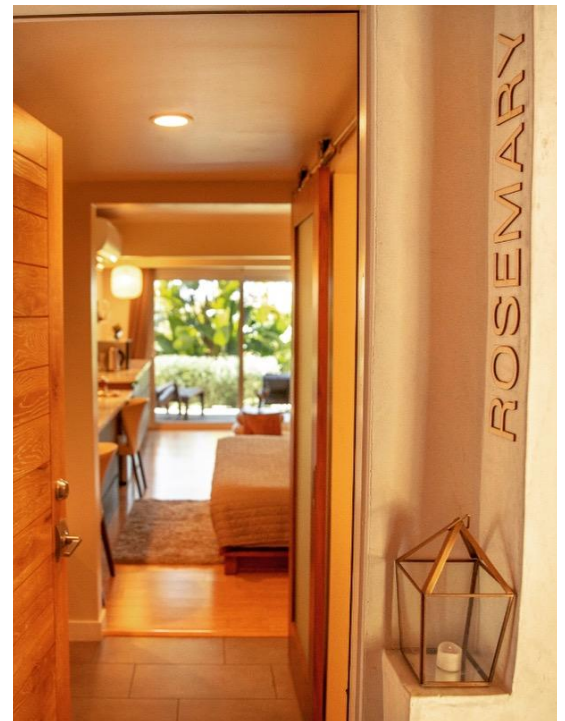


## WELL Story: Inn at Moonlight Beach

By Tori Shepherd

The [Inn at Moonlight Beach](#) in Encinitas, California recently became the first hospitality project in the world to achieve WELL Certification, and did so through the highest commitment to wellness – WELL Certification at the Platinum level. To add to these impressive marks of global leadership, the Inn at Moonlight Beach also became the first WELL Certified building in San Diego county; thus promoting an increased focus on wellness within their local community.

This past July, I was fortunate enough to be welcomed by [Shangwen Chiu Kennedy](#) and her extended “family” - her husband Mike, the Inn staff and the WELL team - as they celebrated their achievement of WELL Certification. I am pleased to share insights from Shangwen (owner and WELL project administrator) and WELL consultant [Chloé Lauer](#) about their experience implementing WELL into the development of the Inn.



**As both the owner and designer of the Inn at Moonlight Beach, what inspired you to get involved with the WELL building movement?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* As an urban designer, property developer and entrepreneur, I'm committed to creating sustainable housing-community living environments that enhance the quality of life and well-being of their occupants. Ultimately, my vision is that these places will enable people to experience joy and belonging in a global family. In 2010, I began creating co-living houses in the Boston, Massachusetts area... My commitment to building these houses was to create environments that support well being.

When I first learned of the WELL Building Standard from a builder and friend who develops top tier luxury hotels such as Aman and six senses resorts in 2016, I got tears in my eyes at the thought that there was a standard that I would have devoted my life to creating if it didn't already exist. I immediately began my work to become a WELL Accredited Professional.

When we purchased the Inn at Moonlight Beach later that year, knowing that it would require a major remodel, I jumped at the opportunity to implement the standard on this property. It was then a surprise to learn that no other hotels had yet pursued the standard in earnest. Apparently someone needed to lead the way.

**From your perspective, what trends are driving the healthy building movement in the Hospitality sector?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* More and more people are becoming conscious of the importance of good nutrition, a healthy and active lifestyle, managing stress and cultivating peace of mind. People are now showing that they value being connected to something bigger than themselves. In turn, travel habits are becoming less about indulgence and escape, and more about connection and nurturing self. The notion of the Conscious Destination is new to the lexicon, and something we are proud to provide.



*Caption: The Inn at Moonlight Beach creates an immersive biophilic experience for their visitors, which promotes mental health and nourishment.*

**Congratulations again on the impressive achievement of WELL Certification at the Platinum level. From your perspective, what are the most exciting aspects of WELL within the project?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* Given my background in landscape architecture, it was important to me that in addition to the building itself, the land surrounding it should also be *well*. Our implementation of the biodynamic urban farm is the fulfillment of that vision. It envelopes the property and helps to create a unique environment for the building to sit within. Biodynamic farming treats the entire land area as a living organism that is self-sustaining and generates its own vitality. This enables our WELL Building project to be more than just a building--it is a whole environment that extends the elements of the WELL standard outward.

