NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMED

BOSTON'S NEW GREEN DISTRICT

By Elizabeth Cutright on Feb 2, 2016 in News

Extravagance and environmentalism don't seem like natural soulmates, but in Boston a new set of developments seamlessly combines the amenities and modern sensibilities of today's luxury living with eco-conscious construction. The result? Affordable, eco-conscious community housing for Boston's middle class that's been dubbed the "Green District."

The brainchild of developer Bruce Percelay, the "Green District" sits at the intersection of Brainerd Road and Redford Street in an area of Boston commonly known as Allston. Conceived as an enormous 500-units housing project with an initial cost of $125 million, the Green District consists of six buildings – The Element, The EDGE, Eco, The Metro, The Matrix, and The Gateway – designed for sustainable living.

The Green District began to take shape in 2012, just after the real estate market crashed and most developers were playing it safe.

"I bet the farm," Percelay admits in an interview with the Boston Globe, but the wager paid off – the three new buildings were sold to the National Development of Newton for $150mil in 2014, with Percelay initially managing the properties. National Development took over the administration of three Green District buildings – the Element, Edge and Eco – earlier this year.

Residents moving into Green District flats will be privy to a slew of environmentally friendly features, from recycled materials to energy and water efficient fixtures and appliances. Outfitted with solar panels, low-flow fixtures, and other green amenities, the Eco, Edge and Element are all LEED certified and priced 30-50% below the city's high-end developments.

Though the rents are lower than most high-end rentals, the amenities are on par with what you'd expect at the most luxurious apartments: gym, rooftop decks, a movie lounge, pet-grooming stations and even a putting green. Priced in a range that starts at $1,700 for a studio and hits a high of a little over $3000 for a 2bedroom/2bath apartment, Green District rents are about on par with Boston's average rent of $2200-2700 for similarly sized living spaces.

The development is also designed to foster a sense of community among its inhabitants, encouraging resident brunches, and offering free yoga classes. Renters can also partake of on-site dry cleaning pick-up, bike storage, and easy access to Boston's mass transit.

"We love our unit," declares one Yelp reviewer of The Edge, "gorgeous floor to ceiling windows with custom blinds, very nice layouts and fixtures, and a sharp modern look. Nothing feels cheap or Ikea-esque. Definitely the closest to having a "home" that I've come to in my years of renting."

"Management has been pretty great and very, very responsive," adds another Yelper, "they get back to you immediately and repairs are made ASAP (same day or next morning). They seem to genuinely care that you are happy with your unit and the building."

Despite the all the extras and bonus activities, the development's commitment to the environment is readily apparent. Denizens of the ECO, the Green District's platinum LEED homage to European design apartments, must sign a "Green Declaration" as part of their lease, stating that they are committed to energy and water efficiency, along with recycling, alternative transportation, and "other eco-conscious practices."

From inception, one thing was clear: sustainability sells. The project's first building, the Element, opened on July 1, 2012, with 70 percent of the 100 units already rented.

"The most environmentally sensitive building in the country won't work if the tenants won't work with it," Percelay told the Boston Globe back in 2012. "You want tenants who understand the philosophy. Our belief is that by creating the awareness, you attract tenants who care."

"We were in the unusual situation where we controlled a neighborhood," he elaborated.

"We wanted to do something different, set a new standard. The green movement is here to stay