

METRO NEWS

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How green is the Bronx

From rooftop gardens to solar panels, the boro goes eco-conscious

BY ABBY LUBY
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

THE BRONX is going green.

Rooftop gardens, vegetative walls and gleaming solar panels — the Green Movement here is big, and for many reasons.

“There are concerns about health issues,” said Miquela Craytor, executive director of Sustainable South Bronx, which trains workers in green construction.

Asthma is almost endemic in the industrial South Bronx, mainly from truck emissions. Planting trees and shrubs help soak up the airborne toxins that can cause asthma and other respiratory diseases.

The concern inspired FlatRate Moving and Storage to begin buying eco-friendly trucks using special toxin-reducing filters, as its general counsel David Giampietro put it, “to be an active part of the community rather than take a toll on it.”

FlatRate also installed a 50,000-watt solar power system for its new 40,000-square-foot facility.

Other businesses going green include Miss Grimble Desserts in Port Morris, where owner Errol Bier — out of concern about local asthma rates and for “continued growth and financial reasons” — just installed 168 solar panels that will supply 23% of the electricity.

“The benefit of using solar power instead of burning fossil fuels is that it’s equal to planting 125 trees a year, recycling 1 million cans of soda a year or not driving 75,000 miles a year,” said Bier, who was guided by the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp.

New York State and federal energy efficiency programs paid about 12% of the total cost. With



Habitat for Humanity volunteers and Delta employees install a roof garden on Fox St. designed to save costs on heating and air conditioning. Below, FlatRate Moving & Storage put solar panels on its roof to reduce energy bills. Photos by Mariela Lombard (above), Enid Alvarez/Daily News

what he saves on electricity, Bier hopes to hire additional staff.

Planted “green walls” buffering industrial buildings to cut pollution was an idea Craytor offered to Simms Metal Management in Hunts Point. The 8,000-square-foot green wall there now runs a complete city block.

Earlier this month, Habitat for Humanity, which builds housing for the poor, helped install a roof garden at 715 Fox St. at Leggett Ave. The new seven-story building with 50 apartments had a 2,400-square-foot roof that was perfect for a garden, with 1,200 flats of shrubs, flowers and foliage.

“You can walk right on top of it,” said Josh Lockwood, Habitat’s New York City executive director. “The plants were selected for easy care — you only have to mow it once a year.”

Lockwood said the garden,



funded with \$100,000 from Delta Airlines, will save energy costs on heating and air conditioning while producing oxygen and reducing carbon dioxide.

Not all greening is outdoors.

Palladia Inc., a large multi-service agency that aids the homeless, has sponsored the greening of a new Section 8 and rent stabilized building at Fox Point. Inside there is low-emitting parti-

cle board for walls, nontoxic paint and carpets without formaldehyde. The building is also well insulated and ventilated to cut down on mold.

“Since we opened in May, one tenant told us her asthma symptoms have all but gone,” said Jane Valez, Palladia’s president/CEO. Sally Bernstein, project coordinator for the building, said they encourage tenants and the superintendent to use green products. “We hold ongoing education meetings and offer a handbook on living healthy.”

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., believes all the sustainable initiatives are adding to the quality of life in the Bronx.

“It also creates educational, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities while setting an important standard for sustainability in the Bronx that is irreversible,” the beep said.

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