

# Real Estate

## ROOFTOP LIVING IS LOOKING UP

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Got rent woes? Fear not, the coach is in Page 24

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A breathtaking balcony atop the Time Warner Center  
(DORIAN MCGRATH FROM "ROOFTOP GARDENS," (REZZO) 2010)

# THE NYC ROOFTOP REVOLUTION



High above New York City's bustling sidewalks, a quiet revolution is taking place largely out of view.

Residences, offices, bars, warehouses and schools have been transforming their rooftops into platforms for socializing, exercising, screening movies, even bee-keeping and farming.

"It's as big as it's ever been, and the trend is growing more and more," said Roberta Amon, author of "Rooftop Gardens."

It wasn't always this way. Although New York City has a "long and storied tradition" of putting its rooftops to good use, the practice was ad hoc and informal, said Michael Krieger, lead architect at the Pratt Center.

People once used their rooftops to hang laundry or escape the sweltering heat. Wealthier blocks in Manhattan often had impressive rooftop gardens, while neighborhoods in Brooklyn have a history of rooftop coops housing pigeons.

But unlike, say, Paris, New York never fully embraced the idea, said architect John Coogan of OCV Architects.

All that is now changing. A convergence of influences



is at play, such as gentrification and developers with a desire to offer terraces and balconies. Meanwhile, businesses and cultural providers seeking to maximize space and be innovative also have embraced the concept. That's helped by eco-conscious city dwellers eager to use roofs in environmentally friendly ways, encouraged by incentives such as tax breaks.

David Graves was one early convert. He has been using city rooftops to keep bees — and

produce honey that he sells at farmers' markets — for more than a decade.

Graves uses about 12 Manhattan rooftops, from Harlem to the East Village, to store hives. Most are atop friends' residential buildings.

Standing eight floors above lower Manhattan, Graves gazed out over the rooftops and added: "Wouldn't it be great if one day you flew over New York City and it was all blue with lavender? The bees would love that."



Top: An Upper East Side rooftop garden. Left: An infinity pool at SoHo Rooftop. Above, folks lounge at the Sky Terrace in midtown. (ABOVE: RJ MICKELSON/AMNY; TOP AND LEFT PHOTOS: NORMAN MCGRATH "ROOFTOP GARDENS," RIZZOLI 2011)

BY JOE JACKSON  
Special to amNewYork

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• **Rooftop Films** has been screening movies on roofs and other outdoor spaces since founder Mark Elijah Rosenberg projected film footage against a white sheet for some friends atop his East 14th Street building in 1997 – and was evicted. This year's season, which kicked off May 13, will screen on four different rooftops in Manhattan and Brooklyn in addition to other outdoor venues.

## Jump on the elevator to savor these views

### Culture

• **The Metropolitan Museum's rooftop garden** overlooking Central Park was created as an outside exhibition space in 1987, with countless artists' innovations displayed in six-month intervals ever since. It is currently hosting sculptures by Anthony Caro through October.

### Social

• **Ava Garden**, the penthouse bar at the Dream Hotel on W. 55th St., is a good rooftop drinking option. **230Fifth** is a midtown rooftop bar; its skyline views have won it numerous awards. Meanwhile, the cool crowd gathers 18 floors up at **The Standard Hotel Rooftop** in MePa.



vegetable farm on a warehouse roof in Greenpoint — was founded by Annie Novak and Ben Flanner in 2009. The farm operates a small community-supported agriculture program and an on-site farmers' market. It also caters to area restaurants. This summer, it will hold free talks on the roof every Sunday.

• In 2010, Flanner opened **Brooklyn Grange** on Northern Boulevard in Long Island City, Queens. The goal of this commercial organic farm is to connect city people more closely to farms and food production, and to make urban farming a viable enterprise and livelihood. Flanner aims to put more farms on roofs throughout the city and beyond in the future.

in the world:

• **At Park Avenue in the East 60s** sits a 3,200-square-foot rooftop modeled on the gardens of Versailles, with separate dining and cocktail terraces and room for 100 guests.

• **The Silver residence**, on the 76th floor of a Time Warner Center tower, is the highest private rooftop terrace in New York. It's so high up, the considerable number of sculptures, furniture and plants must all be bolted down. (JOE JACKSON)

### Environmental

• **Eagle Street Rooftop Farms** — a 6,000-square-foot organic

### Residential

New York boasts some of the most spectacular rooftop spaces

## The greening of Gotham's roofs

Fears of climate change and the search for solutions to excessive stormwater runoff are combining with various campaigns by the Bloomberg administration and nonprofit groups to promote the creation of environmentally friendly rooftops, said John Coogan of OCV Architects.

Greenroofs — a system of plants growing on a waterproof membrane on top of buildings — are leading the way. OCV designed its first greenroof in 2004 and has completed a dozen more since. "It will keep growing because the cost is coming

down and the manufacturers of roofs are getting into the game," Coogan noted.

New York City lags countries like Germany in this innovation. But it is beginning to catch up thanks to tax breaks, grants and enthusiasm among developers and home owners said Dwaine Lee, a green infrastructure professional, who recently spoke to an audience of affordable housing managers and developers.

"We're slammed," said Marini Majorelle, who founded Alive Structures in 2007 to help people convert their rooftops into usable spaces. (JOE JACKSON)



**Eagle Street Rooftop Farms in Greenpoint opened in 2009.** (ANNIE NOVAK)

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