

DAILY NEWS

BRONX

Bronx building's once black roof will be both blue and green

Osborne Association trying innovative plant and rock system to retain water. System will keep sewage from entering the East River.

BY DENIS SLATTERY / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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The roof of the Osborne Association's headquarters at 809 Westchester Ave. in the Bronx will feature plants and water retention trays to help keep sewage out of the East River.

One Bronx nonprofit is going green ... and blue.

A state-of-the-art, eco-friendly system that uses plants and water retention trays to reduce stormwater overflow is coming to a Longwood roof.

The project, a combination of "green" and "blue" technologies, originated in 2011 when the Bronx non-profit Osborne Association became one of 29 partners chosen for the city's Green Infrastructure Grant Program.

The grant awarded \$3.8 million to fund the construction of green infrastructure projects designed improve water quality across the five boroughs.

"It will capture stormwater and reduce the amount of pollution in the East River," said Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland.

The "blue" portions of the rooftop will utilize trays and small rock beds to hold rainwater and allow for slower or reduced entry into the sewer system.

The plants and soil that make up the remainder of the "green" system help to absorb and repurpose the water, leading to a 32% decrease in storm runoff.



Here's a close-up of the "blue" and "green" roof system.

To complete the project, Osborne spent roughly \$400,000 on top of the \$288,000 it received from the Department of Environmental Protection.

"We are excited about this project. With this blue and green roof, everybody wins," said Osborne Association Executive Director Elizabeth Gaynes.

Most of the city relies on a combined sewer system that carries both rainwater and sewage — an antiquated system that overflows into the rivers during heavy rains.

City officials are hoping green and blue roof initiatives will help alleviate the problem.

"By easing pressure on our sewer system, green infrastructure will save New York billions of dollars it would otherwise have to spend on expensive detention systems," Strickland said.

Osborne, an organization that works with the formerly incarcerated, will also benefit from the earth-friendly technology.

The greenery reduces heating and cooling costs — and also can help the group's honey-making operation.

"We are continually seeking innovative solutions for problems both large and small," Gaynes said.

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