



EMERALD BUILT  
ENVIRONMENTS

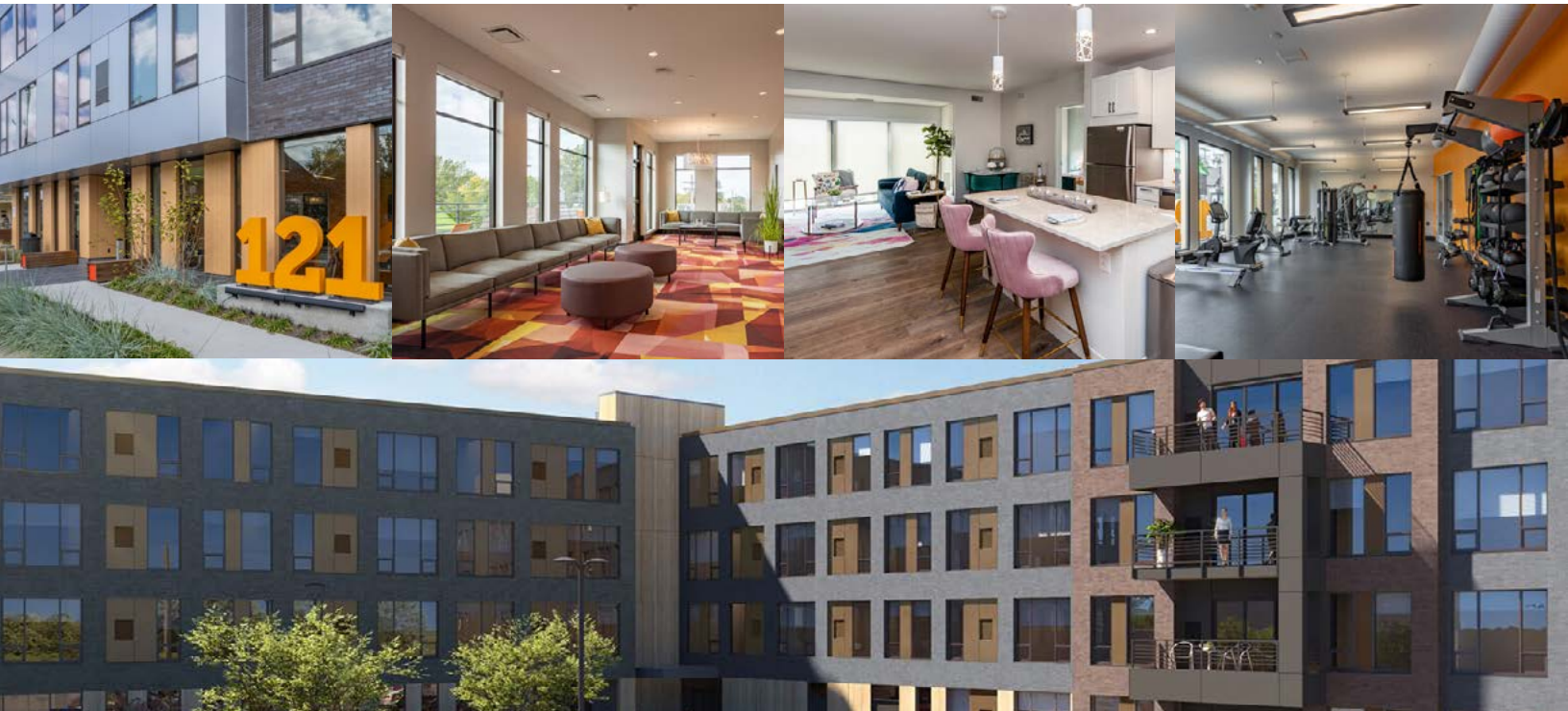
Case Study  
121 Larchmere

## Engaged Owner Leads LEED Strategy Development

How focused collaboration can benefit many stakeholders

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When embarking on a new construction project, each one presents an opportunity to create value and positively impact society, the economy, and the environment. This vision was put into action in the development of 121 Larchmere by First Interstate Properties. Due to the high level of engagement by First Interstate, the team achieved multiple goals for different stakeholders including the developer, the City of Cleveland, current neighborhood residents, and building tenants. The results of this project demonstrate that complex sustainability goals are within reach and can be achieved through active engagement and collaboration.



