

# WOOD: MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT HOME RUN

The SoBe-esque 310-unit Brooklyn Riverside apartment community has not only helped revive a flagging neighborhood, but ably demonstrates the remarkable benefits of wood in multifamily development.

Jacksonville, Fla. isn't the first thing that comes to mind when you consider edgy urban chic.

Yet the once-sleepy Brooklyn neighborhood of this northern Florida coastal metropolis is undergoing a stirring Miami South Beach (SoBe)-flavored renaissance, led by a \$40 million apartment community called **The Brooklyn Riverside**.

The four- and three-story Brooklyn Riverside, which was delivered in April 2015, is marked by bold festive colors and jaunty cantilevers. The

aesthetic bears an unmistakable SoBe vibe. It's a design bet that is an "absolute home run" for the developer and the community.

## **Powered by Wood**

"We kept the base of the building fairly simple," observes the project's lead architect, Jason Shephard, AIA, and principal of Dwell Design Studio, an award-winning national design firm specializing in low-, mid-, and high-density multifamily projects.

"We wanted to use pops of color to accentuate the large overhangs and some of the vertical bends to break up the overall mass of the building.

"People comment all the time, 'This isn't wood frame.' I tell them it's all wood frame, a type V structure. There's hardly any steel at all. It's all done with wood trusses and how we creatively framed the building to pick up those overhangs. It's very unexpected," Shephard says.



Wood plays a starring role in the success of the \$40 million Brooklyn Riverside apartment community. Wood construction not only helped reduce project cost, but met all of the required safety and code requirements.



**LEFT:** The chic design aesthetic is especially favored by a surging marketplace of millennials looking for an urban, more car-free lifestyle. “The developer offers private garages available to any tenant,” Shephard reports. “The garages aren’t tied to any one particular unit. They can be rented to anyone. Through wood framing and building code, we’re allowed to simplify the process and keep it cost-effective for all.”

**BELOW:** The oversized front corner represents the grand entrance. A clubroom occupies the fourth floor, overlooking the city of Jacksonville. The view is spectacular. Tenants are invited to rent for parties and other social events. “A clubroom like this is completely unexpected, especially in a wood-frame structure,” Shephard says. “You just don’t see it in this product type, especially with surface parking.”

### Cost Savings

Wood is cost-effective and was central to the project development. Besides the near-absence of steel, the use of concrete was minimized too. There is no podium base. Parking is allocated to 77 private tuck-under garages and 373 surface spaces.

Shephard says his design ethos was shaped in part by the downturn. “Nobody could afford structured parking,” the designer states. So Dwell Design has focused on a multifamily design concept called “ditch the deck.” The idea: Rely solely on wood to drive design and development economics. “No concrete podium is huge, huge, huge from a cost perspective.”

### Code & Climate

Brooklyn Riverside even had code officials cheering. “They preferred it from a building code standpoint. We observed expected fire resistive practices, including a full sprinkler system and other code-compliant safeguards. We didn’t have to increase our fire rating from a floor-ceiling standpoint, for example,” Shephard says.

Building codes require all structures to perform to the same level of safety, regardless of material

used, and wood-frame buildings can be designed to meet or exceed standards for fire protection and resistance to harsh weather. In the case of Brooklyn Riverside, code required a one-hour fire rating, typical of multifamily properties. Wood construction fully complies with that rating standard.

And Jacksonville’s humid coastal climate? “We carefully considered wind-blown rain. We went with a zip-wall system. It’s an engineered sheathing with a built-in vapor and air barrier. There’s a bit of a cost bump, but it’s minor. It’s definitely worth it for this region.”

### 39 Units/Acre

The bold aesthetic has earned its share of rave reviews. But Shephard points to the project economics with equal pride. For example, Brooklyn Riverside is nearly leased-up, with occupancy at about 97 percent. “They’ve been killing it” as Shephard says of the leasing pace.

With cost of land rising, developers want value-engineered solutions that deliver more density, surface parking and wood-frame performance capabilities. Brooklyn Riverside works from all perspectives—design, development, and community.

“It’s an absolute home run.”

**Owner:** Pollack Shores Real Estate Group

**Architect:** Dwell Design Studio

**General Contractor:** Cambridge Swinerton Builders

**Structural Engineer:** M2 Structural Engineering

**Photography:** Pollack Shores, Matrix Residential

**Location:** 100 Magnolia Street, Jacksonville, Florida

**Awards:** 2016 Wood Design Award—Regional Excellence Winner, WoodWorks



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