

# BUILDING IMPACT

*Structures built using sustainable and regenerative design practices can better our health and enhance the human experience*

BY LOLA THÉLIN

There has long been a link between a human's habitat and health. "You can make the case that it's been around since the first humans created firepits for warmth and cooking, and created shelters for themselves in caves," says Jamie Gold, a wellness design consultant.

Known as wellness design and architecture, this concept that "well" buildings and homes enhance an occupant's well-being—from the physical to the emotional—has seen a surge in recent years. Post-pandemic, society has gained a new appreciation for the power of environment. The idea of "building for human health" is now a mainstream idea, according to the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), the leading research organization for the wellness industry.

At its Fall 2021 symposium, GWI offered revealing data on wellness real estate: The global market grew 22 percent on average annually, ex-

THE CREATORS OF MUSE RESIDENCES COLLABORATED WITH DR. DEEPAK CHOPRA FOR A GROUND-BREAKING WELLNESS LIFESTYLE CONCEPT.

COURTESY OF MUSE RESIDENCES



COURTESY OF ETEVEN HOTEL & RESIDENCES



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COURTESY OF SPINNAKER GROUP

FROM TOP: ETEVEN HOTEL & RESIDENCES' WORLD-CLASS SPA; THE SPINNAKER GROUP SELECTED A BIOPHILIC DESIGN FOR ITS WEST PALM BEACH HEADQUARTERS; THE HILTON WEST PALM BEACH IS A LEED (LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN) SILVER CERTIFIED SPINNAKER GROUP CLIENT.

panding from \$148 billion in 2017 to \$225 billion in 2019 to \$275 billion in 2020. "There was a huge growth in wellness design pre-pandemic, as developers realized they could command higher prices for wellness communities," says Gold, the author of *Wellness by Design: A Room-by-Room Guide to Optimizing Your Home for Health, Fitness, and Happiness*. "Now it's not just a perceived 'nice to have' but a must-have as homebuyers seek shelter with health and safety in mind."

Indeed, South Florida high-rises, hotels, office buildings, and residences are seizing on the movement's growth, implementing a variety of wellness-by-design practices that not only benefit a person's health but also reduce hazard risk and offer accessibility, comfort, functionality, and enjoyment.

A leading adviser in all things green, sustainable, and wellness-minded is Spinnaker Group, a West Palm Beach company that connects the built world with the latest sustainable, resilient, and healthy solutions. The firm also works with developers, owners, and design professionals to integrate sustainability and wellness in building projects. "Research demonstrates that when organizations prioritize health in their buildings, operations, and policies, they are more likely to benefit from increased employee productivity, reduced absenteeism, and retention of the best and brightest talent," says Margaret Fitzsimons, vice president of sustainability at Spinnaker Group, whose clientele is 80 percent based in South Florida and boasts 100 to 150 active projects annually.

The most innovative interventions include bringing nature into spaces through practices like biophilic design, which introduces nature both physically and conceptually. Furnishings (carpets, wood and tile flooring, paints, and cabinetry) and building materi-

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Hospitality properties seeking to go beyond the traditional spas and comfy beds are finding that design innovations in the wellness space are ideal tools. With a mission concentrated on health and wellness, the Amrit Ocean Resort & Residences on Singer Island will embed wellness design throughout its property when it opens later this year, beginning with the entrance's moon gate embodying the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. With 100,000 square feet dedicated to its spa

FROM TOP: A WATER FEATURE AT THE ETEVEN HOTEL & RESIDENCES' SPA; AMRIT OCEAN RESORT & RESIDENCES' MEDITATION SPACE AND HOTEL SPA POOLS.



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als (drywall, sealants, and caulking) are offered in low emissions and finishes that incorporate recycled content. "Third-party testing and verification agencies have elevated testing and reporting standards, allowing manufacturers to have their products tested and receive certifications that demonstrate both industry standard compliances and the healthy benefits of their products," says Fitzsimons.

Spinnaker helped create a rooftop amenity space, complete with a running track, water features, and garden areas, for Optima Office Buildings in Aventura and Hallandale Beach. Related Co.'s 360 Rosemary—West Palm Beach's newest office building—was curated with sustainable materials and environment-forward features to offer tenants space for collaboration and relaxation, including an outdoor terrace and 360-degree views.