### ABOUT FIRST INTERSTATE

First Interstate Properties is a Cleveland-based real estate development/management company invested in Cleveland's continued development and prosperity with a portfolio of both commercial and residential spaces. They focus on creating "environmentally respectful high-impact projects that create value" for all stakeholders: residents, communities, and investors. One landmark building they are known for developing is the luxury apartment building One University Circle.

### THE CHALLENGE

As the team sat down to begin the 121 Larchmere project, the lessons learned by the owner's team at First Interstate were top-of-mind as they had just completed the 20-story development called One University Circle. Among differences in massing, this 4-story development would serve a different market: One University Circle is a high-end luxury building and 121 Larchmere would provide more affordable market-rate housing. This decision was based on an extensive stakeholder engagement effort, which indicated that market-rate housing would create value for this Cleveland neighborhood. This supported the neighborhood's opposition to the previously planned Dollar Store at the site.

The envisioned project included mixed-use residential and first-floor commercial spaces to elevate the project's impact on current and future neighbors. Environmental sustainability design considerations would also positively impact residents, the neighborhood, and the local economy. For example, including electric vehicle charging stations for tenants and visitors, as well as Enhanced Indoor Air Quality Strategies to ensure both residents and commercial tenants would be confident the air quality was consistently monitored.

## 121 LARCHMERE'S SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY



### THE SOLUTION

This was Emerald's first project with First Interstate. Having previously worked with the designer, City Architecture, Emerald used its proven 4-step process to help guide the team.

### STEP 1 is Listen and Strategize.

To facilitate strategy development, Emerald employed the LEED v4 Integrated Design Process to increase synergy across building systems, including energy and water, and energy modeling at multiple project stages, but that was just the start. Once the initial strategy was set, the team moved into evaluating options.

## STEP 2 is Evaluate and Plan.

When it came time to refining the preliminary project strategy by considering design options and running calculations, many owners followed along. First Interstate fully engaged in this part of the project by actively participating in design charrettes, which are interactive meetings that encourage stakeholders to align objectives and plans. Charrettes are an important part of the Integrated Design Process because they encourage disciplines to understand how design impacts extend beyond the obvious – creating efficiencies in evaluation and planning. Through this process, First Interstate actively managed the decision-making process, pushing back on the collective team to find the right answer. They were keenly attuned to design and operation strategies that met the community's goals, and theirs. For example, First Interstate repositioned Emerald's traditional presentation of credit prioritization and related costs to prioritize decision-making that first addressed broader project goals.

## STEP 3 is Implement.

Throughout construction First Interstate, City Architecture, Emerald, and the contractor A.M. Higley held weekly meetings to discuss outstanding items, current LEED Construction credit status, and Commissioning status. Emerald and First Interstate were aligned in deadline setting, with Emerald providing the action items and the owner effectively pushing the construction team to meet deadlines. With First Interstate's active engagement in the LEED Construction process, the contractors and sub-contractors stayed on task resulting in a timely LEED Construction submission.

## STEP 4 is Test and Measure.

One of First Interstate's choices early in the project was to invest in rigorous commissioning, a process that ensures the building operates as designed. With a portfolio of buildings to manage, they know the value of commissioning and opted for both the enhanced commissioning and envelope commissioning options in LEED. As an engaged owner, they took the precaution to avoid issues in the future and gain an extra test & measure phase during the warranty phase.

### THE OUTCOME

Celebrated by the community's neighbors and political leadership, 121 Larchmere officially achieved LEED Silver Certification and opened in the spring of 2021. As doors opened, 90% of the building's units were already leased and the 6,500 sf of retail space attracted the building's architect, which illustrated the benefit of connecting space to purpose. City Architecture is committed to creating space with a purpose for all.

### WHAT'S NEXT

With another successful, environmentally respectful building in its portfolio, First Interstate plans to continue to develop high-impact projects that have a lasting positive impact in the Cleveland area.

Learn how Emerald can elevate the value of your development project with sustainable certifications. Start a conversation today.  
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