

# THE AGE OF THE WELL BUILDING

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<http://theadvisor.hfflp.com/blog/what-is-well-building>

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Meditation rooms, cushioned floors, anti-glare lighting and healthy food and beverage options on-site are just some of the features found in buildings specifically constructed and designed with the health of its occupants in mind. Welcome to the age of the WELL building.



## WHAT IS A WELL BUILDING?

Americans spend more than 90 percent of their time indoors, and most of that 90 percent is spent in the work place. The WELL Building Standard™, or WELL, speaks to issues that affect the welfare of building occupants. WELL is an evidence-based system for measuring, certifying and monitoring the performance of building features that impact a person's health and well-being. Administered by the International WELL Building Institute™ (IWBI), which Delos™ founded in 2013 pursuant to a Clinton Global Initiative, WELL's mission is to improve human health and well-being through the built environment.

“I founded Delos to help create spaces that actively contribute to human health and well-being by seeking to marry the best innovations in technology, health, science, and real estate,” Delos CEO and IWBI Founder Paul Scialla stated. “As part of this, we pioneered the WELL Building Standard, the first building standard to focus exclusively on the health and wellness of the people in buildings”

Scialla and the IWBI are committed to improving the way people live by developing spaces that enhance occupant health and quality of life by sharing WELL globally. To date, more than 250 projects across 23 countries are registered or certified through WELL.

## HOW TO ACHIEVE WELL CERTIFICATION

WELL is third-party certified by Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), which also administers LEED certification. Where LEED focuses on how a building interacts with its environment, WELL focuses on how a building interacts with people who spend time there and seeks to improve things like nutrition, fitness, mood, performance and sleep patterns for personnel.

It takes years and planning for a building to become a WELL building. The timeline for each project varies and, while the WELL Building Standard itself underwent peer review phases, including scientific, practitioner and medical reviews when it was being developed, the process for individual buildings to achieve WELL Certification involves the following:

1. **Registration:** WELL Certification begins with registration through WELL Online, an online platform designed to take projects through the WELL certification process from start to finish.
2. **Documentation:** Documentation, including annotated project documents and drawings in addition to letters of assurance from the project team, is required prior to final certification review.
3. **Performance Verification:** A series of onsite post-occupancy performance tests known as Performance Verification occurs.
4. **Certification:** WELL Certification recognizes that the project has successfully documented compliance with all features and passed Performance Verification.
5. **Recertification:** Recertification, which must be completed every three years, ensures that the project maintains the same high level of design, maintenance and operations over time.

The reviews evaluate seven items – what WELL calls the Seven Concepts – surrounding the environment: air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, comfort and mind. The Seven Concepts came about from seven years of research and collaboration with leading physicians, scientists and industry professionals.



(<https://www.wellcertified.com/well>)

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As a performance-based certification, a building must pass reviews in each of the Seven Concepts to receive certification in one of three levels, Silver, Gold or Platinum. Currently, for commercial and institutional buildings, WELL covers commercial new and existing buildings, new and existing interiors and/or core and shell property types. “From the quality of the air in a space, to the amount of daylight entering, to the ‘walkability’ of the building location, there are many design, construction and operation decisions that can contribute to a person’s well-being,” Scialla noted.

In total, WELL consists of more than 100 features, each one with the purpose of addressing a specific issue relating to health, comfort or knowledge.

## WHY ADOPT WELL?

425 Park Avenue\* is a 47-story **office** tower currently being constructed that has started the WELL Certification process. The developer, L&L Holding Company , has been working on 425 Park Avenue for 15 years, and it was the **first** building in New York

City to register to pursue WELL Certification. Designed with LEED Gold and WELL standards in mind by architect Lord Norman Foster, it is the first full-block office development on Manhattan's Park Avenue in nearly 50 years.

"Once Delos and WELL Certification was established, it seemed like a natural fit," said Sara Fay, senior director of Marketing for L&L Holding Company. "Across any industry, people don't work nine to five anymore; they are working much longer hours, and they have a greater appreciation for how important it is to be surrounded by natural day light and open collaborative spaces. We have a much better understanding about what makes employees happier and more productive. The Well Certification validated everything we were already doing or wanted to do with the project."



Features of 425 Park Avenue, which is expected to be completed toward the end of 2018, will include a meditation center on the 26th floor, air filtration, advanced water purification, a structure that allows for an abundance of natural sunlight, healthy food options, a dedicated wellness center and terraces on high floors with Central Park views that will serve as common space.

According to Scialla, the variety of reasons why a developer, tenant or building owner should adopt WELL include:

- WELL buildings can help improve a variety of areas of an occupant's life, including nutrition, fitness, mood, sleep patterns, productivity and work performance.
- Additionally, since, as mentioned above, the largest line item in the 30-year cost of a building has to do with personnel, ensuring that, when the health of the occupant is addressed, overall costs can be reduced.
- Building owners can use WELL to help differentiate their space and attract tenants.
- Companies can use WELL as a way to attract and retain top employees.
- WELL can potentially reduce health care costs, adding to its economic potential.

Those reasons resonate with L&H Holding Company. "Well Certification represents an important component of the features that office tenants are looking for and is a reflection of the value that employees are placing on both physical and mental health," Fay added. "It makes good business sense to choose a space for your business that reflects the company culture, fosters employee happiness and productivity and gives the company a competitive edge in recruiting."

There are several misconceptions about WELL, most notable are that pursuing well is expensive and that only new construction can achieve WELL Certification.

"WELL building decisions are not necessarily more costly decisions, but more conscientious decisions," Scialla said. "Given 90 percent of the cost of the building are the people inside of it, the prospects for WELL building – addressing the 90 percent cost input – are vast. Whether it's a building owner looking to differentiate their space so they can lease out tenants or whether it is companies looking to retain and attract employees, enhance productivity, or potentially reduce health care costs, WELL has the potential to offer a valuable return on investment."



In addition to new construction, WELL Certification can be applied to existing buildings and interiors. Also, individual building tenants can pursue WELL Certification for their specific leased spaces even if the entire building is not WELL Certified.

Within the next decade, Scialla said that he hopes that WELL buildings will become the new normal. "Rather than look toward a future of healthy buildings, we will look at the past and say, 'Remember when we didn't consider the human condition when designing these spaces that we spend 90 percent of our lives in?'"

The International WELL Building Institute™ (IWBI) is a public benefit corporation committed to improving human health and well-being through the built environment.

\*HFF provided the construction financing for 425 Park Avenue in 2015.