



Designing for Wellness in the Workplace

ALLSTEEL | GUNLOCKE CHICAGO SHOWROOM ACHIEVES WELL

To foster wellness and enhance user experience, the Allsteel | Gunlocke Showroom utilized WELL Building Standard practices to improve key components that have the greatest impact on the health of our visitors—indoor air quality, access to clean water, natural light, healthy foods, and the promotion of fitness, comfort, and mindfulness.

Why We Pursued WELL

To us, the WELL concepts are intuitive; like the WELL Building Standard, Allsteel and Gunlocke believe in designing for humans. We consider what workers need to work in a healthy and productive way, and how to support them physically, mentally, and emotionally.

We design products to fit people, including their physical needs, like body shape and size, as well as their expectations about how they want to work. Ergonomics is a core design criterion, along with choosing healthy, low-emitting materials. From individual to group environments, work settings can enhance a person's emotional well-being. We have thoughtfully designed the space with wellness principles in mind, allowing spaces for community and respite, providing access to healthy air and natural light, and giving users ways to connect with nature.

Additionally, we chose our shared Allsteel | Gunlocke Chicago showroom because it gave us yet another challenge: It's updated every year for the NeoCon trade show each June. So regardless of the changes we make each year, we will want to ensure that we're maintaining a space that supports the health and wellness of our members and visitors. Being the first furniture showroom in theMART to achieve WELL certification provides us with an ongoing opportunity to educate our guests about the benefits of designing for health and wellness and to give a visual representation of these concepts in action.

What is WELL?

The WELL Building Standard® is the first building standard to focus on the health and wellness of building occupants. We spend over 90% of our time indoors, so focusing on the built environment can help drive improvements in our overall health and wellness. Developed by Delos and administered by the International WELL Building Institute, WELL was designed using evidence-based medical and scientific research to create built environments that support human health and wellbeing.

WELL version 1 includes seven "Concepts," or categories of impact relevant to occupant health in the built environment. The Concepts include: Air, Water, Nourishment, Light, Fitness, Comfort, and Mind. Within each Concept are Features to pursue. Mandatory features are called "Preconditions," while optional features are called "Optimizations." Projects can achieve WELL Silver, Gold, or Platinum, depending on the number of Optimizations they achieved.

Wellness Insight #1:

Research has shown that humans with a connection to nature generally experience a stronger state of well-being. Adding biophilic elements, like plants and natural materials to a space can help reduce stress while improving learning, healing, and worker productivity.



Allsteel was an early adopter of the WELL Building Standard, earning the first WELL Certified™ Gold – Retail Pilot award in the world for our Los Angeles Showroom in 2017. Since then, we've achieved WELL Certified™ Gold – Retail Pilot for both our Boston and Chicago showrooms. The Retail Pilot is a version of the WELL Standard that applies to retail spaces where products are on display; where there might be few full-time members, but many visitors. The Retail Pilot has a few less requirements to meet in the Nourishment, Light, Fitness, and Comfort concepts, but other rigorous criteria must still be met.



Wellness Insight #2:

Having access to a variety of spaces can enable individuals to adjust their environments and choose their degree of engagement. Research has shown that having this choice is associated with higher job satisfaction and group cohesiveness.

Challenges & Strategies

Realities of Being in a Tenant Space

The Allsteel | Gunlocke showroom is located in downtown Chicago, inside of theMART. Built in the 1930s, theMART has over 4.2 million gross square feet, spans two city blocks, and rises 25 stories. Because we are one tenant out of many and our shared 20,000 sqft. showroom space still a relatively small portion of theMART's overall real estate, we reached out early on to understand if WELL Certification would be feasible. Performance Verification testing, or on-site audit, was key to our success as we worked closely with theMART's team well before project kick-off and on through testing.

theMART places a priority on operating a sustainable building and they recently achieved LEED O+M Gold certification in 2018. The updates made to theMART's building systems, like using MERV13 air filters, remediating and encapsulating harmful building materials, and offering green cleaning services, ultimately helped us achieve our WELL goals.

