

# Regular rooftops will go green with envy

▶ They're not just for urban gardeners ▶ If applied all over Toronto, green roofs could result in tens of millions of dollars in savings, according to the city



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Rooftop gardens and terraces are an increasingly popular amenity for Toronto condominiums and provide an excellent common area for residents to enjoy a little of the outdoors in the inner city.

But did you know that a green roof provides many environmental advantages as well?

The elevated urban green space is essentially a roof of a building that has been partially or completely covered with vegetation and a growing medium, planted over a waterproof membrane.

Beata Domanska is chair of the green committee at her building, the Hugh Garner Housing Co-operative on Ontario Street, which boasts one of the largest residential, multi-unit green roofs in Canada.

The building was in need of a new roof at the time, and the residents opted for something "not as toxic and wasteful as a conventional roof," says Domanska, who played an instrumental role in planning the 8,000 square foot south roof.

Completed in May of 2010 at a total cost of \$800,000, it has already accounted for a significant reduction in the building's power consumption.

Plans are underway to complete the north roof, which would bring the total green area to 22,000 square

**A green roof can extend the useful life of a building roof by 20 to 25 years.**

## Eco leader

Although green roofs are a fairly new trend for urban condos, they are not new to Toronto.

▶ The Manulife Centre has maintained a well-established green roof for the past 25 years, located over a parking garage, with mature trees that reach three stories high.

▶ York University installed a 30,000 square foot green roof during the construction of the Computer Sciences Building in 2003.

feet.

The combination of layers of waterproofing, insulation and topsoil results in less heat absorption by the building, which translates to less air conditioning.

The Hugh Garner rooftop is well thought out. The network of plant beds are designed around a self-irrigating water system that collects up to five inches of rainwater underneath the paving stones.

The entire area underneath acts as a reservoir and recycles the water back into the vegetation, thus significantly saving on the use of city water.

The rooftop is fully accessible; planters are set at low height with barrier-free corridors and ramps.

The City of Toronto has published various studies that show numerous benefits of green roofs, from a reduction in storm water runoff that improves the quality of the local water supply, to reduced energy consumption for cooling and the urban heat island effect.



▶ A green roof can be a little slice of urban heaven.



▶ After-work drinks will have to move from the bar to your garden terrace with a view.