

Moving Forward -- An Environmental Sustainability Action Statement and Plan for Riderwood

Environmental sustainability is a critical concern for Continuing Care Retirement Communities such as Riderwood. We define sustainability as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Implementing a campus sustainability plan would ensure, and be visible proof, that Riderwood operates responsibly, conserves resources, and values the well-being of residents, staff, the surrounding community, and indeed around the world both now and in the future. An environmental sustainability action plan outlines strategies across energy, water, waste, buildings, transportation, landscaping, food services, and community engagement that Riderwood's staff and residents can employ to respond to the ever increasing challenges of supporting a healthy campus environment and managing rising energy costs. One example of such a plan is the [Collington Sustainability Plan](#) developed by a CCRC not far from Riderwood.

A compelling case for creating a sustainability plan for Riderwood is based on the rapidly changing climate, quickly evolving technologies, new information on the effect of contaminants on health, and the public's demand for sustainable practices. Each individual, community, business, and group needs to do their part to positively impact the environmental health of our planet.

The plan should conform to the highest standards of the Sustainable Development Goals as adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and provide a common sense, financially responsible way forward for Riderwood to optimize energy conservation, waste management, and grounds maintenance that will make Riderwood a leader in sustainability among CCRCs now and into the future.

Background for This Request

In April 2025 the Riderwood Resident Advisory Council (RAC) approved the following statement:

We, the residents of Riderwood, live in a community that supports the health and well-being of the Riderwood residents and staff on our campus and beyond. We feel it is our obligation to leave the world a better place than when we found it so that current and future generations can flourish. To contribute to this goal on our campus, we envision an environment here that conserves resources; reduces our carbon footprint; reduces our exposure to toxins; and supports a habitat in which wildlife, plants, and trees can prosper. We sincerely hope that management and the residents, supported by the RAC, will

continue to work towards a working sustainability plan that continues to move us in that direction.

In May, 2025 the RAC asked the Riderwood Board to encourage Erickson management to create a climate action plan. Based on resident input we have now expanded the scope of this plan beyond global warming and changed the name to Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

Resident Input for the Riderwood Sustainability Plan

The Environmental Coalition at Riderwood (ECO-R) solicited ideas from resident members of committees and groups about their priorities for improving sustainability on campus as a jumping off point for discussion. Once goals have been finalized, the completed environmental sustainability action plan will identify costs and benefits; personnel; activities; timelines; and methods for assessing progress. We suggest that the development and implementation of the plan be led by a senior-level Riderwood staff member with input from residents. Efforts would be further enhanced by expertise at Erickson given that improving sustainability requires specialized knowledge of environmental science and technologies.

The goals listed below are in draft form and not exhaustive but are meant to be illustrative of the breadth of environmental issues that residents would like to have considered in the eventual plan. We recognize that some of the items in the plan may have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed.

1. Reduce Energy Use and Transition to Green Energy in Campus Buildings

1.1 Conduct periodic reviews of *exterior* state-of-the-art building materials, supplies, and suppliers to identify products that are made from durable, nontoxic, recyclable materials that can be used during repositioning and maintenance.

1.2 Conduct periodic studies of *interior* state-of-the-art building materials, supplies, and suppliers to identify products that are made from durable, nontoxic, and recyclable materials and appliances that have the highest possible energy efficiency rating for use in unit turnover and maintenance.

1.3 Conduct periodic comprehensive carbon footprint audits to identify areas where energy use can be easily, safely, and cost effectively reduced. This audit would look at interior and exterior lighting, roofing, solar panels, and other exterior building materials.

1.4 Implement an ongoing program to increase and maintain awareness as to how individual residents can conserve energy within their unit and community. Year-to-year comparisons of total energy use by resident units could be publicized to incentivize responsible energy use.

1.5 Implement a systematic program of care and maintenance for the Wellness Center's green roof.

Benefits: Lowers utility bills, provides a healthier environment for residents and staff, improves Riderwood's impact on the environment.

2. Reduce Waste Generation at Riderwood

2.1 Increase participation in existing kitchen waste and resident composting.

2.2 Reduce use of single use products and containers.

2.3 Reduce single-use water bottles and plastic cups on campus.

2.4 Reduce or eliminate use of non-compostable food containers for carryout.

2.5 Divert more recyclable material from the trash stream by improving collection of recyclable and compostable materials at campus events.

2.6 Optimize recycling or reuse of building materials, carpeting, flooring, and furniture at unit and neighborhood repositionings.

Benefits: Reduces costs that go into purchasing paper and plastic products and single-use water bottles, employs best practices that position Riderwood as a leader among CCRs in environmental sustainability.

3. Minimize Use of Insecticides, Herbicides, and Other Toxic Chemicals in Buildings and Grounds

3.1 Hire contractors that adhere to Integrated Pest Management strategies and that provide adequate safety training to their applicators.

3.2 Use nontoxic cleaning chemicals wherever feasible.

Benefits: Minimizes exposure of Riderwood's vulnerable population as well as staff to toxins, which have been implicated in Parkinson's Disease and a rise in cancer among young people; creates a more hospitable environment to pollinating insects and birds, thus qualifying Riderwood to be considered a Homegrown National Park.

