

STRATEGIES

HOW I...

Designed Central Florida's healthiest building

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Theoretically, Jim Hair always knew there were holistic elements he wanted to include into building designs – things that clients shook

off as unnecessary and esoteric.

But now, there's a systematic code in the early stages of adoption that's starting to back him up. And he was able to design the first building – now up and running in Lake Nona – that's a case study for that program.

Hair, Orlando office president of Little, one of Central Florida's largest architectural firms, was involved in the design of one of the Sunshine State's first projects built to the new International Well Building Institute standard. The new 16,000-square-foot headquarters office of Tavistock Development Co. LLC in the \$70 million Lake Nona Town Center was designed to achieve core and shell standards for the overall building, while Tavistock's own office went after the full certification for Well Building, Hair said.

The new standard, which Hair described as the concept that picked up where LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) left off, looks at not only how a building impacts its surrounding environment, but how it affects the health of those within it. Though it can add an average upfront cost of about 3-5 percent more for tenants and up to 10 percent for building owners, the end result is a more productive, engaged workforce, as well as a great way to attract and retain top talent.

Here, Hair talks more about how your business could benefit from this:

What benefits can a project designed to Well Building standards provide Central Florida's business community? Having this new standard lay things out like this helps building owners and company owners understand perhaps what we've always wanted to do: recognize the value and benefit of doing those things. Of course, there's a huge benefit it has on the employee, but for companies, it's a bottom line thing. At the end of the day, employees will be more productive, happier, more engaged and the company will experience reduced absenteeism.

How has LEED set the stage for Well Building? LEED has become codified,



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Jim Hair, Orlando office president at Little architecture firm

where all the municipalities have elevated their standards to the level of LEED or gone beyond requirements. So, if you're designing per code today, you're pretty much designing for the mandates for a LEED-certified building. If LEED hadn't been adopted, and building and code officials didn't say "that's our standard," we'd still be back where we were 15 years ago. Well Building takes that to the next step by focusing on the human condition.

What was different about the design of this building versus LEED-certified projects? With LEED, we could have done everything with just the facilities manager. But with the Well Building, I had to include ownership, facilities managers, HR and other leadership because we had to create policies. HR had to figure out a way to communicate this to the employees. They had to make it policy, make sure everyone knew why things had to be done a certain way and support those behaviors after they moved in.

What's an example of changing workplace policies? To meet the Well Building certification, the tenant has to provide healthy snacks and water or beverages to their employees. You can't provide drinks with sugar, so sodas are out. They can offer nuts, granola and

grains – things that are better for you than Doritos and Snickers bars. This was after the design was done, so it was more operational and had to be put in place by management and their teams.

What's a feature designed to earn the Well Building certification? If you locate the stairs in a way that makes it more welcoming, such as putting them to the exterior with lots of windows to encourage more natural daylight, people tend to use them more. You also can do things like minimizing the number of elevators so they're slower. That frustrates people, so they take the stairs.

Describe the most unique feature in the Tavistock office that affects people's health: The fitness center. That inclusion in an office space is unusual. A lot of times, you'll see a fitness center in an office building, but this is a tenant improvement, so it was put in as an amenity for the tenants and will be an attraction for talent. They've got bikes, treadmills, Yoga balls and walk stations, where you can go in with your work and walk on the treadmill at a low pace while you use a laptop or read documents. That's almost unheard of to see that in an [individual] office space.

What's a more subtle feature in the office? Well Building has rigid criteria

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The International Well Building Standard points to seven main areas where projects must be designed to promote better health and wellness for a building's occupants. Here's how to achieve each one:

- **Air:** Optimizing indoor air quality by removing contaminants and purifying the air through proper HVAC systems, indoor plants, etc.
- **Water:** Providing filtered/treated drinking water near all workstations, whether through water coolers, filtration systems in the sinks or providing bottled water
- **Nourishment:** Promoting better eating habits through education and healthy snacks or meals in the office
- **Light:** Controlling lighting systems and window treatments to minimize disruption to the body's natural sleeping patterns and making sure light levels will improve energy, mood and productivity
- **Fitness:** Encouraging physical activity during the work day through design technologies, education and accommodating workouts
- **Comfort:** Ensuring the indoor area is distraction-free by making sure workers are able to find environments that are quiet or active enough for them to be productive
- **Mind:** Designing and decorating work spaces to offer stress-relieving views, such as large windows, interior plants and artwork

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about how many garbage pails are in the workspace. You can't have open garbage pails where trash is thrown in and stays until the cleaning crew comes in at night. It has to be contained with lids that have to be opened without hands so you don't bring germs back to your workspace.

How can the International Well Building Institute ensure these policies are kept up? There's a recertification every few years.

What's the downside of the standards? How to maintain the standard is a bit controversial right now. You're paying for something now, and if there's a possibility you're not going to be able to say you're in a Well Building in a couple of years, then there's a problem.