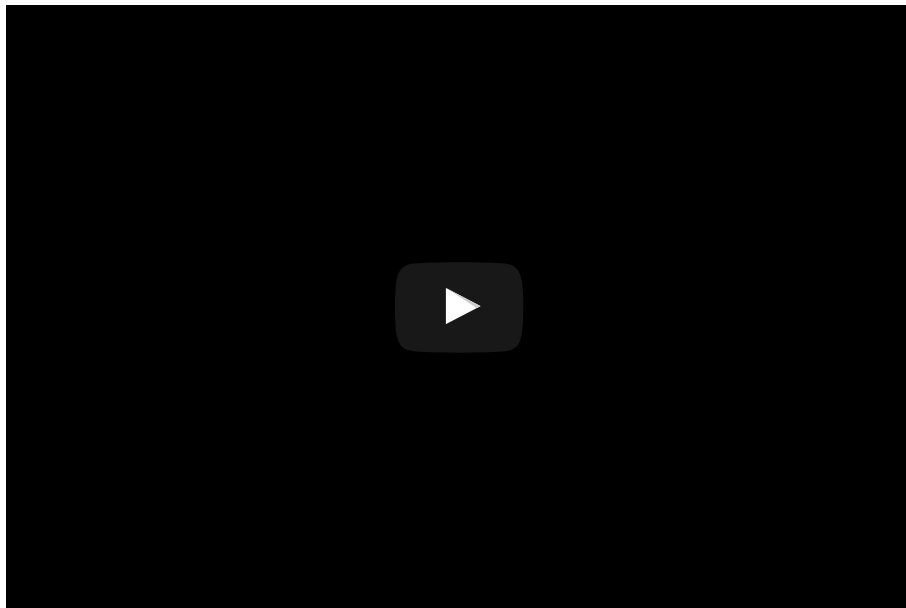




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Encore! Tampa Takes Big Strides Toward Sustainability

MARCIA BIGGS | TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2013



Signs of clean green progress are taking shape at Encore!, downtown Tampa's heralded 30-acre redevelopment project and one of the first master-planned developments in Florida to seek LEED Neighborhood Development certification.

A state-of-the-art stormwater treatment system, central chiller plant and solar park join The Ella, the first of four sustainably built apartment buildings, to be completed in the public-private venture between the [Tampa Housing Authority](#) and the [Banc of America Community Development Corporation](#).

Visitors to the 12-block district just north of downtown between Tampa's Central Downtown Business District and Ybor City will find major steps are underway toward "going green."

Across from the fully occupied 160-unit Ella on Ray Charles Boulevard, cranes and construction crews are midway through building the 141-unit Trio apartment building. Just up the street, construction began last month on The Reed, a 158-unit senior apartment residence. These buildings, designed by [Baker Barrios Architects](#) of Tampa join the Tempo, a 203-unit multifamily residence designed by [Bessolo Design Group](#) of St. Petersburg. The Tempo is expected to start construction in early 2014.

Apartment buildings in the mixed-use development are targeted to a multigenerational mix of young professionals, families and active seniors with mixed incomes.

During a property tour in September, members of the [Florida Gulf Coast Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council](#) got a look at the newly completed projects with key members of Encore's development and architectural teams from Baker Barrios, [Cardno TBE](#), [Tampa Bay Trane](#) and the Tampa Housing Authority. Participants walked along pedestrian friendly streets and sidewalks lined with pervious pavers, drought-tolerant landscaping, waste receptacles, bicycle racks and energy efficient street lighting.

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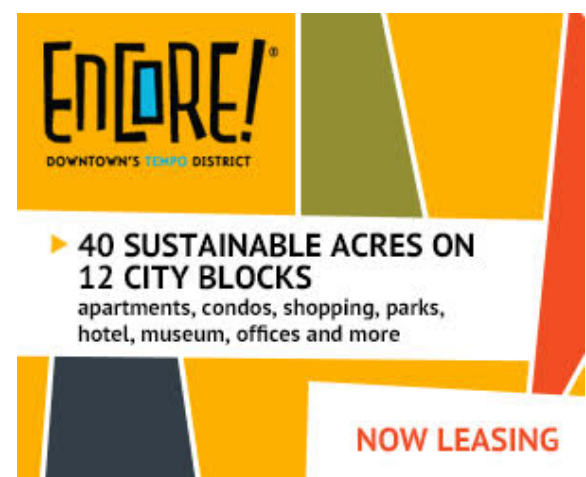
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Reclaiming And Reusing Resources

Reclaiming and reusing, major tenets of urban sustainability, are integral principles of the [Encore! Tampa](#) development. The project reclaims the once-lively Central Avenue Business District, recognized for its musical heritage during the 1930s and '40s. The neighborhood later became home to Central Park Village, a low-income housing project that was demolished in 2007.