Strategizing for an Existing Space

Our Chicago showroom receives annual updates, including modest construction, new paint, and new furniture. Early on, we knew that certain WELL features and strategies would not be applicable to our project. For instance, finishes that had been in the space for more than one year were excluded from the WELL VOC requirements; however, all new paints, carpets, and furniture were required to be specified as indoor air quality certified to meet the low-VOC criteria in WELL. Our project team performed an extensive gap analysis before the start of the project to understand which WELL features would be applicable to our project and ensure we still met the Gold level requirements.

Meeting the WELL Criteria

With the gap analysis completed, our project began in March 2018 with an Integrative Design Charrette, where our project team — comprised of sustainability and ergonomic experts, showroom operations teams, building management, and an outside MEP consultant — discussed project goals and each feature we planned to pursue. For criteria we wouldn't pursue, we determined alternative strategies that still aligned with WELL. Goals finally outlined, our team spent months implementing strategies, updating policies, and collecting documentation. In December 2018, we submitted documentation for review and in April 2019, completed our Performance Verification. We were awarded the WELL Certified™ Gold – Retail Pilot designation in June 2019, once our assessors determined that all requirements had been met.

Examples of the strategies implemented for each WELL concept are shared on the following pages.



Wellness Insight #3:

We often think about standing postures at the individual workstations but having options for standing meetings can also be beneficial (especially for those of us who spend more times in meetings than at our individual stations). Additionally, standing meetings have been shown to be generally shorter and more efficient than meetings at seated height.



Air

Paints, furniture, and furnishings are made with materials that can contain VOCs, which can contribute to poor indoor air quality. Nearly all the finishes we specified, including our own furniture, were proven to meet the WELL VOC requirements through independent third-party certifications, like the SCS indoor Advantage™ Gold certification for indoor air quality.

Harmful building materials can impact the indoor air quality of a space. Through the process, we learned that some light fixtures in our space, like our Exit signs, contained mercury and were not allowed by WELL. We updated our Exit signs and other fixtures and bulbs to LED or mercury-free products and implemented policies to specify mercury-free, which ensures a safer environment for our members and guests.



Water

As publicly supplied water may not always be the cleanest or best-tasting, we installed filters on our water lines to be served at our showroom hospitality station that includes a carafe of water for our guests. By changing the filters regularly, the water we serve our guests and drink ourselves will stay at top quality and taste properties.



Light

Due to theMART's size and layout, our showroom is too deep to meet the natural light features in WELL; however, we still worked to maximize access to natural light. Next to our windows, we placed our community lounge and café space, rather than private offices and conference rooms. Throughout the space, we kept panel heights low and designed clusters of glass-walled conference and touch-down rooms that allow access to views, but do not impede the views of others at workstations. Allowing everyone in the space access to natural light and views can improve moods, productivity, and circadian rhythms.

Wellness Insight #4:

Occasionally, employees feel like they are "on display" if they are standing while everyone else is seated. This feeling may prevent some employees from fully utilizing their height-adjustable worksurface to the extent that they would like. Products with screens allow some ability to feel "camouflaged" while standing.

Wellness Insight #5:

Noise is still a common complaint in the office setting - regardless of whether there are panels or open plan workstations. Having small rooms for individuals to remove or reduce conversational noise can be beneficial to coworkers, while providing some privacy for the individual.





Nourishment

Providing healthy food and beverages is not a requirement for Retail Pilot projects but we chose to align ourselves closely with the mission of WELL and pursued these requirements for our project. On-site, guests and members have a variety of low-sugar, healthy snacks and beverages to choose from, with ingredients and allergens that are clearly labeled, to encourage healthier eating habits.



Fitness

Incorporating more movement into an office worker's day can sometimes be a challenge. Throughout our space, we featured height-adjustable surfaces at workstations and a mix of height-adjustable and standing-height meeting tables. Additional work settings, like lounge furniture setups and private enclaves give workers a variety of spaces to use, which promotes movement and posture changes.



Comfort

WELL's definition of comfort includes acoustic, thermal, olfactory, and physical (ergonomic) comfort. While acoustic requirements are not as strict for Retail Pilot projects, we addressed acoustics by using softer materials in open plan areas and creating private retreats for individuals to use when acoustic privacy is needed. Physical comfort was addressed at each workstation by providing adjustable height worksurfaces and adjustable seating products.

