

The Plan

WHO'S WHAT FOR THE STARRETT-LEHIGH BUILDING

BUILDING OWNERS: RXR AND BLACKSTONE
ARCHITECT: CORY & CORY
DESIGNER: STUDIOS ARCHITECTURE
LEASING AGENT: CBRE



FACELIFT: The Starrett-Lehigh Building, which turns 94 this year, is getting a little nip and tuck to stay competitive in the modern age. Owner RXR has focused on creating 100,000 square feet of amenities, turning the building's railroad bays into themed spaces like a "work lounge" (bottom left and center) and an entire floor called Level 10 that will have a restaurant (bottom right).

By Amanda Schiavo

There is always something new happening at the historic Starrett-Lehigh Building.

The Chelsea landmark turns 94 this year and, like anyone approaching their centennial birthday, the building needed some cosmetic work to help maintain that youthful glow.

Building owner RXR has embarked on a massive renovation of the building after acquiring it in 2011.

Since then, RXR and its partners — Blackstone bought a stake in RXR's portfolio, which included Starrett-Lehigh, in 2015 — have worked to transform the 601 West 26th Street property into a modern workplace campus with 100,000 square feet of amenities.

Some of the 19-story building's key

renovations were to turn its famed truck bays into vibrant amenity spaces, each with its own theme — gaming lounge, living room, etc. — providing office workers with those much-desired third spaces that help keep them from feeling stuck at their desks all day.

"This was originally an industrial building, and it was famous for having these giant elevators that you could literally roll railroad cars onto," said Michael Landeen, senior vice president and general manager at RXR. "They would literally take railroad cars off what is now the West Side Highway and roll them into the building, load them onto these elevators, and then every floor had a loading dock. Now, we utilize these loading docks on each level as part of our amenity plan."

Office tenants throughout the building

who are looking for a little break can head to the 15th-floor space — which was completed in February — to play some pool, shuffleboard, "Mario Kart" or "Donkey Kong," as well as enjoy a full bar. The vibe is softer, more like a hotel lobby than an office playroom. The lighting is muted and there are comfortable chairs for eating lunch, getting work done, or just enjoying some midday relaxation.

There are more amenities to come, too.

Currently under construction, but coming this spring, is Level 10. Spanning almost 45,000 square feet, the new amenity floor will feature a high-tech conference center and event venue, six podcast recording studios, a 14,000-square-foot rooftop terrace that will feature cabana seating, a green lawn with tenting and stunning waterfront views.

Once Level 10 is officially open, the

rooftop terrace will be a coveted spot to watch the city's annual Fourth of July fireworks.

"Watching the fireworks from up here is pretty amazing," Landeen said. "Last year I had a party for just my staff, and it was really cool."

Level 10 will also feature a yet-to-be-named indoor-outdoor restaurant overlooking the Hudson River.

Level 10 spaces will be available for both building tenants and the public to book. RXR plans to introduce a new entrance on 12th Avenue that will allow direct access to the rooftop.

"For us, obviously this is for the tenants, but also to have something that's public facing and to have that ancillary revenue on top of leasing, it's a double win for us to be able to curate additional revenue for the building," Landeen said.