The productive landscape directly offers food that supports the element of Nutrition, at the same time it provides a powerful sensory experience: the beautiful scenery, the shifting aromas of various medicinal and traditional herbs, even the surprising sounds of frogs that have made our fountain a home. One of the reasons the Inn really works as a wellness destination is the immersive experience of biophilia that it creates.

*Chloé Lauer:* My favorite feature is the Biodynamic Urban Farm, which the Inn received credit for as an AAP for Nourishment Feature 49: Responsible Food production. It's just amazing to see over 50 fruits and vegetables flourishing due to the many months of soil improvements that Shangwen and her team invested in. Guests are in awe as they see and taste the delicious, beautiful things grown on site.



## Which elements of WELL within the Inn do you think guests benefit from most?

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* I think the most obvious and tangible elements of the experience come from the Air, Water, and Nourishment concepts. People notice the drinkable clean water from every tap, the meticulous air filtration, and our healthy organic breakfast basket, complete with nutritional labels.

However, I think the most powerful aspect of the experience is in the category of Mind. Our health and wellness library, medicinal herbal tea collections in the lounge, our meditation deck, various gardens throughout the property, and the visual design and biophilia elements of the Standard contribute to an awareness of health and well being for guests that is impactful.

Also critical to this aspect are the employee policies that contribute to the happiness and well being of our staff. The guests may not be directly aware of this, but they are interacting with people who are happy to be doing what they are doing, and that, in turn, rubs off on them.

*Chloé Lauer:* One of the most exciting aspects of the project is how many people will be exposed to the WELL Standard via the Inn. When people stay at the Inn, they immediately experience an “exhale.” There is a sense of peace and serenity that is palpable throughout the site, and guests wonder what created that experience. WELL is a foundational element, to be sure, and something that the Innkeepers and Owner are sure to point out as they welcome guests and show them the property.



*Caption: WELL Certification has helped foster a culter of happiness and wellbeing amongst the staff, who actively maintain the health-oriented operations and protocols at the Inn.*

**You were able to achieve a high number of WELL feature requirements. Were there any WELL features that surprised you or expanded your thinking on amenity offerings in the Inn?**

*Chloé Lauer:* Definitely. I was personally particularly interested in the Nourishment features and the interface with the guest experience. I hadn't thought how helpful something simple like signage to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables could be but I do see that it has a positive impact! Plus, the veggies are often harvested directly from the biodynamic farm, which inspires the guests even more to give them a try.

**Were there other wellness amenities that you incorporated into your design and operations that did not contribute towards WELL Certification?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* The maker's station, where guests can create planters with herbs, vegetables, and succulents is an unusual concept for our industry that enables people to engage the creative process and have wellness-supporting items that they bring back to their home. Most importantly, we want them to not just experience wellness here, but to take wellness and bring it into their own homes.

**What challenges did you encounter and how did you solve them?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* The Fitness element was a challenge for us, as our facility is not sufficiently large to accommodate much in the way of fitness equipment, let alone a dedicated gym. We were able to utilize [nearby] hiking trails and beach workout offerings that guests could take on at their leisure. We like to say that we are a resort destination, and Downtown Encinitas is our resort.



*Caption: Guests can pick up yoga mats for use on their private deck or the local beach, as well as join group classes on the Yoga Deck.*

**How has the community responded or engaged with the Inn's WELL Certification at this point?**

*Chloé Lauer:* The community has been very receptive and interested in the WELL Certification process. Many people (community and guests) leave feeling inspired to incorporate the features of the Inn in their own homes. Shangwen has received a number of requests to design homes for people -- so far, she has declined as she's focused on running the Inn and developing another property.

**What advice would you give to other hotels or hospitality projects interested in pursuing WELL?**

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* A WELL hospitality project is really about a mindset that sees potential benefits to the guests before and beyond anything else. You can't quantify the value of that.

*Chloé Lauer:*

It's possible! Seek council from someone who has gone through the process, keep going, don't give up. Schedule time to move forward at least twice a week so that you continue to build momentum, and take your WELL coach up on any and all opportunities to connect. Celebrate the little wins.

*Shangwen Chiu Kennedy:* My "advice" would be, trust the standard and your Support team and what you yourself are up to providing for the guests. This works, and yes, it is good business.