

# Workplace Insights

## Highlights of the Greenbuild 2017 International Conference



source: [www.https://www.greenbuildexpo.com/en/home.html](https://www.greenbuildexpo.com/en/home.html)

The Greenbuild 2017 International Conference & Expo, held in Chicago this past November, featured presentations covering every aspect of sustainability, health and wellness. The following are the key highlights from the sessions attended by Hixson:

- **The Wellness/Energy Nexus - A Case for Effective Design.** This session, led by engineers, architects and a member of the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI), looked in depth at how the WELL Building Standard is being used by designers to incorporate healthy living concepts into the built environment. One key idea is the notion of holistic well-being, including elements of design, operations, and behavior. As companies begin to more fully implement wellness concepts, it is important to consider elements of lighting, air and water quality, and other environmental factors, as well as conservation of core sustainable elements such as energy, water, and materials. Employers who focus on healthy, active, engaging environments for their associates are in position to unlock the greatest value from these improvement strategies.
- **The Great Indoors: Green Building and Health Outcomes.** Session presenters Gary Adamkiewicz of Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Lauren Baumann, Vice President at New Ecology Inc., outlined the results of a study of health outcomes comparing newly designed sustainable housing to legacy developments at a public housing complex in South Boston. Working with the Boston Housing Authority, developers and study organizers were able to intervene in multiple ways – through the place (e.g., maintenance, renovation), the people (e.g., education, clinical intervention), and policies (e.g., purchasing, regulatory). Using approaches that can be translated to the commercial real estate world, including reducing chemical exposures for occupants, improving indoor air quality, and incorporating design strategies that encourage active living, the project succeeded in demonstrating positive health outcomes for the occupants of the sustainable development. In addition, the new development showed significant reductions in energy and water consumption through better design and improved occupant awareness and behaviors.
- **Fitwel - Driving Occupant Health and Wellness in the Built Environment.** One of the newest wellness concepts, Fitwel, was explained in this session by key experts on the topic, including presenters from the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), two of the organizations responsible for the creation of the standard. Similar to the WELL Building Standard, the Fitwel Certification System draws from a wealth of health-based research to provide strategies targeted toward improving workplace design and policy. Fitwel is designed to be easily understood by, and accessible to, building managers and operators as well as design professionals. Implementation of both WELL and

Fitwel is intended to create a healthier, happier, more productive future for building occupants. Each system has advantages, so evaluating which to use for your project is a critical first step to success.

- **Biophilic Design Interactive: Research, Tools & Tech.** Experts in this presentation shared ideas and examples of biophilic design – the concept of incorporating the natural world into the built environment – to better promote its adoption by attendees. Consider this: If the WELL Building Standard is the trunk of a tree, biophilia is one branch that can help achieve WELL Certification. Case studies presented in the session highlighted theories of biophilic design and implementable strategies, including environmental features, light and space requirements, and the purposeful use of natural patterns and processes. Key tip: Creating even small natural corridors/installations on project sites can help reverse the loss of habitat and species destruction, as well as creating localized natural environments for employees to experience. For more on biophilic design, visit [www.living-future.org/biophilic-design/](http://www.living-future.org/biophilic-design/).
- **LEED and Industrial Facilities - Raising the Bar Globally.** In this session, attendees learned about green industrial and food manufacturing projects underway internationally, and what it takes to achieve certification under LEED Version 4. Today, some of the world's biggest organizations are seeking LEED Certification for their facilities. The biggest takeaways? Certification levels beyond LEED Silver in this sector require strong organizational commitments to achieve. Early engagement with the design team and a critical focus on energy savings are two of the fundamental keys to success under LEED Version 4. With nearly 6,000 industrial and manufacturing projects registered or certified, LEED remains a highly-recognized, but challenging means of demonstrating leadership in sustainable manufacturing practices.

These are only brief highlights from just a few of the sessions attended. To learn more, contact Hixson.

## Continuous Improvement

At Hixson, our Continuous Improvement program is designed to actively educate our associates, as well as promote and pursue quality and process improvements in an effort to deliver successful projects and great project experiences for our clients. The following are some of the features of and/or recent activities enabled by Hixson's dedication to Continuous Improvement:

**Future Offices 2018**  
New York City, NY  
January 29-31, 2018

**Greenbuild International  
Conference & Expo**  
Chicago, IL  
November 14-16, 2017

**CoreNet Global Summit**  
Seattle, WA  
November 5-7, 2017



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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In his role as Project Architect at Hixson, Matthew Spangler is responsible for programming, design, and coordination primarily for projects in the firm's corporate workplace and retail business units. Matthew holds both a Masters in Architecture and a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Cincinnati.

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