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Please Don't Tell speakeasy owners to open hidden bar in Midtown office building

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Eric Medsker / Highball Ltd. will occupy a 6,000-square-foot space on the 11th floor of 10 Grand Central.

An office building near Grand Central Terminal that offers its tenants a smorgasbord of amenities is getting a new one: a speakeasy.

East Village speakeasy Please Don't Tell (PDT), along with Apres Cru Hospitality, is partnering with Marx Realty to bring Highball Ltd. to the 36-story Midtown office building. It's set to open March 13.

"We want it to be different from anything that exists in the Grand Central neighborhood," said Craig Deitzelweig, president and CEO of Marx Realty. "We want it to be a really elevated space where people can have conversations. You can celebrate your company's success or someone's birthday. I think Highball takes our amenities to the next level."

The bar for amenities is already pretty high at 10 Grand Central. Tenants have access to a luxury car that can take them to meetings. They can watch an independent film on a 150-inch screen in a theater on the 11th floor. Nearby, a gelato machine dispenses five flavors.

Highball will occupy a 6,000-square-foot space that is part of Marx Realty's 11,000-square-foot amenity suite on the 11th floor. The suite has a meeting lounge that fits 200 participants, a sound-attenuated space equipped with technology needed to produce and record podcasts, and the aforementioned theater, with plush stadium seating.

Highball's space will include a kitchen and seat 65 people. There is a hidden entrance on Third Avenue, with a red light to signal to guests that they are in the right place. Patrons then walk over a red carpet to a freight elevator, and press the H button for Highball.

The name of the speakeasy is a double entendre. A highball is a simple, tall mixed drink made with a spirit and two or more non-alcoholic mixers served over ice. The word is also a 19th-century railroading term referring to a signal that authorizes a train to move at full speed. "The space kind of feels like a really nice Pullman car," said Jeff Bell, PDT's managing partner. "There is a train feel to it with a cove ceiling."

The speakeasy's menu will offer house highballs, signature and classic cocktails, including an Aperol spritz and a Manhattan. Pricing will start between \$20 and \$23. For the food, Marx Realty is bringing in Michelin-starred Chef Marc Forgione.

The lease is long-term. Marx Realty's Henry Henderson represented his firm in the deal. PDT, which is tucked behind a phone booth in the hotdog shop Crifs Dogs, opened at 113 St. Marks Pl. in 2007. The speakeasy topped World's 50 Best Bars list in 2011, and won the inaugural James Beard Award for Outstanding Bar Program in 2012.

Bell said that opening Highball will broaden the company's customer base beyond New York residents.

"There are so many office workers who live in Connecticut, Westchester and Long Island who only have time to get a quick drink nearby before hopping on the train," Bell said. "Its a whole new target audience than what we have at PDT."

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