

## APA CASE STUDY

# High Density Project Uses High Value, Low Cost Wood

## Atlantic Station brings wood home to huge, award-winning development

Atlantic Station has created quite the buzz as a national model for smart growth and sustainable urban development. And versatile, environmentally friendly wood – a renewable building material harvested nearby – sits at the heart of it all.

Atlantic Station is a 138-acre, \$2 billion urban renewal project located at the edge of Midtown in Atlanta, Georgia. Developers sought to prove that you could be both green and giant when they built Atlantic Station on an abandoned, contaminated brownfield, the site of the former Atlantic Steel Mill. Construction followed a year of EPA-supervised cleanup.

The award-winning development now includes condominiums, apartments, townhomes and single-family residences, along with offices, retail and even public parks. Wood played a leading role in the construction of two of Atlantic Station's high-density residential projects – The Park District Apartment Homes, with 231 units, and The Art Foundry, with 347 condominiums. Element, a 322-unit condominium complex, also used wood framing.

Both the architect and contractor for The Park District and The Art Foundry said they never considered using anything but wood for Atlantic Station. “The developer challenged us to build an affordable, high-density project with 75 to 80 units per acre,” said architect Ron Harwick, principal of James, Harwick + Partners and architect for the two projects. “We knew we could not achieve the economics or reach the targeted density without wood; that was certain.”

### Project Summary

#### PROJECT

- Atlantic Station
- The Art Foundry Condominiums
  - The Park District Apartment Homes
  - Element

#### LOCATION

Atlanta, Georgia

#### OWNER

AIG Global Real Estate  
Investment Corporation

#### ARCHITECT

James, Harwick + Partners, Inc.  
Dallas, Texas

#### CONTRACTOR

Lane Realty Construction, LLC  
Alpharetta, Georgia

#### PROJECT DEVELOPERS

AIG Global Real Estate Investment  
Corporation, Jacoby Development  
Incorporated

#### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPERS

Lane Company  
Atlanta, Georgia

#### COMPLETED

2005

### Versatile wood allows unique, high-density design

Atlantic Station included more than two million square feet of wood-framed structures, making it the largest construction site in the Southeast at the time.



Architects used wood's design versatility to vary external elevations and add visual interest to Element, a 322-unit condominium complex in Atlantic Station.





Construction staging requirements in the dense development challenged builders but one project architect, Ron Harwick, said they could not have achieved the economics and the density without using wood.

“Wood’s versatility was critical to our ability to design a variety of building types for a high density project,” added Harwick. “Our firm won a number of design awards for the Art Foundry and The Park District. By using wood materials, we had the flexibility we needed to accommodate different aesthetics and different unit configurations. We had two-story townhomes over flats and flats over townhouses, and we could easily use wood for it all.”

Wood’s ready availability also was a major factor. Market demand for the Art Foundry and The Park District was exceptionally strong. The Art Foundry alone had \$20 million in pre-sales over three nights, so developers quickly expanded the original 69-unit project to almost 350 condos. Wood building materials manufacturers and suppliers met the aggressive construction schedule.

### Wood structure plays hidden but starring role

Atlantic Station home styles vary, from loft style apartments with exposed ductwork and wood framing to traditionally-styled units with high ceilings and crown moldings. Outside, architects varied the building configurations by using different external elevations. And behind it all lays a wood structure designed for versatility and affordability.

The Park District and Art Foundry design and construction teams used plywood and OSB floor sheathing to cover 18-inch open-web wood trusses. In addition, they used plywood and OSB roof sheathing panels over LVL beams to increase interior clear height and create higher ceilings.

“We also used LVL as the first floor studs,” explained Harwick. “We needed straight wall studs, which was particularly important for a four-story structure. We were going to use double dimension lumber studs spaced 12-inches on-center, but instead used LVL studs at 16-inches on center. The decision resulted in less lumber required at the site, and the builder experienced less waste with the LVL. We have since been trying to promote that approach with other projects.”

### Ease, speed of construction

“Wood was certainly the most cost-effective choice,” added Paul Hutchinson, president, Lane Realty Construction, builder for The Park District and Art Foundry. “We’ve run different scenarios from time to time, pricing wood versus steel or other framing materials. We always keep coming back to wood because we know that wood is the most cost-effective way to build a project like this.”

Atlantic Station construction involved hundreds of contractors, framers and other workers on site. Hutchinson said they had about 200 workers each at The Park District and The Art Foundry. In addition, the density of the development, at 75 to 80 units per acre, was a challenge in terms of logistics and material storage.

“We had a limited amount of storage space, but it really just meant that we had to plan better,” said Hutchinson. “There are a lot of knowledgeable wood framers in this region, which made wood an efficient choice in terms of construction. At Lane, 95 percent of the work we do uses wood. Going forward, we expect that trend to continue because wood is definitely the most cost-effective way to build a project like Atlantic Station.”

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