



FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES

SHOWCASE PROJECT: FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES: TRAILS AT THE PARK

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

Foundation Communities combines affordable housing with on-site support services to empower its residents to achieve educational success, financial stability, and healthier lifestyles. To limit operational expenses and maximize funds set aside for resident services, Foundation Communities has invested strategically in sustainable buildings over the past 10 years, including constructing LEED®-certified buildings and improving its portfolio through weatherization, green capital improvements, and green operations and maintenance practices.

Trails at the Park is one of 20 properties owned and managed by Foundation Communities in the Austin, Texas region. The multifamily affordable property was designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and is home to 400 low-income individuals. Trails at the Park is an ideal neighborhood for families, as it is located next to a city park with hiking trails and is within walking distance of the local middle school.



SECTOR TYPE

Multifamily

LOCATION

Austin, Texas

PROJECT SIZE

209,000 Square Feet

SOLUTIONS

Similar to Foundation Communities' housing-plus-services model, its approach to sustainability is buildings-plus-people, recognizing that green buildings cannot realize maximum energy savings without energy-conscious residents and staff members. A 2013 grant from the St. David's Foundation allowed Foundation Communities to pilot this approach at Trails at the Park, combining physical building upgrades with programming to develop a culture of sustainability.

The primary physical building upgrades were:

- Lighting retrofits, including new energy-efficient exterior lighting and LED change-outs;
- ENERGY STAR® appliances;
- Digital thermostats in resident units;
- Programmable NEST® thermostats in community spaces;
- Faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads;
- Solar screens; and
- Upgraded hot water heaters (converted aquatherm to a split-system heat pump with electric resistance backup).

The primary people-focused programming included:

- Regular environmental education for students in after-school and summer programming;
- Recycling initiatives, including door-to-door education and recycling bin distribution;
- “Visually green” design elements in the leasing office and learning center (recycling stations, up-cycled artwork, community amenity map, green features signage, and a new garden);
- Staged resident units with green items (recycling magnet and bin, water conservation decals, thermostat instruction sheet, and healthy cleaning supplies);
- National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) Green Property Management Credential provided to all property managers and lead maintenance staff through a one-time 16-hour on-site training followed by four hours per year of continuing education; and
- Updated Green Operations and Maintenance standards and policies.



Finally, Foundation Communities began tracking energy and water consumption at Trails at the Park with Energy ScoreCards, allowing for continued monitoring of the property's energy and performance. As a result of Foundation Communities' strategy of combining a comprehensive operations and maintenance plan with ongoing staff and resident engagement and targeted physical building upgrades, the property has achieved significant energy and water savings. Looking ahead, Trails at the Park will receive new low-flow toilets, irrigation system improvements, and staff education with Energy ScoreCards.

Since implementation of the Trails at the Park upgrades, the approach has been replicated in several other properties within Foundation Communities' portfolio. By actively participating in the Better Buildings Challenge, Foundation Communities hopes to support affordable housing developers nationwide by offering a roadmap to comprehensive environmental sustainability practices.

OTHER BENEFITS

Low-income families spend a larger proportion of their income on utility bills, and have weaker social and economic safety nets to treat health conditions that are aggravated by poor indoor air quality. Foundation Communities mitigates this disadvantage by providing high-quality affordable housing that supports resident success in multiple ways, including:

1. Increasing overall housing affordability by providing energy- and water-efficient homes with lower utility costs and greater transit connectivity;
2. Creating healthier indoor environments and empowering families to make choices resulting in safer indoor air; and
3. Encouraging a culture where residents feel pride in their community through beautified public spaces and design features.

Utility consumption data is whole-building, but cost savings data only reflect owner-paid accounts. Baseline year water costs are measured using 2016 water rates.

Annual Energy Use

(Source EUI)

Baseline(2013)



Actual(2016)



Energy Savings

15%

Annual Energy Cost

Baseline(2013)



Actual(2016)



Cost Savings

\$3,000



Trails at the Park