



# WELL TO DO

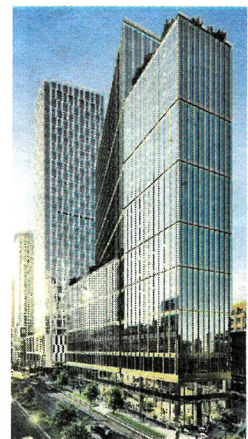
Landlords lure workers and shoppers back with new health certification

By LOIS WEISS

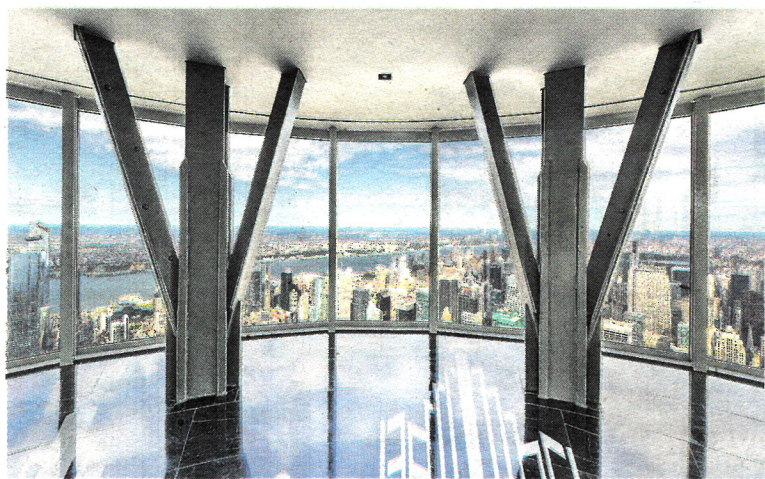
**T**HESE buildings are WELL-endowed. In response to COVID-19, the real estate industry is shifting its focus away from scoring top energy and environmental ratings to improving the human experience.

To do it, they're embracing aspects of WELL — a building certification based on criteria meant to boost physical and mental health by bringing everything from greenery and cleaner air to substance abuse services to the tower's occupants.

"I felt there was a focus on the environment but half the story was missing as there was a lack of focus on people," said Paul



Brooklyn's new 141 Willoughby St. is expected to get WELL Gold certification.



Breathe easy: The air on the uppermost floor of the Empire State Building, its observatory (above), is replaced 22 times an hour. Fresh air is just one of the factors that earned the tower and Empire State Realty Trust's entire portfolio of buildings WELL Health-Safety certification.

Scialla, CEO of healthy living brand Delos and founder, in 2013, of the associated International WELL Building Institute (IWBI).

In response to the pandemic, IWBI launched the WELL Health-Safety Rating — a subset of items from the more robust rating — as a way to provide confidence when returning to indoor spaces.

"It focuses on pathogen concerns, but is a broader verification of all health and safety protocols," Scialla said.

Since launching in 2020, WELL Health-Safety has splashed a reported \$100 million on star power, including Michael B. Jordan, Jennifer Lopez, Lady Gaga and Robert de Niro for ads directed by Spike Lee that were shown at the Super Bowl and elsewhere. It publicizes the Well Health-Safety rating and advises people to look for the sticker/seal on the window so they know it is "safe" to go into a store or building.

It's clicking with anxious landlords. Earlier this month, Brookfield announced that its nearly 100 properties with over 75 million square feet are all newly WELL Health-Safety rated. SL Green Realty Corp. also achieved the rat-

ing on April 1 for 29 buildings across 23 million square feet, including One Vanderbilt.

The WELL Health-Safety rating covers a subset of 24 features taken from the more rigorous WELL Building Standard, of which 15 must be met. These items cover everything from cleaning and sanitation, emergency preparedness, air and water quality management — some of which requires using a qualified engineer.

One section covers promoting the flu vaccine while another discourages smoking. Meanwhile, L&L Holdings' new, 42-floor, Foster + Partners-designed office tower at 425 Park Ave. applied to be the city's first WELL certified building — aiming for "Gold" status — while it was under construction in 2015.

"It's the healthiest building in the world," said chief executive David Levinson (inset, above). "A company's most important asset is their people. As people occupy the building and experience it, [the certification] will become more valuable and people will be performing at the

highest level."

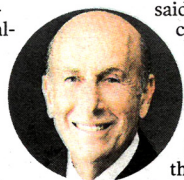
While New York City code requires 25 percent fresh air, 425 Park brings in 95 percent fresh air due to the unique rear core and metal "fins" that "breathe" filtered air directly to each floor. It also employs AtmosAir bipolar ionization technology, a commercial air-filtration system that attacks COVID, among others nasty particles.

"It's crazy," Levinson said, noting that according to research his building's improved air quality will in turn improve the cognitive functions of its workers. "It's the only building that does this."

The building's common areas, amenity spaces and lobby also have lighting that adjusts with the available natural light.

Others getting the WELL Health-Safety rating are T-Mobile stores and JPMorgan Chase bank branches. JPMorgan's upcoming 1,425-foot-tall tower at 270 Park Ave. is targeting the full WELL certification.

"In the past, it was LEED," said James Dean, the co-founder of HVAC designer Oxygen8, referring to the certification for Leadership



Towers like 425 Park Ave. are impressing the folks at the International WELL Building Association.

Alan Schindler, Corbis, Zhou (inset)

## It focuses on pathogen concerns, but is a broader verification of all health and safety protocols."

— PAUL SCIALLA, CEO of Delos and founder of the IWBI

in Energy and Environmental Design. "But right now people care about a healthy work environment."

His company is helping commercial spaces make the WELL grade and reducing their carbon footprint by outfitting them with low-profile, ductless electric heating, ventilation and air-cooling systems. They feature a special membrane that uses less energy and

retains a higher humidity — which helps to fight viruses — and still provides 100 percent outdoor air pushed through a MERV 13 filter (a high standard for filters).

Unsurprisingly, during a pandemic, the city's major building owners are all focused on creating healthy indoor air.

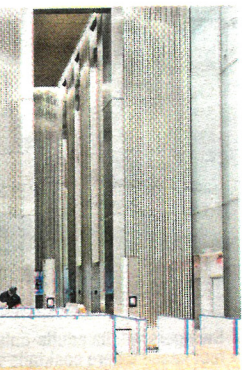
Fisher Bros. just received the WELL Health-Safety rating for its 5.5 million-square-

foot portfolio office buildings with MERV 14 filters.

One World Trade Center brags about its MERV 16 filters, which are used in hospitals. World Trade Center 3, 4 and 7, built and operated by Silverstein Properties, have MERV 13, as does the Empire State Building, which also deployed the AtmosAir system.

All of the Empire State Realty Trust's buildings, including its flagship Art Deco masterpiece, are now WELL Health-Safety certified.

But adding mountain-fresh air into crowded office towers requires lots of energy. The higher the fil-



With 95% fresh air and other health perks, 425 Park Ave. (above and left) applied to be the city's first WELL certified building in 2015; while Fisher Bros., no slouch themselves, just received the WELL Health-Safety rating for its portfolio of buildings, including 1345 Sixth Ave. (below) with MERV 14 filters.



ter number the denser the filter so the heating and cooling system has to be matched to the filter or less air will flow through. (The highest-rated filter, a MERV 20, is used for radioactive materials and clean rooms.)

In the topmost 102nd floor of the Empire State Building observatory — a small area with a lot of people traffic — the air is now replaced 22 times an hour,

said the building's owner, Anthony Malkin (inset, left), CEO of the Empire State Realty Trust. A regular office floor, however, may only need several air

changes per hour. The WELL Health-Safety program also comes with other costs. One section of its 61-page guide calls for a "health benefits plan," covering medical, dental, vision, mental health and medication "at no cost



or [subsidy]."

Overall costs for just the WELL Health-Safety rating review can range from \$2,730 for a small business to \$12,600 for a place like a stadium — Yankee Stadium has the rating — and scales down to \$415 per building for a portfolio of over 301 properties so long as you spend at least \$150,000.

Scialla said that while the program is "a rigorous process," it is also designed not to overly burden small businesses. Yet much of it is tailored to large buildings and seems like overkill for the local pizza shop or hair dresser whose customers see the star-studded ad and ask about the seal.

For the big buildings, however, cost is no object. Peter Rosenthal, principal director of development and chief sustainability officer at Savanna, which owns 7 million square feet in New York, was not worried about the costs. The entire Savanna portfolio achieved the WELL Health-Safety Rating in March.

"For us, as it's all about the tenants which are our clients and we want to do all we can for them," Rosenthal said. "It's

a very robust requirement to get the full WELL Certification and our new 400,000-square-foot office building [at 141 Willoughby St., Brooklyn] is on track to get the full WELL Certified Gold. To have our tenants feel comfortable and know that when they can come into our building it is a safe environment — you can't put a price on it."



The WELL seal tells visitors that a building has met the program's strict criteria.