Stories Behind Kendeda

people who build
people who make
people who create
how can a building promote a sense of equity?

Inclusion by design

The quality of buildings and spaces has a strong influence on the quality of people’s lives. Decisions about the design, planning and management of places can enhance or restrict a sense of belonging. They can increase or reduce feelings of security, stretch or limit boundaries, promote or reduce mobility, and improve or damage health. They can remove real and imagined barriers between communities and foster understanding and generosity of spirit.

Even though accessibility has improved over the last decade, and planning policy has shifted, with investment providing new facilities to once-excluded communities, the fact remains that poor and disadvantaged people are far more likely to live in poor quality environments. Social, cultural and economic inequalities are still being literally built into new places, and planners and designers need to examine more closely the impact of their decisions.

*Source: published in 2008 by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment*
people make places.

creating equitable architecture requires input from a broad range of people with varying experiences and perspectives.

For the Future: how can we make sure that students, faculty, and the surrounding community are at the forefront of design decisions on campus?

Numerous discussions about the building were held including one comprised of Georgia Tech students, a Lord Aeck Sargent architect and even Emory University’s director of sustainability initiatives.

As part of the Living Building Challenge, Kendeda was required to focus on equity as part of its design. The four primary requirements are human scale and humane places, universal access to nature and place, equitable investment, and JUST organizations.

A specific Equity Petal Work Group was also established to make sure diverse voices were heard during the design & construction phase.

Events at Kendeda include:
- educational outreach & tours
- rooftop gardening & beekeeping
- classes & labs
- a community closet
- sustainability lectures
- movies & campus events
- club meeting spaces
And much more!

places are for people.
buildings should cater first and foremost to the people and communities they are serving.
vip: building for equity and sustainability

Course goals: to advance social equity as a key part of creating sustainable built environments and communities

Project 1. Clarkston Mobility: focused on mobility and creating an equitable bike culture in Clarkston, GA

Project 2. Kendeda Ratings Systems: partnered with the NAACP and The International Living Future Institute to compare sustainability rating systems and develop proposals for incorporating equity more deeply

Project 3. Equity in Capstone: developing a system for incorporating and evaluating equity and sustainability in GT capstone/senior design

Interested? Sign up for next semester's VIP class!
urban honey bee project

The Georgia Tech urban honey bee project is a unique interdisciplinary undergraduate research and education program focused on the impact of urban habitats on honey bees. Located on the roof of the Kendeda building, students can get involved in one of the two sets of hives on campus. In fact, Georgia Tech is a proud member of Bee Campus USA, meaning that we foster the well-being of pollinators and educate the surrounding community on their importance. You can also stop by during the semester to purchase some of the honey harvested from the Kendeda rooftop.

kendeda rooftop garden

Understanding where our food comes and how it’s grown is a vital component to understanding food security and equity.

You can find leeks, radishes, rhubarb, kale and other fruits and veggies growing abundantly on top of Kendeda’s roof. As part of the Living Building Challenge, the building was tasked with having an urban agricultural component. Designers chose to create an “edible landscape” not only because of its more sustainable harvesting practices but also because it enables students and the surrounding community to better understand the process of how food gets to the table. Through this, we can work to address growing equity issues that are arising regarding food insecurity.

rallying around the relatives of our yellow jackets!
Apprentices check the spaces between panels while under supervision.

The reclaimed wood ceiling was assembled and built by apprentices from Georgia Works. An organization that helps men have been chronically homeless, formerly incarcerated or recovering from substance abuse get back on their feet and reenter the work force. Initially there was difficulty finding a subcontractor that would be willing to use salvaged wood due to skepticism over the quality, even though project manager Jimmy Mitchell was confident of the woods’ integrity. But he realized that this was a perfect opportunity to further add to the equity pedal. By working with Georgia Works, the project was able to engage with members of the local community. Six apprentices from the program worked on the project along with workers from Skanska, the main contractor.

Another plus from this arrangement was that the cost was much lower than originally anticipated. In the industry contractors make bids on jobs and then management reviews and then chooses the best one. Not many companies sent in bids and the ones that did either rejected using the reused beams or asked for a high price.

Through the program, the apprentices gain on the job experience with the hope that one day they land a permanent position. One of the apprentices, Kenyatte Daniels was offered a job at Skanska after being recommended by supervisor David Luffel.
Before the Eco Commons and before Georgia Tech bought the property, there stood a restaurant called PickRick where a civil rights protest took place. The owner was a pro-segregationist and continued to refuse to integrate even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Three students of the Interdenominational Theological Center; Georgia Willis Jr., Albert Lee Dunn, and Woodrow T. Lewis, decided to challenge the Pickrick restaurant's continuing practice of denying African Americans service. The restaurant was demolished in 2005 but to commemorate the students' brave stance, a memorial was erected in their honor.
The Lifecycle Building Center began as a group of volunteers determined to do something about the solid waste problem in Atlanta and redirect viable building materials away from landfills and back into the local community. Their mission is to help foster “Environmental stewardship and community resilience by creating a sustainable lifecycle for the built environment.”

For more information check out lifecyclebuildingcenter.org/mission-vision
It has positive net energy and positive net water output. It’s made of wood from naturally fallen trees. It uses fans and pipes under the floor and shades to regulate temperature year round. It’s designed to be used as a blueprint for other places to make their buildings more sustainable.

I think the open concept design creates a welcoming atmosphere that makes it easier to relax and focus.

I like to see the exposed wood architecture. When the building was new I could smell the wooden building materials, which was very welcoming.

Conducive to learning yet in a relaxed & cozy sort of way. I enjoy the openness of the space (spacious central hallway combined with the small islets and cafe counter areas designed for resting, socializing or studying purposes), the quality of the natural light (bay windows, high ceilings) and the “human” size & proportion of the classroom.

“It is more engaging to go to the Kendeda than going to other classrooms. The windows help brighten the mood up, and the atmosphere in the classroom is less suffocating than being in regular classroom.”

It’s an uplifting environment. I enjoy the window to wall ratio and there is plenty of natural light. I especially like warmer days where we can open up the side doors and let in fresh air into the building.

love the open space, the lightning the peace and calm one feels even when our days are stressful, the days go by quickly, it feels like a very peaceful place, and the temperature is great also.
The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design is among the greenest in the world. It achieved Living Building Challenge 3.1 certification in March, 2021. Project construction achieved zero carbon footprint by first incorporating low-carbon and salvaged building materials, then by recycling over 99% of construction waste, and finally by purchasing a one-time carbon offset that funded new solar projects in India, which is highly reliant on coal for electricity.

Shan Arora, Director for The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design

Well, I can tell you that my favorite challenge is incorporating salvage materials into the building. We need to incorporate 10 salvage pieces (under LBC’s Net Positive Waste Imperative), and we're going to find and incorporate not just a 10 items, but it's going be 10 items that showcase a great story. Another fun challenge is the geothermal wells. It won't be a huge problem but it will still be interesting to drill in this tight little area.

What are the biggest challenges in this Living Building Challenge building?

Jimmy Mitchell, Director of Project Solutions, SKANSKA