While addressing thermal comfort, we learned our HVAC system was not delivering the right amount of air to our space, impacting thermal comfort. We worked with theMART and a local MEP consultant to identify the fixes needed to help our system operate properly. The on-site performance verification confirmed that our system now meets the applicable thermal comfort requirements.



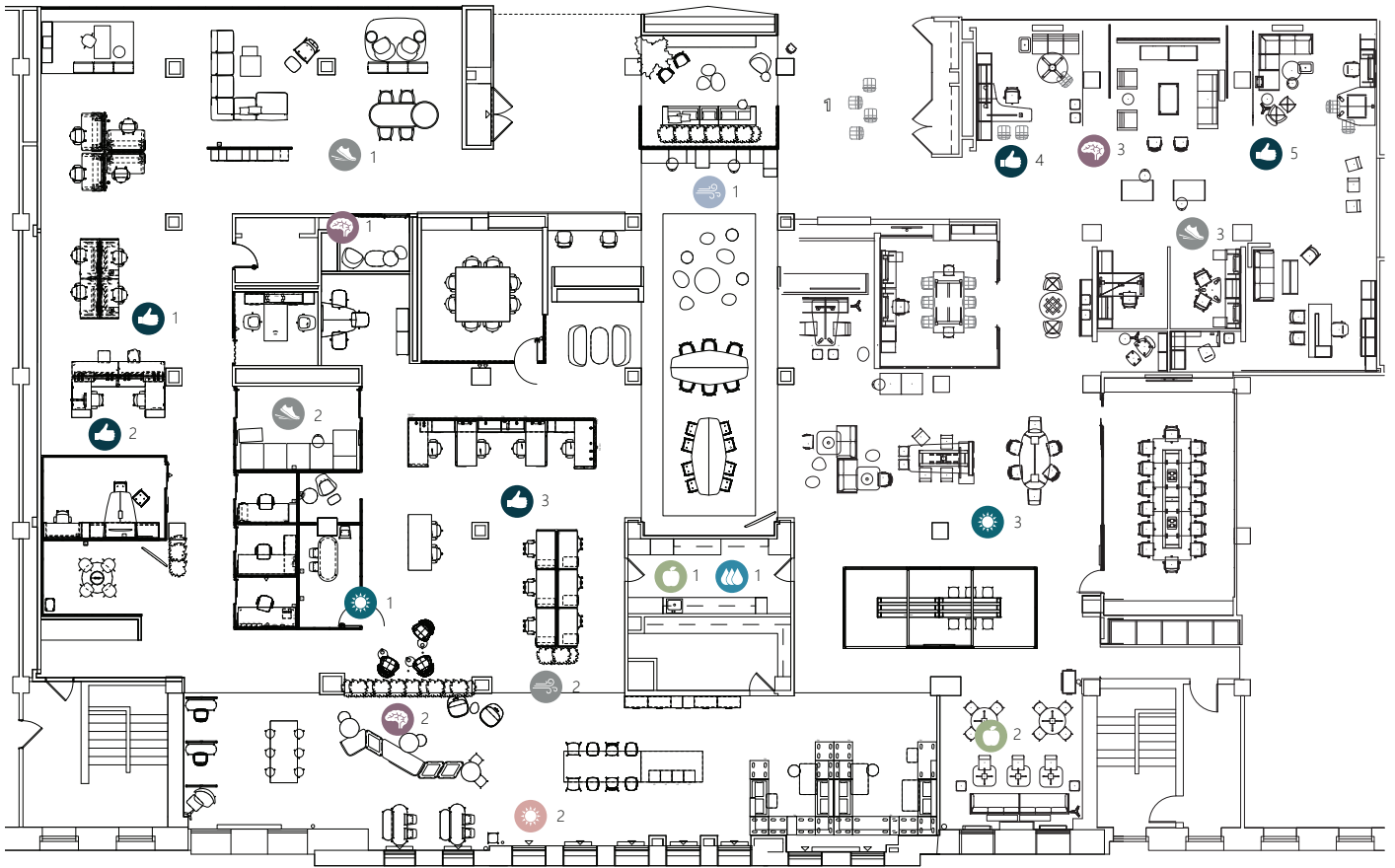
Mind

As humans, we each have our own unique personality, work style, and motivators when it comes to inspiring productivity at work. How we do this is often at odds with what a workplace can offer, which is why our showroom features a variety of spaces to support different degrees of engagement. From open workstations to community lounges to private enclaves, providing a balance of different areas for employees can help support a healthy mental state and increase workplace satisfaction and productivity. The physical environments in which we see most people thrive are inspired by nature. In our showroom, we've brought nature in through the use of plants, natural textures and materials, muted color palettes, and graphics.

