

Discussion Group: **The Economics of Urban Green Roofs**

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The use of green roofs is widespread in parts of Europe, and is starting to appear in North American cities now. Systems for growing specialized vegetation on a thin layer of engineered growth medium are now a mature technology, adapted to a variety of climates and building types. In addition to esthetic considerations, a number of environmental advantages have been documented for these systems: (1) mitigation of rainfall runoff; (2) energy conservation for cooling and heating because of added insulation in winter and active cooling by evapo-transpiration in summer; (3) increase in life span of the roof membrane due to protection from temperature extremes and UV radiation; (4) cooling of air next to the roof in summer, leading to potential mitigation of the urban “heat island” thermal effect.

Recently though, questions have been raised regarding the cost-benefit potential of green roofs in New York City. In particular, a recent city analysis reaches a rather unfavorable view of the economics of the urban green roof. In our discussion group we seek to assemble a collection of experts with experience in this field, and various viewpoints to critically examine the technical components of this debate, and attempt to find a consensus with present information.