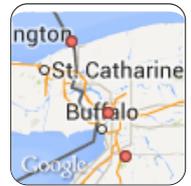


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Tri-Main Center studies installation of largest 'living roof' in WNY

ANNISE CELANO
Reporter

Where's the story?



Kevin Connors, left, and Jason Long, of eco_ logic STUDIO, look over plans for the possible installment of a green roof on the Tri-Main Center. Photo by Daniel Rosati. Purchase color photos at www.BeeNews.com

Buffalo's Tri-Main Center might eventually boast the largest "green" roof in Western New York.

According to Matt Wolfe, Tri-Main Development general manager, the repurposed manufacturing plant, home to various businesses and artists, is conducting a green infrastructure feasibility study with the intention to make some major implementations.

"We're constantly looking at ways to reduce energy costs and to be more green," said Wolfe, noting that in recent years the building has implemented recycling programs for its tenants, replaced fluorescent lighting fixtures, and installed a more efficient boiler.

Over the course of the next three months, Kevin Connors, principal at eco_ logic STUDIO, an architectural firm specializing in green design and neighborhood revitalization, also located in the Tri-Main Center, will continue conducting the green infrastructure feasibility study to weigh the costs and benefits associated with the potential project and ultimately determine whether all or some of the proposed modifications can be

brought to fruition.

Also working on the feasibility study are two area firms — Optima Design and Engineering, which will look at the capacity of the roof to support additional weight, and Green Top, a living roof construction company.

Connors estimated the project's cost to Tri-Main Development at approximately \$500,000 but noted the possibility of being awarded up to 90 percent reimbursement through a New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation yearly grant program dealing with green infrastructure.

According to Connors, in addition to analyzing the benefits of putting a living roof made up of mostly sedum, or flowering plants, on the building located at [2495 Main St.](http://www.bee.com) —

about 50,000 square feet of rooftop — the study will also factor in the possibility of porous painting and adding



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cisterns, or large-scale rain barrels — all of which would help keep the hydrology of the site sustainable and identify as “green” alterations.

“It would be my hope that we could do all of them,” said Wolfe. “If not, I’m sure we could do some of them.”

According to Wolfe, the project has a twofold advantage for Tri-Main Development: upholding its environmental responsibility and also helping to reduce building energy costs.

Among many foreseeable operating cost reductions for Tri-Main Development, Connors said the proposed green infrastructure’s primary advantage would be in the environmental impact, citing the combined sanitary and storm water sewer systems in the City of Buffalo, upon overflow, to be a catalyst for river pollution.

“If you think about what this land was like before it was settled, it would take forever for a drop of rain that landed right here [at the Tri-Main Center] to get to the [Niagara River](#). Now it takes about a half an hour,” said Connors. “So all that water that comes down in a torrential rainstorm, it’s immediately going into pipes and it’s going towards the river as quickly as possible because we’re just trying to get it off the ground.”

Connors also noted that the green roof would last much longer than a polymer one, for example, as the living species would not be affected by deteriorating exposure from the sun’s ultraviolet radiation. It also would have some cooling advantage and would dampen exterior noise, such as from trains, which would cause a reverberation on one metal section of the existing roof.

“It would also involve capturing rainwater to offset water that’s lost through their steam boiler system,” said Connors, noting that the building also has to pay the city for its water and sewer use. “So we can reduce their operating costs by capturing rainwater and at the same time reduce combined sewer overflows that cause pollution.”

According to Wolfe, this green infrastructure project — provided the feasibility study proves it a holistically beneficial investment — would be the largest scale of its kind that the building has undertaken.

Connors added that eco_ logic STUDIO has also been working with PUSH Buffalo to develop about 20 rain garden sites in the city and also install a green roof for them. Connors also helped install a living roof on the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority bus shelter at North Division and [Ellicott](#) streets.

Given the Tri-Main Center’s longstanding history, according to Wolfe, the project would be fitting to its identity in the area, as well as Buffalo’s attitude toward historic preservation.

“There’s a lot of talk in Buffalo about refurbishing, rehabilitating, the reuse of old buildings,” said Wolfe. “That, now, is becoming very popular — or the buzz — in Buffalo. ... I think Tri-Main is known to some as the first large-scale reuse project in the city.”

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