Wellness Insight #6:

Soft seating can offer destinations for individuals to walk to and allow them to sit in different postures—introducing movement into the work environment and fostering health.





Air

1. Indoor Advantage Gold Certified furniture for a healthier environment.
2. Cradle to Cradle certified furniture bans the use of harmful chemicals.

Water

1. Filtered water removes toxins and chemicals that alter the taste of water. Water stations promote hydration.

Light

1. Beyond walls allow access to natural light and don't jeopardize window space.
2. Access to natural sunlight for circadian rhythm support and thermal comfort.
3. Light-colored surfaces help the space appear brighter by reflecting more light.

Nourishment

1. Healthy snacks and low-sugar beverages. Kitchen with cold food storage and prep appliances.
2. Mindful eating spots away from desks promote community connections and attention to eating.

Fitness

1. Varied-height tables for active meetings.

2. Soft seating provides additional working or relaxing areas and promotes movement.
3. Sit-to-stand desks provide opportunities to move throughout the day.

Comfort

1. Supporting worker comfort at standing heights can be achieved through the placement of tall items next to workstations. This can help encourage workers to stand and feel comfortable when their coworkers are seated.
2. Adjustable task seating products support occupant comfort.
3. Ergonomic tools, like monitor arms and task lights support occupant comfort.
4. Ample and varied storage reduces clutter and supports different organization styles.
5. Alternative team spaces support varying work styles and postures.

Mind

1. Enclosed spaces for private conversations or for quieter working spaces.
2. Area to work quietly or relax and recharge.
3. Biophilic elements (plants, natural materials) provide a connection to nature; furniture design supports patterns of biophilia (prospect and refuge).



A - Wellness Insight #7: Allowing enough space for workers to come and eat in a cafeteria environment is one way that offices can support mindful eating. Instead of having employees eat at their desk or run out for fast food, employees who have a space to prepare and enjoy eating have the opportunity to enjoy the experience more.

B - Wellness Insight #8: Conference rooms do not have to jeopardize window space. Using glass walls gives employees access to views in workstations and collaborative areas and contributes to organizational transparency.

C - Wellness Insight #9: An additional biophilic design consideration is having a location for "refuge": A place for withdrawal from environmental conditions or the main flow of activity, in which the individual is protected from behind and overhead. Allowing workers "protection" from the back is one way to provide this.

D - Wellness Insight #10: Dynamic, full-body movement is an important element of a healthy work style. Changing postures frequently throughout the day is one way that employees can increase their movement. Providing ergonomic furniture at workstations is key, along with designing community spaces that encourage movement and support different postures.



The Allsteel | Gunlocke Wellness Team

Allsteel and Gunlocke's team of wellness experts includes WELL APs with backgrounds in ergonomics, sustainability, architecture and design, and business and product development. They help our customers choose the best furniture options to meet workplace wellness requirements and to satisfy WELL features. They can assist with customer's WELL projects by providing the appropriate documentation for selected products. Contact your local Allsteel | Gunlocke rep for more information.

Looking for
more?

Here are the
resources.

WELL Building Standard, WELL Retail Pilot Standard: <https://resources.wellcertified.com/>

[Allsteel's WELL Product Contributions](#)

[Gunlocke's WELL Product Contributions](#)

[Allsteel's Wellness Maze and WELL V1 Overview](#)

[Allsteel's Holistic Workplace Infographic](#)

[Allsteel's Ergonomics Resources](#)

To schedule a tour of the Allsteel | Gunlocke Chicago showroom, or other showrooms, please visit: <https://cms.allsteeloffice.com/resource-centers/Chicago/>