

Sustainability at The Landings on Skidaway Island, Georgia

Location: Savannah, GA

Population: 8,500

Size: 6,300 acres

Type of property: Private community

Type of membership:
Sustainable Communities Program

Member since: May 2013

Certified since: February 2018



The Landings on Skidaway Island, Georgia

Skidaway Island, only 12 miles southeast of Savannah, is a jewel in Georgia's chain of barrier islands, reached by a sweeping causeway across tidal salt marsh and a bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway. The Landings, a private gated residential community of 8,500 on two-thirds of the island's 6,300 acres, has a long history of sensitive development. The Landings Community was started in the 1970s by the Branigar Corporation, and in 1972, the covenant documents were established to control the building types and land use in the community as development moved forward.

The Landings community offers 40 miles of walking trails through maritime forest of native pineland and live oak and extensive salt marsh habitat, a two-acre community garden, and many kayaking, fishing, boating, and birding



The Landings on Skidaway Island has six, certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary golf courses.

opportunities. Skidaway Island is also home to the University of Georgia's Marine Extension Service and Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, as well as the Skidaway Island State Park. Management is by a homeowners association with an elected volunteer board.

The Landing's relationship with Audubon International began in the 1990s when Skidaway Audubon, a not for profit dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the natural resources of Skidaway Island, provided the initial funding to allow all six of their championship golf courses to join, and ultimately achieve certification in, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf.

Following the strong lead by the golf courses, the community then decided to be a part of what was at the time a pilot program of Audubon International, the Green Neighborhoods Program, a project-based approach to sustainability. A few years later, building upon the momentum already garnered through the Green Neighborhoods Program, The Landings decided to take a more holistic view at their relationship with sustainability, and became a member of the Sustainable Communities Program (SCP), which offers a certification for communities that merge economic and social considerations with the protection and enhancement of a community's environmental characteristics.

After joining the SCP in the spring of 2013, The Landings began taking a comprehensive look at their community's past and present efforts to be more sustainable, as well as options to continue its efforts into the future. Skidaway Audubon also financed and led the work at the community scale, convening a robust group of key stakeholders including: The Landings Association, The Landings Club, The Landings Company, Utilities Inc. of Georgia, The Village on Skidaway Island Commercial Association, and volunteers from University of Georgia's Marine Extension and Skidaway Island State Park. A short four and a half years later, and The Landings on Skidaway Island became the first community in the state of Georgia to achieve designation as an Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community.

After developing a long-term sustainability plan, complete with measurable goals and a timeline for completion, and upon initial implementation of those goals, communities are eligible for certification in the Sustainable Communities Program. The Landings is implementing action items from their adopted long-term sustainability plan and measuring initial progress towards its chosen sustainability targets. The Landing's accomplishments include:

- **Sustainable Landscaping:** The Landings has updated their Architectural Guidelines to include water conservation requirements within the landscaping, i.e., use of native plants and promoting xeriscaping practices.
- **Resource Use:** The Landings Association (TLA) has developed and implemented an internal water conservation program, which includes all TLA owned buildings, common properties, and marinas. As a result, all TLA buildings have been upgraded with faucet aerators and low flow toilets.



The Landings is home to a bird cam that offers a live feed of the two resident osprey.

- **Food Sourcing:** The Landings on Skidaway Island is home to a robust two-acre community garden, that not only provides food for residents, but also provides food for the local food pantry.
- **Green Design:** The Landings is incentivizing homeowners' participation in green design by establishing a community program to recognize sustainable housing and landscaping projects.

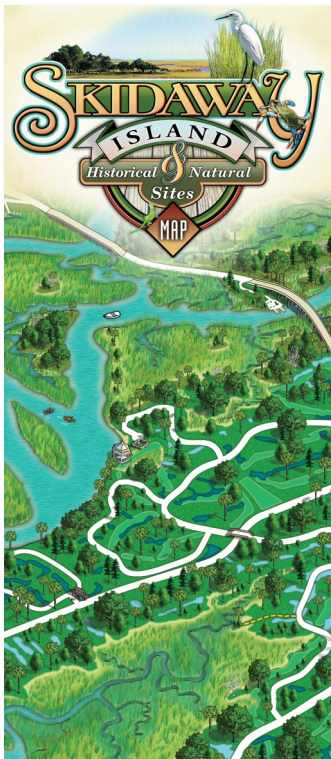


A component of the Sustainable Communities Program is a demonstration project, which is to provide educational information about sustainability to its residents. The Landings installed this informative sign at the Delegal Marina Tower for their demonstration project, providing viewers information about the Georgia coast.

- **Recreational Opportunities:** The Landings set a goal to synchronize, organize, and market their recreational opportunities to the community. They are doing this through many avenues, such as developing interpretative signage across the island and by providing a community calendar with information about recreational events. Additionally, a Skidaway Island Historical & Natural Sites map was developed and is widely dispersed on the island (see photo below).
- **Native Ecosystems:** To help support the local bee populations, The Landings has a beekeeping project where they maintain multiple hives.
- **Waste Management:** The Landings has built a comprehensive recycling facility with clear signage at each bin about what can be recycled. Additionally, the tons of recycled materials collected is shared monthly in the Landings Journal. Similarly, The Landings is working with contractors to encourage them to recycle construction materials by adopting a recycling/reuse policy for construction materials.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** A Skidaway Island Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan has been developed and is communicated via community meetings twice a year.
- **Public Space:** The Landings is working to enhance gathering places to create a sense of community, such as the recently developed Sunset Park and Kid's Fishing Lagoon.



Left to Right: Shari Haldeman (Landings Association General Manager/COO), Meredith Welch (Sustainable Skidaway Board Chair), Jessica Latus (Audubon International), and Sean Burgess (Landings Association Environmental Manager) receiving the Sustainable Communities Award at their designation ceremony in February 2018.



Skidaway Island Historical & Natural Sites map.

Meredith Welch, Sustainable Skidaway Board Chair, spearheaded this initiative, and is to be commended for her hard work and dedication to this process. In addition, Sean Burgess, Landings Association (TLA) Environmental Manager, was the pivotal staff lead for the effort. Furthermore, the other Sustainable Skidaway Steering Committee members and TLA staff that offered their spirit and skills to the process made this a truly collaborative effort. The passionate volunteers working alongside the paid staff and elected officials, who gave their great guidance and blessing to this effort, made this work as successful as it was.

The Landings Association President, Rick Cunningham, joined in congratulating the community on receiving the AI Certified Sustainable Community designation. "This award recognizes the three pillars of sustainability: a healthy local environment, quality of life for citizens, and economic vitality. The Landings, founded 46 years ago, is one of the oldest planned communities on the coast. Because of the vision of the original developers, the dedication of thousands of volunteers over the years, and the energies and efforts of all the residents, it is a community that continues to thrive, and attract and retain vital and engaged residents."

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