real focus on an aesthetic that appeals to a sense of lifestyle and enjoyment, functional flexibility, and ultimately creates an experience that is much more than just the simple concept of ‘swimming.’”

An Integrated Experience

The luxury amenity dives even deeper into the trend of creating a hospitality and experience-driven environment. Ximena Rodriguez, principal and director of interior design at CetraRuddy, explains, “From our perspective, the term ‘resort-style’ refers to a pool that’s part of a holistic, integrated, and highly intentional overall approach to amenity programming and design—where the focus is on promoting well-being and offering an elevated and curated resident experience. This close attention to the way environment supports and enriches experience reflects a broader trend in multifamily design, and pools offer a great case study.”

Rodriguez’s team has a prime example at Hoboken Point, a new 262-unit community on the North New Jersey waterfront that CetraRuddy designed for Hartz Mountain Industries. “Located on a large outdoor game areas, and landscaped green space—it’s a real gathering space and a social hub for the whole Hoboken Point community,” she adds.

Having watched the trend of amplified pools emerge, Rodriguez adds, “For a long time, it was enough for multifamily developers and owner/operators to offer residents a pool that wasn’t much more than a hole in the ground surrounded by some lounge chairs.

“What we see today is a much more thoughtful and hospitality-inflected approach, where for example the pool is located amid complementary uses like a fitness center, flexible indoor/outdoor resident lounges with a variety of gathering spaces, or even on-site food and beverage programming.”



At Remi on the River in Miami, the resort-style pool is complete with an array of seating options and views of the Miami River.

For Lounging and Socializing

Even a run-of-the-mill community pool can be a gathering place, but a resort-style one can up the intrigue. AVE by Korman Communities director of development Jeffrey Brown, AIA, says, “There’s been an increase in pool decks to accommodate the growing interest of residents seeking a space to relax, lounge, and entertain.”

These decks are most often outfitted with various lounge settings and cabanas or umbrellas for shade. In newer projects, Haun says ZOM Living is implementing enhanced daybeds or cabanas with outlets to charge phones, with some cabanas even having small fridges and private TVs. He says plunge pool areas near TVs for residents to view sporting events while cooling off are also making a splash.

“A successful pool setting will support larger social gatherings as well as individual relaxation and recreation, and it will also feel as inviting at 6 a.m. as it does at 6 p.m. In part, this flexibility is about specific elements like the seating around the pool, but it’s also about layering in a series of adjacent and complementary uses and spaces—for example, spa-like elements like saunas, steam showers, or even salons that allow residents to engage with the pool in a more free-flowing way that doesn’t feel

constrained or prescribed,” Rodriguez notes.

Waterfalls, fountains, and extra water features are adding to the ambience of these oasis-inspired settings. Perez says, “We’re seeing an increase in developers that opt for water features, which is a reflection of the industrywide shift toward more resort-style designs.”

At AVE’s communities, Brown says, “Our latest designs incorporate an infinity edge, a transfer wall for residents to gather at the water’s edge, and additional lighting to create ambience at the pool in the evening. Nearby, we’re creating elevated grilling stations with semi-private dining and social spaces for residents to entertain their guests.”

DeFruscio adds, “We strive to create a sense of community at each one of our properties, and our resort-style pools provide a space for our residents to gather and our team to host fun resident events. We start with the pool and create an experience around it, all within reach. Think Saturday mornings reading your favorite book on an in-lay pool lounge chair, firing up our grills for a midday barbecue, and teeing off the day at our outdoor putting green.”

Hot Additions

From cooking to cozy gathering spots, the contrasting element of fire amenities is a top trend. Whether gathering with neighbors or hosting friends, cooking and dining areas have risen to the “must-have” list for many multifamily communities. Haun says both cooking and eating areas and fire pits or fireplaces are popular additions for ZOM Living.

Serving up the same sentiment, DeFruscio says, “The grills are the most utilized featured in our pool areas, whether it be our on-site teams grilling for our residents at a resident event, individual residents using them to prep meals, or residents creating cook-offs with their fellow neighbors.”

Landry at Mast Capital points out that many of the new additions to resort-style pool development can vary widely depending on local regulations for each community. He adds, “Fire pits, waterfalls, bar and grill spaces, interesting lighting like LEDs, and adjacent spaces for fitness activity continue to be more prevalent and sought after.”

A Focus on Views

The location of the pool can elevate residents’ experience even further—especially if views are involved. At Remi on the River in Miami, Landry says the team collectively put a lot of thought into the orientation of the pool and the adjacent space planning for activities and functionality. “It accommodates a variety of recreational activities that suit the needs of residents and certainly has unrivaled waterfront views of the Miami River,” he says.

In terms of design, Rodriguez says she is seeing an interest in using pools to create a “wow” factor for

communities plus designing and locating the pool itself to maximize the impact. She says, “For example, Hoboken Point is on a prime site directly across the Hudson River from Midtown Manhattan, so we took advantage of that opportunity to set the pool on a roof deck with incredible views. When potential tenants come up to this amenity level, it’s really a show-stopping moment.”

Hoboken Point’s high-priority pool highlights a larger trend that Rodriguez and the CetraRuddy team have been following—pools are more common in urban settings across the Northeast. “In the past, this was an amenity associated primarily with apartment and condominium communities in Florida, on the West Coast, or in the Sun Belt—and often in more suburban or exurban settings, too. We’ve been tracking a shift in this approach for several years now.”

She continues, “In fact we’ve designed numerous buildings in the New York metro area, Philadelphia, and elsewhere that utilize pools as a key amenity focus. In a similar vein, we’ve recently designed several wonderful indoor pool spaces, but our clients are increasingly asking us to incorporate outdoor pools into our multifamily or mixed-use amenity programs, which reflects a broader focus on supporting true indoor-outdoor living across a range of geographies.”

As these relaxing retreats continue to foster even more awe-worthy elements, Landry says resort-style pools can help generate a buzz in marketing and leasing efforts, leading to a stronger lease pace and overall occupancy. He adds, “I think when done right, a resort pool draws more prospective residents by appealing to a wide variety of people’s needs or desires for how they want to live even if they don’t swim. For example, it could be well-thought-out lounge spaces that provide for sunbathing, restfulness, or for those who enjoy entertaining and socializing with friends.”

Haun shares, “When a prospect enters our properties and pool areas, we hope that they have an ‘awe’ or ‘wow’ moment that they really can’t control. Hopefully this impression leaves them with a more favorable experience and results in them wanting to live at our community.”