

Social Impact Case Study

Community Garden & Urban Farming Program



Improving Resident Quality of Life Through Urban Farming and Access to Fresh, Organic Produce

What

Community Garden & Urban Farming Program

When

2016-Present

Where

Ashlar Townhomes - Jonesboro, GA

The Gardens at Camp Creek - Atlanta, GA

Havenwood Townhomes - Columbus, Ohio

The Overlook - Jonesboro, GA

Eastwyck Village - Jonesboro, GA

Arbor Ridge – Athens, GA

Amber Grove at Olley Creek – Marietta, GA

The Greens at Windy Hill – Smyrna, GA

Bradford Park – Tucker, GA

Villas at Embry Hills – Chamblee, GA

One of ACRE’s most closely held beliefs is that lasting value is created by investing not just in physical properties but in the people and communities who inhabit them.

With these principles in mind, our firm has long sought to help residents at our properties improve their health and nutrition through access to fresh, locally grown produce. We launched our first Community Garden -

Urban Farming Program in 2016 at Eastwyck Village in Jonesboro, Georgia. The program has since expanded to a total of ten locations across two states. By providing freshly cultivated fruits and vegetables in residents’ backyards, ACRE has helped to mitigate the harmful effects of food deserts – urban areas in which fresh and affordable produce is not easily accessible.

Spanning more than seven acres of land, ACRE's community gardens were planted on formerly underutilized private sites or public spaces gifted for this use. The gardens are maintained by a combination of professional farm managers and resident volunteers. The small-scale urban agriculture farms cultivate a variety of more than forty types of fresh produce, including everything from collard greens and mustard greens to watermelon and cantaloupe, as well as a wide variety of herbs.

"Establishing the Community Garden program has helped reinforce our team's mission and commitment to actively serve and invest in the communities where we own and operate properties. Residents take ownership of these farms and many of them find true passion in the work. They help toil the ground, plant seeds, care for the crops, and volunteers get to experience the joy and satisfaction that comes from gathering crops during harvest," said ACRE Founding Partner Les Menkes. "These farms offer more than just fresh produce – they have become a safe, vibrant place for the community to gather, commune and host events. This is the exact type of impact we hope to make at all of the properties across our portfolio."

Residents are welcome to participate in the local food systems in many ways: by volunteering and participating in farm or garden-based community events, or by cultivating the sites as gardeners or farmers themselves. During harvest season, ACRE

Additional Community Garden enhancements by ACRE include:

- Cover hoops to the garden beds to protect crops from extreme weather conditions
- Irrigation systems to water crops on-demand
- Compost stations and 300-foot deep well systems
- Storage units to house tools and necessary farming materials



management hosts Farmers Markets, and residents are encouraged to walk through the gardens near their properties to gather crops free of charge. ACRE property managers and associates also gather and deliver fresh produce to the doorstep of residents who cannot access the gardens. More than 600 residents benefit from various ACRE community gardens across the country, with more than a third actively volunteering to maintain the farms and keep them thriving.

Substantial planning and investment go into the construction of each community garden, with each farm built to withstand dramatic shifts in weather. Open-air pavilions and pergolas were erected at select sites to create a sense of charm and placemaking in the community. Underutilized spaces were re-energized to serve as gathering places for events, cookouts, educational programming, and outdoor workshops. At select properties, ACRE expanded pedestrian walkways to improve access to the gardens and vehicular access to the areas.

Programs stemming from ACRE's Community Gardens:

- › Farmers' Markets
- › Community Farm Planning Events
- › Harvest Festivals
- › Annual Fall Festivals
- › Annual Back to School Bashes
- › Summer Meal Programs
- › Kids in the Kitchen Healthy Cooking Class
- › Food Cultivation and Indoor Farming Kids Programs



Sustainable and Social Development Goals:

ACRE's Community Garden Program aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals for Impact, including: Zero Hunger, No Poverty, Good Health & Well-Being, Responsible Consumption & Production, Climate-Resilience, and Reduced Inequalities. The program also aligns with ACRE's overarching UN SDG Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities: making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

The primary Impact Theme focuses on Sustainable Agriculture. It includes (1) Improving Social Equity and Justice Through Agriculture, (2) Increasing the Resiliency of Food Systems Through Agriculture, and (3) Improving Human Health Through Agriculture. (Source: IRIS+)



We believe that lasting value is created by investing not just in physical properties but in the people and communities who inhabit them. At ACRE, our mission is to collaborate with local businesses and organizations to improve residents' quality of life and ensure they are supported. More on our commitment to our communities can be found here: <https://acremgt.com/about/social-impact>

acremgt.com