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Wellness-Focused Multifamily Community Debuts In Los Angeles

By: Jeffrey Steele
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Be DTLA is the first Southern California apartment community to capture IWBI's WELL Health-Safety Rating.
DAVID GUETTLER PHOTOGRAPHY

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated health to its rightful place high above wealth on many people's lists of priorities.

Real estate developers have responded to the pandemic by placing greater emphasis on outdoor space, biophilic design and air circulation inside new structures, whether office buildings, retail structures or apartment and condominium communities. Pursuing wellness initiatives is only good business. The grim milestones of 2020 have helped lift health and wellness real estate from desired to essential commodity.

This year, for the first time, owners and operators of real estate enjoy a centralized source and governing body to validate their efforts in supporting the health and safety of people who enter buildings they own and manage. It is the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) WELL Health-Safety Rating.

Empowering owners

One of the initial outcomes of IWBI's Task Force on COVID-19, which convened more than 600 public health experts, virologists, designers, government officials, academics and other health

and wellness experts, the WELL Health-Safety Rating is an evidence-based, third-party-verified rating to empower property owners to prioritize the health and safety of their residents, visitors and staff. It draws not only on the findings of the Task Force, but on guidance developed by the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health regarding COVID-19 and other respiratory infection spread.

"Our buildings and the people who tend them are our first line of defense for keeping us safe and healthy," IWBI President Rachel Gutter says. "The current pandemic has confirmed that health is a material economic consideration of the first order. These two simple truths stand at the nexus of our work to date and will, along with the hard evidence that is mounting, inform all our decisions about the critical need for better buildings, more vibrant communities and stronger organizations going forward."

The WELL Health-Safety Rating focuses on operational policies, maintenance protocols and emergency plans to respond to the post-COVID-19 world. IWBI began accepting registrations in June for the rating from all types of buildings and facilities, including offices, restaurants, hotels, retail establishments, manufacturing plants, warehouses, stadiums, arenas, theaters and other entertainment venues, schools, multifamily housing and others.

Filling niche

In the vanguard of the movement is Los Angeles's first wellness-focused apartment building, Be DTLA, from the Souferian Group. Formerly known as The Sofia, it is the first apartment building in the entirety of Southern California to attain the WELL Health-Safety Rating. Residents benefit from a dedicated concierge staff, touchless, no-contact text message communication and online resident events.

On-property meditation pods located throughout the building enable residents to leave their residences and yet visit another part of the building to relax, rejuvenate and calm their minds. A converted theater room has become a TikTok studio equipped with tripod station and surround sound, so residents can exercise, have fun and socially connect in a distanced way. Private outdoor green space on the rooftop lets residents engage with the outdoors and the natural world.

Be DTLA achieved the rating by executing on 15 criteria across five categories. The five are cleaning and sanitization procedures, emergency preparedness programs, health service resources, air and water quality management and stakeholder engagement and communications. "My vision is to provide the first-of-its-kind apartment community that redefines the focuses on wellness residential living – a centrally-located environment that emphasizes healthy minds, bodies, spirits and fun," says Behzad Souferian, founder and CEO of The Souferian Group, a Los Angeles-based real estate development and investment group.

"Our health is our wealth. And I believe people are searching for something different than ornate or overly-designed spaces. We focus on developing beautiful and functional environments for people to be well, be centered and be home."