

Foundation Communities, Austin, TX
Edible Estate Community Garden
Budget: \$4,000



[Foundation Communities](#), an Austin-based NeighborWorks Organization, has created a model of sustainability by converting the front lawn of its [Sierra Ridge Apartments](#) into a vibrant, food-producing community garden.

The organization plans to use the garden to foster cohesion among its residents as the development of condominiums and high-end boutiques comes closer to their neighborhood. Jennifer Hicks, Foundation Communities' Director of Housing Finance, hopes the project will "tie the Sierra Ridge residents to the land and give them a sense of ownership of the neighborhood."

Residents have taken interest in the project and have been involved from the beginning by helping design, plant, maintain and harvest the garden. The organization also plans to involve local children by using the garden as an outdoor classroom for the apartment complex's [on-site learning center](#).

In fall 2009, Foundation Communities will add another sustainable element to the garden by installing a rainwater harvesting system that will provide water for the plants without relying on the municipal system. Hicks says using rainwater for the garden will "display to the community that sustainability can be practiced by any community- no matter if urban or rural, higher income or lower income."

Foundation Communities originally partnered with a local art museum in spring 2008 to construct the garden as part of an exhibit about [Edible Estates](#), an initiative to replace traditional front lawns with locally sustainable, edible plants. The initiative's founder, artist Fritz Haeg, plans to use Foundation Community's Edible Estate as one of nine regional prototype gardens across the United States.

Previously, Foundation Communities has proven its [commitment to sustainability](#) by becoming a regional leader in solar electricity production, performing numerous green retrofits on all its properties and changing its company policies to reflect green principles. The organization is currently designing Austin's first LEED-certified affordable housing development and has received several local green awards including Austin Business Journal's "Going Green Award" in the Nonprofit/Agency category.

Read more about [the creation of an edible estate at Sierra Ridge](#).

BEFORE:



AFTER:

