

at home

# CAN YOUR HOUSE MAKE YOU HEALTHY?

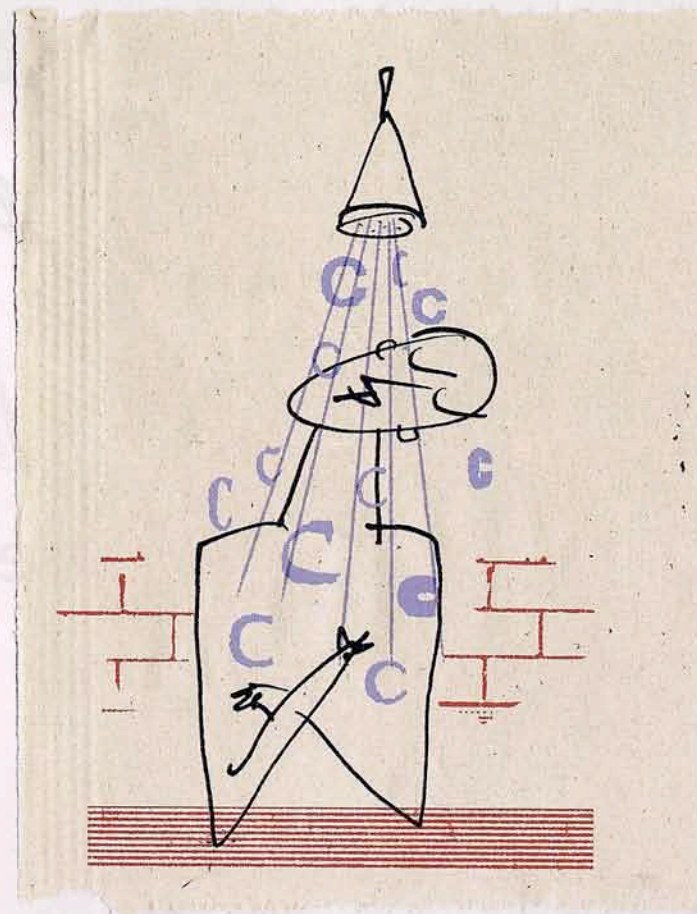
Yes, says the Delos company. It's making ecofriendly something personal. **BY AIMEE LEE BALL**

**A**re you still waking up to a traditional alarm clock and showering with ordinary municipal water? That's so old school. In the brave new world of "wellness real estate," the alarm clock simulates dawn with birdsong for a more natural wake-up call; the shower water is infused with vitamin C to neutralize chlorine; the lighting helps optimize your circadian rhythms; and every room can receive task-specific aromatherapy.

Such salubrious features are among the draws of the country's first Delos apartment building, a former parking garage in New York City's Greenwich Village that's been divided into five residences. (The crowning glory is a 10,000-square-foot penthouse with a solarium on the roof deck, expected to sell for \$4,000 per square foot, along with the city's first million-dollar parking space.) The healthy living amenities include a juicer built into the ergonomically designed kitchen cabinet and a reflexology path built into the bathroom floor, but the hidden assets are all-important: electrostatic particle filters and ultraviolet sanitizers to clean the air, Sheetrock lining the walls for soundproofing and "forgiving floors" with antimicrobial layers and cork for lumbar support.

Delos is the brainchild of Morad Fareed, a former executive at Starwood Hotels who developed the ecofriendly Element brand and started thinking, Why stop at accommodations that are good for the environment? How about something that's good for the guests? Cofounding the company Delos with that goal in mind, he set about creating partnerships with some of the world's leading scientists, technology whizzes and think tanks, including the renowned Cleveland Clinic and the Clinton Global Initiative.

The company has ambitious plans to expand beyond residences: Healthy offices and schools are in the works, and last October the first 42 Stay Well hotel rooms were unveiled at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, where holistic guru Deepak Chopra greets guests from the TV with tutorials about how tanning affects the brain, using



acupuncture instead of Prozac and eating pink food for fewer wrinkles.

The idea of vitamin-infused showers and concern for a good night's sleep in Sin City was improbable enough to be spoofed on *Saturday Night Live* when the rooms were announced. "Vegas is a stage," says the 33-year-old Fareed by way of explanation. "Everybody goes through Vegas. Could we have chosen a five-star hotel in Manhattan? Sure, and we will, but Vegas is a global mall for new ideas and innovation. If it were five years ago, we would have done it in Dubai."

In both private homes and hotel rooms, many of the added wellness benefits are invisible. Every surface, from sink to doorknob, has a photocatalytic coating that breaks down

bacteria and volatile organic compounds (VOCs are what make paint smell bad), so housekeepers must be trained to operate special cleaning equipment. Both air and water are run through advanced purification systems to reduce allergens and toxins. And there are barriers to the electromagnetic fields from power sources that can disrupt sleep.

Delos started out with almost 350 possibilities and narrowed down the list to 80 doable ideas, eliminating the unwieldy, the unproven and the outright bogus. (Massage chairs didn't make the final cut. It seems that actual human hands are necessary to instill the benefits of a rubdown.)

In evaluating possible health benefits from the worlds of alternative and complementary medicine, top consider-

ation was given to studies published in reputable journals with a large sample size and replicable results. And some research confirms what many people know anecdotally and experientially: It's hard to get up in the morning when it's dark outside, even if you've never heard of seasonal affective disorder, and your feet hurt after standing too long on a hard floor in the kitchen.

"There are a lot of bad studies about aromatherapy," says Dana Pillai, the company's director of product development, who comes from Columbia University's Earth Institute. "It's not going to cure a disease, but integrated into a traditional medical cure, it does seem to be very palliative. It speeds up recovery. Given that you are getting good treatment, it's part of a holistic approach."

**C**uriously, wellness has been incorporated into just about every area of consumer products—food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture—but not into real estate at this scale until now. Delos is staking out the intersection of two of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries: real estate (\$100-plus trillion) and wellness (now \$2 trillion globally and growing at about 20 percent a year, despite the beleaguered economy). "We're not beholden to any grant, to any time horizon, to any investors," says Fareed. "We have full rein to investigate the universe."

Future projects may include retrofitting a house in Chappaqua, New York, owned by a nice retired couple named Clinton. The former president was impressed with his tour of a Delos loft in New York's chic Meatpacking District, so "we're talking," says Fareed. "The spaces where people are going to spend a lot of time should nourish their minds and their bodies. For most people, a home is the biggest investment they make in their life, and investing in yourself is the most important thing you can do. This is a movement, a game-changing shift. This is saying, 'Let's be intelligent about every single thing we design, because we can be.'"

The new Delos building is at 66 E. 11th St. in New York. For more information, go to [delosliving.com](http://delosliving.com).