COURTESY OF AMRIT OCEAN RESORT & RESIDENCES



COURTESY OF MUSE RESIDENCES

FROM TOP: MUSE RESIDENCES IN SUNNY ISLES; AN OUTDOOR LIVING AREA FEATURED IN WELLNESS DESIGN CONSULTANT JAMIE GOLD'S BOOK, WELLNESS BY DESIGN.

and wellness facility, Amrit is slated to be the largest wellness center in the United States. To help all guests benefit the most from their experience, rooms will be equipped with a controlled lighting system that will influence their circadian rhythms. "The overall benefit of circadian lighting is to wake your body naturally without putting [it] into high stress," says Neera Barot, a member of the Amrit ownership team. The property is also installing a reverse osmosis water filtration system to infuse water with natural minerals and reduce harmful contaminants, toxins, and impurities.

Enhanced lighting, acoustics and thermal comfort, improvements in air and water quality, and using materials with reduced toxins are popular design interventions, but Fitzsimons is also seeing a trend toward interior and exterior restorative spaces. For example, at 2000 Ocean, a boutique beachfront project in Hallandale Beach, lemon trees, tall bamboos, and a mixture of local flora augment the meditation gardens.

"Lush greenery and plant life are essential to mental health and overall well-being, offering holistic benefits like improved mood and cognitive performance," says Saige Robb, general manager at 2000 Ocean, which will also be home to the largest living wall in South Florida. When complete, more than 8,000 plant species will cover the 2,000 square feet of wall space, demonstrating how to seamlessly incorporate nature into a development.

Some residential properties are configuring wellness by design on a luxurious level. The creators of Muse Residences, a 68-unit oceanfront condominium in Sunny Isles, teamed up with prominent alternative medicine advocate Dr. Deepak Chopra to offer a revolutionary wellness lifestyle concept focused on the benefits of air, water, and light. Seven residences feature advanced purification of air and water through whole-home air filtration, a stand-alone air purification upgrade, whole-home water filtration, and a shower infuser to reduce chlorine. With an oceanfront location, the condominium is a perfect candidate for dynamic lighting el-



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ements, engineered to provide an optimal environment. Chopra selected the residences' furnishings and color choices for their calming and positive effect on moods. His global brand is also working with E1 Eleven Hotel & Residences in Miami to build a spa and studio focusing on the mind-body connection, as well as holistic well-being.

Of course, for many, well-being begins at home. Before the pandemic, Gold, who focuses exclusively on residential projects, saw two major groups: seniors wanting to live safely and comfortably in their own homes, and young parents moving into their first apartments or homes. "What I learned firsthand in my 50s was that many of the features that help [seniors] benefit users of all ages and abilities," says Gold. "For example, a zero-barrier home entry is great for someone using a walker or wheelchair, but also for someone pushing a stroller. A handheld massaging showerhead and bench can help someone with fatigue or balance issues, but also feels great for the tired athlete post-marathon."

These simple design choices allow people to safely and independently age in their homes, which can ultimately lead to greater health and happiness. "Wellness in design comes in different

ways," says Mitch Kunik, founding partner of Affinity Architects in Boca Raton, who recently completed Ocean Reef's Residence Club, designed exclusively for aging in place. "Yes, it can be physical products like carpet, cabinetry, and paint, but [it's] also how you plan architecture around the lifestyle. It's designing a surrounding that allows a person to function within their own home and apartment as they age." These are often mechanical choices. A door lever rather than a standard doorknob is easier to grip. A master bedroom closet without doors or steps removes potential obstacles. Installing electrical outlets at a certain height reduces the need to bend down to access them.

At the GWI symposium, a top senior research fellow discussed how a few years ago this concept was only strongly recognized by a select industry group and yet to be understood by the general public, builders, developers, and investors. Post-pandemic, design that includes wellness architecture is a goal for many—whether at home, at work, or on vacation. "The recent pandemic has heightened that awareness," says Fitzsimons. "There's an urgency to implement greater wellness and health and safety initiatives across all sectors." ◀◀

ABOVE: RELATED CO.'S 360 ROSEMARY, WEST PALM BEACH'S NEWEST OFFICE BUILDING, WAS CURATED WITH SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND ENVIRONMENT-FORWARD FEATURES.