



Case Study

# Brixmor Embraces Green Building Certifications with Fitwel and LEED



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# Brixmor Property Group wanted to create a workspace to enhance employee well-being while delivering the energy efficiencies it embraces as part of its environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives

## UL's team helped Brixmor gain the insights needed to create a workspace that supports health, wellness and energy efficiency at its flagship location just outside Philadelphia

In 2019, Brixmor Property Group acquired Plymouth Square, a shopping center located in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, at the same intersection with another Brixmor property and only minutes from the company's largest office. The center had a large vacant space at the back of the property.

Wanting a workspace where health and wellness were top priority, Brixmor leaders began planning. "We wanted to provide the best of the best in terms of health and well-being for our team," Buchakjian explained. "We thought it would be a good opportunity to leverage both Fitwel and LEED certification requirements to achieve exactly that."

"One of the cultural tenets that our company operates by is: 'Great real estate matters, but great people matter even more,'" added Kristen Moore, SVP Marketing for Brixmor. "So, a lot of the decisions we make are geared toward supporting our employees' health and well-being."

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*"This was a great opportunity to relocate our team of nearly 200 employees to a property that we own and control," said Haig Buchakjian, EVP, Operations, Brixmor.*

*"So, we undertook the development of 45,000-square-foot of space within the center to build a premier office for our team."*

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# Designing spaces that enhance employee health, well-being and energy efficiency

Brixmor faced unique challenges in pursuing its green building certifications. “As a triple net lease real estate landowner, it’s not easy for us to undertake building certifications when, for the most part, the tenants own and control the space that they lease from us,” said Buchakjian. “In this case, it’s our space for our team, so it was an opportunity to optimize the space, minimize our impact on the environment and create something meaningful for our employees.”

Seeking Fitwel and LEED certifications was an ambitious goal, but Brixmor was committed to achieving both, so company leaders engaged UL’s team to guide the process. “We did not have much experience in this area, so we needed advisors to help us navigate applying for the certifications,” recalled Buchakjian. “We learned how going through the process can actually help make better design decisions. We worked collaboratively, which I thought was helpful.”

To make the most of their new space as they pursued Fitwel and LEED certifications, Brixmor engaged UL for energy modeling, Fitwel advisory and LEED advisory services.

UL’s experts in each aspect of the project were there to support Brixmor every step of the way, participating in design and construction meetings and keeping Brixmor management updated on the credits being pursued for Fitwel and LEED certifications.

Brixmor opted to engage UL’s whole-building energy modeling advisory services for the project as a basis for energy usage and decision-making, which can be helpful when done in tandem with applying for LEED certification. UL uses energy modeling software to estimate energy usage based on different design options. When incorporated early in the iterative design process, designers and engineers can use an energy model to project energy use based on different fixture and HVAC options. These energy use estimates allowed Brixmor to make design decisions, such as choosing lighting and HVAC options with higher efficiency ratings, to maximize system efficiency without compromising performance.