4. Reduce Water Use

- 4.1 Install a system or systems for capturing and storing rainwater.
- 4.2 Install low-water-use toilets and other water-saving bathroom and kitchen devices during unit transitions.
- 4.3 When installing new landscaping, use mainly native plants, which require less water than nonnatives once established.
- 4.4 Reduce amount of grassy areas and replace with native ground covers and shrubs.

Benefits: Reduces water usage, thus lowering water bills and conserving an important natural resource.

5. Maintain an Aesthetically Beautiful Campus that Sustains Native Plants and Animals and Optimizes the Safety and Health of Residents and Staff

- 5.1 Use Integrated Pest Management methods for controlling insects and vermin as suggested in #3.
- 5.2 Implement ongoing removal of invasive plants throughout campus.
- 5.3 Restore protected conservation areas that have been heavily deer browsed with young native trees and understory plants (this effort should be coordinated with Montgomery County's and Prince George's County's governmental agencies where required and appropriate).
- 5.4 Implement an ongoing systematic program of diseased tree and tree limb removal.
- 5.5 Maintain a balance of at least 70% native to 30% nonnative plantings throughout campus.
- 5.6 Contract with landscaping companies whose values and practices emphasize sustainability, energy efficiency, and proper maintenance of trees and shrubs.
- 5.7 Control deer browsing using nontoxic chemical deterrents such as Liquid Fence, and install deer fencing where feasible.
- 5.8 Provide adequate water to vulnerable trees and plantings during extended droughts.
- 5.9 Plant shade trees or install shading structures along paths, at all benches, and near other recreational sites and on clubhouse patios.
- 5.10 Avoid use of artificial turf.
- 5.11 Reduce litter by conducting periodic campus anti-litter campaigns and installing additional garbage receptacles.

5.12 Conduct regular trash pick-up in all areas of campus, including wooded areas and along fence lines.

Benefits: Creates and maintains a campus that enhances the mental and physical health of residents and staff; creates a more hospitable environment for native pollinators, birds, mammals, and other wildlife, which in turn enhances the well-being of residents and staff; establishes Riderwood's campus as an exceptional place to live and work from an environmental and mental and physical health perspective; reduces water usage; preserves the health of existing plantings thus reducing the cost of replacing dead and dying trees and shrubs; has an impact on the environmental health of the surrounding community; keeps Riderwood solid waste from entering local streams that feed into the Chesapeake Bay and beyond; keeps Riderwood solid waste from harming native birds and wildlife.

6. Promote Sustainable Food Consumption

6.1 Source locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables.

6.2 Use only sustainably harvested seafood.

6.3 Provide more plant-based options.

Benefits: Provides optimally healthy food choices to Riderwood residents; attracts new residents for whom plant-based eating is a priority; supports local agriculture; reduces exposure to harmful chemicals from plastics.

7. Promote and Support Environmentally Responsible Purchase of Vehicles and Use of Transportation

7.1 Develop a plan to transition Riderwood-owned passenger cars, SUVs, buses, trucks, and utility vehicles to electric vehicles as each reaches the end of its useful life, or sooner.

7.2 Promote and facilitate car-free living among residents.

Benefits: Eliminates the use of fossil fuels, thereby reducing costs and creating healthier ambient air at Riderwood and in the surrounding communities; provides residents who do not drive for whatever reason with more mobility and opportunity to enjoy the natural and cultural offerings in the Greater Washington Area.

8. Educate, Inspire, and Involve Riderwood Residents and Team Members

8.1 Integrate sustainability into orientation presentations for prospective residents, new residents, staff, and contractors.

8.2 Organize and support Earth Year activities.

8.3 Organize events, films, and lectures to educate residents and staff about best environmental practices related to Goals 1 - 7.

Benefits: Creates buy-in to and understanding of environmental sustainability initiatives among existing residents and staff; informs prospective residents that Riderwood is a place that nurtures the physical and mental well-being of its residents and staff; contributes to the enjoyment and understanding of the diversity of animal and plant life on the Riderwood campus.

RESOURCES

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

[17 Goals for Sustainable Development](#): Goals 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 directly address environmental sustainability.

Maryland Environmental Regulations

[Maryland Governor's Executive Order](#) on implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan.

CCRCs and Environmental Sustainability

Erickson's commitment to sustainability: <https://www.ericksonseniorliving.com/about-us>

[The Environmentally Sustainable CCRC of the Future](#), By [Brad Breeding](#) December 2nd, 2019:

[What makes a good climate action plan for a CCRC?](#)

[Climate Action Plan Evaluation](#)

[McKnights Senior Living](#)

[Piper Shores Climate Action Plan](#)

[Where You Live Matters](#)

Example: Kendal Senior Living Facilities

[Sustainability is a Key Focus](#)

[Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment](#)

[Collington Sustainability Plan](#)

[Kendal Annual Report](#)