

Enterprise Green Communities, the standard for sustainable futures, is the only national green building program designed explicitly for affordable housing construction. Green building practices lead to healthy, efficient and environmentally responsible affordable homes, and promote equitable development by giving residents a voice in creating their communities.

Project Overview

Gardenside at the Villages of East Lake is the fifth phase of an ongoing renovation and expansion of the Villages of East Lake, a mixed-income rental community. The continued growth of this community is made possible in part by low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC) through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The project team certified the property to the Enterprise Green Communities 2015 Criteria, working with SK Collaborative, a group with proven experience in building techniques for efficient sustainability, to earn a total of 65 points, placing it in the top five of Georgia projects certified to the 2015 criteria and in the top 25% of all projects in the United States.

Supporting Resident Health

Columbia Residential prioritized healthy living in this project, recognizing that the wellbeing of residents is an ongoing need connected to secure, affordable housing. To that end, Gardenside at the Villages of East Lake achieved optional Criteria 1.2b, creating a [Health Action Plan](#) in collaboration with public health professionals and community stakeholders to implement and monitor achievable actions enhancing resident health. While Gardenside was one of only 1.2% of 2015 Enterprise Green Criteria-certified projects to pursue the HAP, the process was already in alignment with Columbia's mission to provide resident health services and not far removed from their existing practices. In doing so, they partnered with local stakeholders, the Georgia Health Policy Center, and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University to compose a health profile for the community, supported by a health scan report of the surrounding area. These initial assessments allowed the project team to identify specific, relevant issues and needs facing future residents.

“To date, this work has connected 149 residents at the Villages with health services and has helped 92% of residents with chronic disease management plans reach at least one treatment goal.”

Jim Grauley, CEO, Columbia Residential

To address these needs, Columbia Residential also collaborated with the East Lake Foundation and its East Lake Healthy Connections (ELHC)



Gardenside fulfills the EGC 1.3a Design for Resilience with optional EGC 3.6 Surface Stormwater Management, through an underground reservoir to mitigate issues from Atlanta's seasonal downpours. And in alignment with the focus on resident health and wellbeing, Gardenside is a smoke-free building, which also fulfills EGC 7.16.

Project Information

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Project Type: New Construction

Construction Cost: \$15,338,000

Property Information: 153,000 SF; 108 apartments; a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units with 70% for 50-60% AMI.

Project Team

Property Developer & Owner: [Columbia Residential](#) and [East Lake Foundation](#)

Architect: [JHP Architecture](#)

Green Building Consultant: [SK Collaborative](#)



Outdoor amenities, which contribute to resident well-being, include a community garden, covered picnic area, and playground (not pictured), with accessible paths for all residents.

program to create a Healthy Housing Initiative plan that would support accessible, relevant care to the community. At the East Lake Family YMCA, which oversees management of the ELHC program, and is less than 1.5 miles away from Gardenside, residents have access to a range of on-site preventative health programming provided by trained Family Health Advocates (FHAs), such as regular screenings for diabetes (including blood pressure checks), vision and dental for children, and flu shots. Additionally, FHAs can help families secure affordable health insurance, connect them to medical homes, and provide educational programs to address chronic disease management. These measures were specifically targeted to the gaps in community health as identified by the health scan, and they are all offered at no cost to residents.

Finally, to monitor and evaluate the ongoing progress of these measures, Columbia worked with the East Lake Foundation to develop a strategy for tracking participation in HHI programs as well as actual health outcomes of participating residents. This aggregated data will be reported periodically to the Georgia DCA, and consistently used for in-house evaluations of program success, so that they can be continually tailored to best meet the evolving needs of the community.

Brownfield site remediation

Columbia Residential also pursued optional Criterion 2.11, developing a designated “brownfield” site — a property that may be contaminated by hazardous chemicals or other industrial byproducts that may pose a risk to public health — with approved protective measures and cleanup efforts. Infill development reduces pressure on undeveloped land, which is in short supply in urban areas. The Gardenside project improved the neighborhood fabric by developing a previously empty, commercial lot into low-rise, garden-style apartments that provided much-needed additional affordable housing in a rapidly gentrifying area.

Previously the site of a dry cleaning establishment, the empty property lot was designated as a brownfield by the state of Georgia. Columbia Residential designed a cleanup program to develop the site with approved protective measures and cleanup efforts, also a process already in line with the team’s goals and experience. The contaminated soil was safely removed, contained and remediated. The buildings were designed with a vapor mitigation system, including a plastic vapor barrier between the foundation and soil to prevent moisture or chemicals from passing through. Naturally occurring radon was present at actionable levels, so the buildings were designed with radon ventilation systems as well as long-term plans for the active operation and maintenance of the system.



With all-electric buildings, ENERGY STAR-certified appliances, and WaterSense fixtures that offer at least 20% water savings, Gardenside is positioned to be Columbia’s top performer in terms of energy and water use.

Implemented Optional Criteria

- 1.2b Health Action Plan
- 2.4 Compact Development
- 2.8 Access to Public Transportation
- 2.11 Brownfield Site
- 3.6 Surface Stormwater Management
- 4.3 Leaks and Water Metering
- 6.5 Certified, Salvaged and Engineered Wood Products
- 6.10 Asthmagene-free Materials
- 7.4 Elimination of Combustion within the Conditioned Space
- 7.16 Smoke-Free Building



At least 25% of wood products used in Gardenside, such as the trusses of the Leasing Office and Amenity Building, are engineered framing materials in accordance with optional EGC 6.5, which reduces pressure on old-growth lumber.