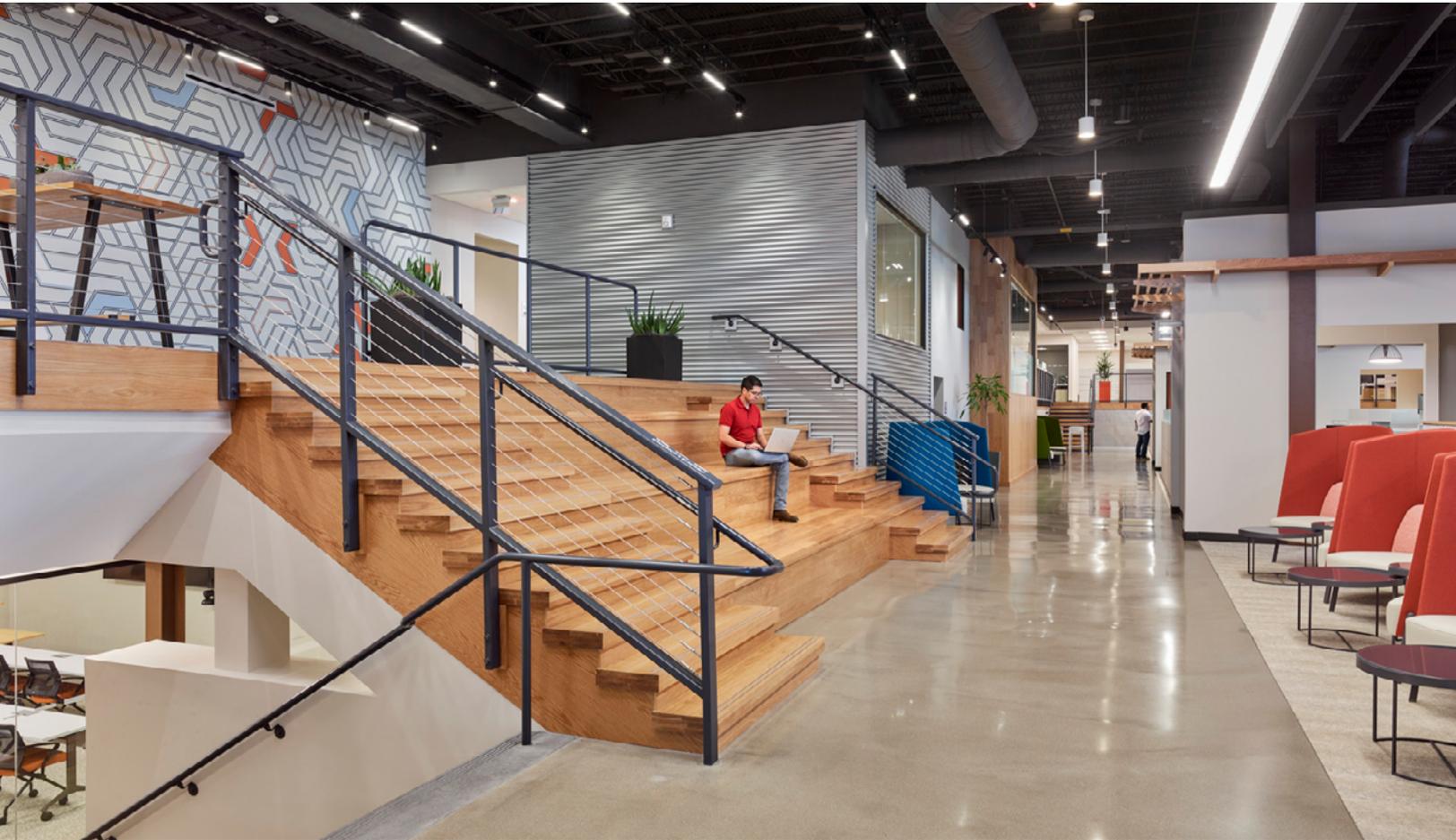


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*“I found the team very responsive, and they were always there when we needed to get on calls and resolve issues and questions quickly and easily,” said Buchakjian.*

*“We were pleased that UL could provide all three of these services in-house, making coordination of the multiple parts of the project much simpler.”*

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## UL collaborates with Brixmor to help achieve Fitwel and LEED certifications

While they are both considered green building programs, the LEED certification centers on aspects such as energy, water efficiency and environmentally responsible construction practices, while the Fitwel certification concentrates on the health and wellness of building occupants.

Some of Brixmor's design choices benefit employees and also fit their ESG goals of achieving optimum energy efficiency. "We bought high-efficiency HVAC equipment, plus an energy management system that controls airflow in zones, allowing us to maximize for comfort and energy efficiency," Buchakjian said.

"We also built into our plan large garage doors off our café area. When the weather allows, those doors are open throughout the middle of the day, so fresh air circulates throughout the space. The indoor/outdoor connectivity promotes a healthy mindset for employees."

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*"The big benefit Brixmor got from pursuing both LEED and Fitwel together and engaging us pretty early on is that we were able to highlight some opportunities at the design stage where they could choose certain lighting fixtures and HVAC equipment that would earn points toward both certifications," said Sean McCrady, Global Director of Assets and Sustainability, Real Estate and Properties at UL.*

*"Because Brixmor was proactive and got UL on board early, we were really able to make some strides and lock in points," McCrady added.*

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# Crossing the finish line: Brixmor achieves both Fitwel and LEED certifications

Ultimately, UL's experts conducted a series of tests at the Brixmor Plymouth Square office to help the company file certification submissions, including on-site visits, visual inspections and performance testing for indoor air quality, and more.

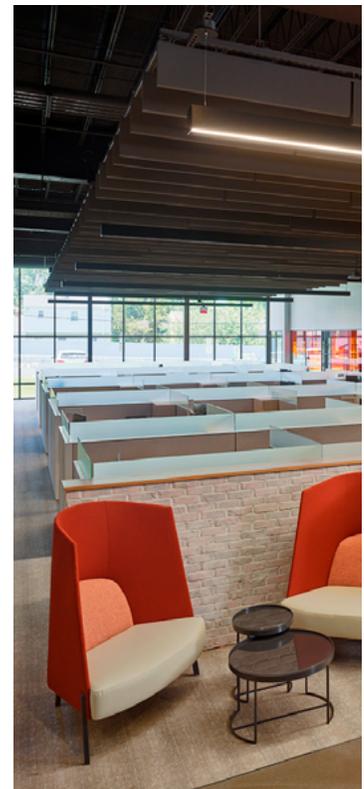
UL's services for Brixmor's Plymouth Square office included:

**Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Testing** – Following indoor air quality testing by the UL team, the Brixmor Plymouth Square office qualified for Path 1 (One Point) for LEED ID + C v4.1 Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) credit: Indoor Air Quality Assessment, Option 2 Air Testing. The office space was tested for airborne particulate matter measuring PM10 and PM2.5, as well as ozone (O3), carbon monoxide (CO), and total volatile organic compounds (TVOCs), and passed all parameters.

