



As Georgians work together to manage stormwater to protect their local streams, some innovative ideas are receiving much attention. Whenever I talk to developers about the latest trends in stormwater management, the technique that always piques

their interest is green roofs. What exactly is a green roof? Well, basically it is a roof that serves as a foundation for growing plants and vegetation. During storms, these plants soak up water, ultimately improving water quality in local streams by reducing the amount of rainwater that becomes stormwater runoff.

Actually, green roofs are nothing new. Many of the early settlers in the United States built their first homes with sod-covered roofs. Most of us have seen pictures of the pioneers in front of their rustic homes, with animals grazing on the roof behind them.

Green roofs have come a long way from those early beginnings. Modern green roofs are very high-tech and include a waterproof liner, a drainage system, and, of course, soil and plants. As we get more serious about stormwater management, high-tech solutions like green roofs, which may have sounded like "pie in the sky" ideas in the past, are starting to get serious consideration. For example, the new YMCA building planned for Woodstock could include a green roof.

"When we design our new Y in Woodstock, we plan to do a LEED certified 'green' building, and we will explore the option of a green roof for that facility," says John Hicks, branch executive of the Cherokee Outdoor YMCA.

"We will try to build a really well-constructed building because we anticipate being in that building for 40 to 50 years. With their emphasis on energy efficiency and using high quality, durable materials, it just makes sense to follow a LEEDs program," says Hicks. However, the ultimate decision to include a green

roof will be determined during the building design phase

The City of Atlanta has installed a green roof on the city hall building. "The benefits of green roofs have been proven," said Benjamin Taube, environmental manager of the City of Atlanta. "The City of Atlanta decided that constructing a green roof on a municipal building would be an excellent opportunity to showcase a technique to mitigate stormwater runoff."

Green roofs have been common practice in Germany for 40 years, and there's a move in the United Kingdom to incorporate green roofs into building designer. Although Atlanta boasts the first municipal building in the Southeast to have a green roof, other American cities are using the technology, as well, including Portland, Or., and Chicago as a way to improve water quality.

There are also psychological benefits to creating a skyline oasis. The green roof on the fifth floor of Atlanta's City Hall includes a patio area where staff can have lunch in a park-like setting, without ever leaving the building. In addition to the new Woodstock YMCA, a Clarke County hospital is con-



The green roof on Atlanta's city hall not only reduces stormwater runoff from the building, but also creates a garden like setting where employees can take a lunch break. (Candace Stoughton/TNC)

sidering a green roof renovation that would give patients access to a restive garden spot. The Chattahoochee Nature Center in North Fulton County plans to incorporate a green roof into the design of its new education building, slated to be constructed in two years.

"We would love the Woodstock Y to be the first building in Cherokee County to showcase this exciting concept," said Hicks. "It fits our mission of working for the health and well-being of our citizens and our communities."

I suspect we will be hearing a lot more about green

roofs in the near future. Especially here in the Etowah watershed where people are concerned about the quality of their drinking water and the health of their local streams. For more information about green roofs go to www.greenroofs.com

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