"This is reuse of existing land, which is one of the criteria in terms of sustainable communities," says Senior VP and COO LeRoy Moore of the Tampa Housing Authority. "We wanted to push the envelope and create one of the smartest communities we could."

Moore notes that concrete from the demolished buildings was crushed and recycled to use beneath the new streets.

Encore's apartment buildings are designed to U.S. Green Building/LEED® Silver Standards requiring the efficient use of energy, water and other resources as well as minimization of waste and environmental pollution. Standard features include Energy-Star appliances, energy efficient lighting and high efficiency plumbing fixtures such as low-flow showerheads and water-saving toilets.

Reclamation and reuse of natural resources can be seen throughout the community. Encore's stormwater system, for example, captures runoff into an underground vault, filters and recycles it for irrigating the development's landscaping.

"In relation, conventional surface ponds treating the same amount of stormwater would have taken up three lots of this development," says Brian Zarlenga, director of site development with CardnoTBE, the project engineers.

Above the 18,000-square-foot stormwater vault, an inviting "solar park" complete with paver paths and benches offers walkers respite and a view of the downtown skyline. A nearby array of photovoltaic panels will be connected to the Tampa Electric Company (TECO) power grid and is expected to generate some 2,000 kw of power -- enough energy to power all the street lighting in the entire Encore neighborhood. Eventually solar panels will be installed atop each of the buildings to generate enough energy to cover electric costs of lighting each of the building's common areas.

The chiller building next to the solar park will provide one central location for distributing chilled water to the buildings and eliminates the need for rooftop air conditioning units, says Stephen Koontz, VP of Business Development at Tampa Bay Trane. To accomplish pumping condensate from throughout Encore! residential buildings to the chiller plant, more than 6,000 feet of insulated steel pipe will be placed underground around sewage and storm systems.

Even permaculture is embraced at Encore! A 2-acre plot will be converted into an "urban farm" until it's turned over for construction in several years.

"We are looking for a farm partner to work with us to grow organic fresh fruit and vegetables," says Moore. "We'll also want them to engage the residents and educate them on how they can grow their own urban gardens."

Ella residents are already encouraged to try their hand at gardening by growing herbs and vegetables in large concrete planter boxes.

"One of the big hits at the Ella is the home vegetable gardens," says Alan McDonnell, Baker Barrios Architects' senior associate and project manager for the Ella. "It's such a small thing but really improves the quality of life. I think this building shows you can be green, you can be energy efficient and you can be cost efficient as well."

Financial Challenges Ahead

The economic downturn has been challenging in terms of project costs, admits Moore. Since breaking ground in May 2010, "building is getting more and more costly," he says. "Ella, for example, was built for \$28 million, while the fourth



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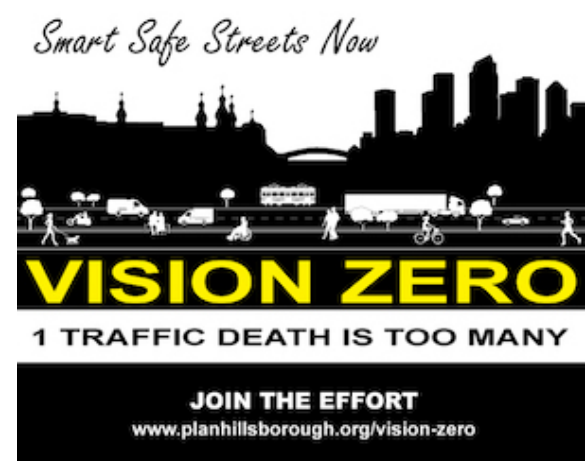
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residential building is running about \$41 million. Per unit costs have gone from roughly \$117,000 per unit at The Ella, to potentially \$140,000 a unit."

With its mix of residential, commercial and retail, Encore! is expected to be home to some 2,500 people and create 1,000 permanent jobs. Retail is vital to the success of Encore's "town center" model and recent news that a Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market is negotiating to become part of the Encore! development has created a buzz.

Under the master plan, the community calls for a grocery store, a bank, pharmacy, commercial offices and a hotel/condominium. The Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market model is a small-scale urban-friendly grocery store averaging 38,000 square feet and includes a pharmacy and bakery/deli. Ground level shops, boutiques and restaurants with outdoor cafes would be part of the mix of the pedestrian-friendly town square.

Completion of the Encore! project is expected to take from five to seven years.

Marcia Biggs is a freelance writer living in Safety Harbor, FL. Comments? Contact [83 Degrees](#).

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