**Energy modeling** – UL's team created a 3D energy model with software that estimates projected energy use based upon different fixture and HVAC choices that helped guide Brixmor's design decisions to maximize efficiency without compromising performance.

**LEED advisory** – The UL LEED advisory team helped Brixmor pursue LEED Interior Design and Construction (ID+C) v4 certification. The UL team worked with Brixmor and the design and construction teams throughout the entirety of the project to advise on the LEED certification submission process. Brixmor achieved Silver Certification.

**Fitwel advisory** – The UL Fitwel advisory team helped Brixmor pursue Fitwel Commercial Interiors v2.1 certification. Brixmor achieved a Fitwel One Star Rating.

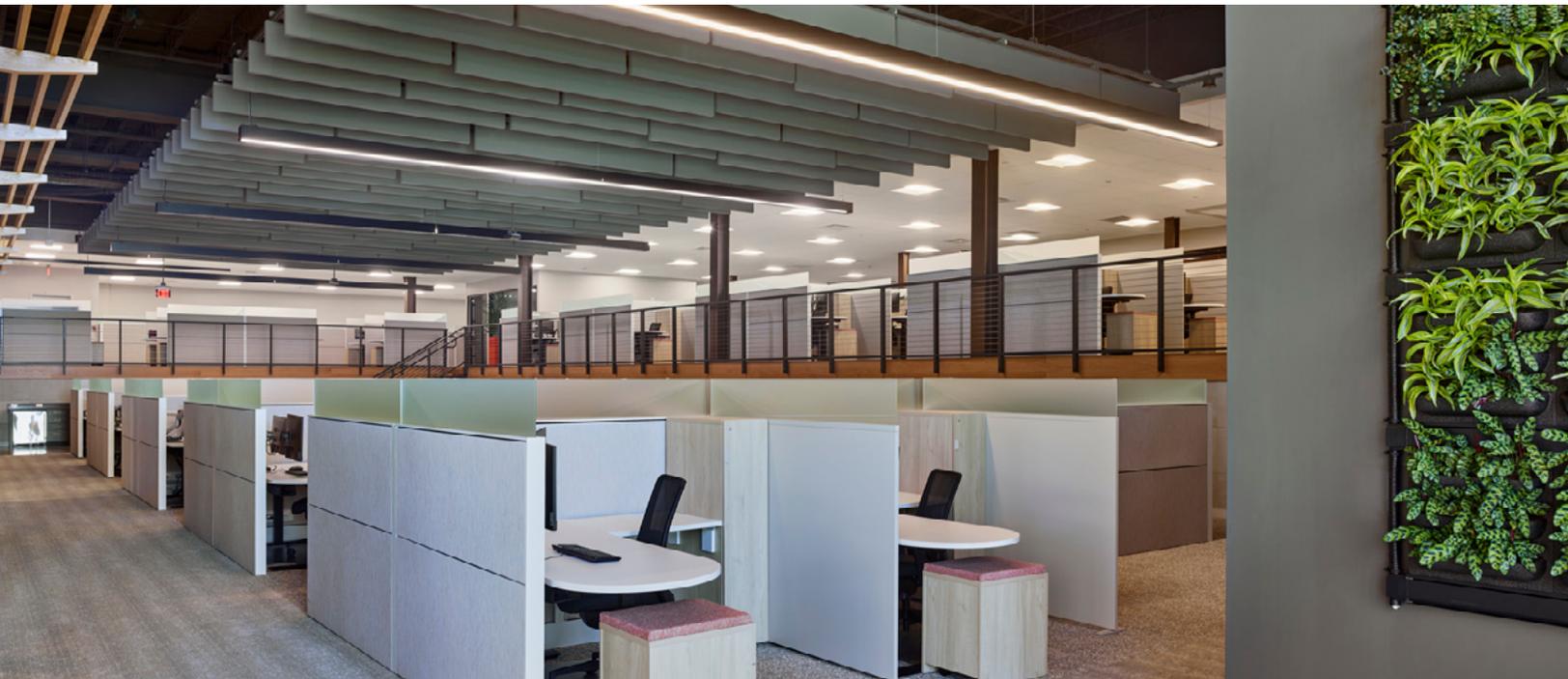


# Benefits of combining green building certifications in a built environment

Brixmor leadership knew from the outset of the project that they would pursue both LEED and Fitwel certifications but may have achieved other benefits along the way.

“The office is energy-efficient and cost-effective to run,” said Buchakjian. “While I’m glad we were awarded LEED, I’m even more proud of what we accomplished to earn the Fitwel certification, as it led to what I think are more tangible benefits for the employees who work in the space.”

“Feedback from employees has been overwhelmingly positive,” Buchakjian said. “Our space is significantly enhanced in terms of, for example, the live plant walls throughout, the lighting design, the energy-efficient HVAC systems, the connectivity to the outdoors and all the amenities.”



Learn more about the [Sustainability Services for Healthy Buildings](#)



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