

WELL Standards: How to Innovate Your Building

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Recently the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) announced there are now 483 WELL certified buildings offering communities all over the world more than 100 million square feet of building space that focus on the most important asset any organization or company can invest in: people.

WELL features that building occupants, owners and operators can pursue include:

- **Air** – Limit pollutant and contaminant concentrations in indoor air, immunizing occupant sluggishness
- **Water** – Enhance quality of water to improve human health
- **Nourishment** – Provide easy access to healthy, organic or locally sourced food, which helps reduce hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease
- **Light** - Light enters the eye and hits photoreceptors on the retina, which impacts a natural biological process known as circadian rhythm. WELL provides proper lighting for critical tasks and aligns with biological rhythms
- **Fitness** - Encourage physical activity and reduce sedentariness, which helps to combat obesity and other chronic diseases
- **Comfort** – Mitigate unwanted indoor noise levels and reduces exterior noise intrusion in order to enhance social interaction, learning, satisfaction and productivity

- **Mind** - Identify workplace policies that can be implemented to positively impact mood, sleep, stress levels and psychosocial status in order to promote and enable overall occupant health and well-being

- **Innovation** – Described in greater detail below

The focus for the IWBI moving forward is to encourage WELL projects to focus on innovation. The previous version of the WELL certification placed the Innovation feature as an optimization under the Mind feature. Seeing a need to evolve and include more project types, WELL certification has progressed with the Innovation feature evolving into its own separate category.

Projects unbarred and willing to explore the concept of wellness can earn five Innovation points. There is no limit to how many Innovation proposals a project can present to the IWBI, but only a

maximum of five points will be offered. The point limitation is well-justified given all Innovation points can be thought of as extra points to a WELL certification score. Point allocation for a WELL certification is straightforward: the total amount of achieved points is divided by the total available points for a particular type of space.

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The second and perhaps most intense requirement is to provide significant and substantiated support for your Innovation.

Because not every WELL category can apply to every type of space, there is a limit to the amount of available points for any one unique space within a building. Innovation points are not counted towards a project's total available points if they do not excel in two key areas: conception and support.

A well-conceived proposal is able to demonstrate that a project is going above and beyond an already listed WELL feature, or a proposed feature, which relates to wellness in a creative way that is not already defined in the WELL standard.

The second and perhaps most intense requirement is to provide significant and substantiated support for your Innovation. This support needs to be validated through medical, scientific, and/or industry research.

Current core and shell projects, new/existing interior projects, and new/existing building projects can benefit from the current WELL standard version 1, but the standard is quickly evolving to include pilot projects for multifamily, educational facilities, retail, restaurants, commercial kitchens, communities, exercise facilities, public assembly spaces, and healthcare.

Examples of Innovation features the IWBI can award:

- WELL AP members on the project team – easy point!

- List the team project members

- Tour of the WELL certified space

- IWBI will provide a list of WELL spaces to the public that are offering WELL tours

- Needs to have an education component to it (e.g. signage about movement as the tour is ongoing)

- Altruism

- Donating space within the WELL certified space for humanitarian purposes, such as a youth empowerment non-profit organization

- Biophilia

- 3rd party label to provide substantiation for their Biodiversity Label, which goes above and beyond the standard measure

- Interior Fitness Circulation

- Staircases are the least expensive way to get normally sedentary people to move more

- Example: a designed staircase in the center of an atrium space that leads all the way to the top floor and provide landings with meeting spaces and plants at every ½ level

- Connectivity

- Wired certification – infrastructure that supports occupants for technology and responsiveness to technology changes

- Hired Onsite Dietician

- Extensive explanation on how the dietician will be providing services to occupants as well as building/space staff

- All products and procedures must reflect the area's culturally sensitive needs

VCA Green is well-versed in the requirements and procedures of WELL standards for any type of building. Feel free to contact Moe Fakh, Vice President, at 714-791-1716 (ext. 502) and/or mfakh@vca-green.com for WELL consultation and other green building services.

