

Going green will save some green

Rafe Arnott, Special to the Times

Publication: Abbotsford Times

Issue: Tuesday, October 20, 2009

Going green when building or upgrading an existing residence or structure usually makes people see red when it comes to the costs, but green roofing can now put proponents of the eco-technology in the black.

While the initial investment of "greening" a home or office can usually cost more than traditional methods, the return on investment is solid, with most green upgrades paying for themselves over a relatively short period of time, according to industry experts.

Other factors to consider when mulling over green technology are ancillary benefits.

Chris Bruntlett is the senior project manager at Streamline Enterprises, an Abbotsford-based company specializing in green roofing and insulating technologies.

The residential architect and designer was drawn to the eco-friendly aspects of the projects Streamline was involved in.

"We're involved right from the start in consulting, design, engineering and then providing the actual Living Wall or Green Roof system."

Bruntlett describes the green roofing and wall systems as an extension of the building envelope that increases insulation, helps the environment and decreases heating and cooling costs.

"Plus, it basically triples the life of your roof," he said.

By using plants and soil in special rubber/plastic containment mats and linked containers, the systems regulate the surface temperature of the building, he said.

The wall components work in a similar manner and are formed from a modular aluminum panel system with embedded cells to carry the soil and plants.

Response to the technology has been favourable, said Bruntlett.

"Up to this point it has been mainly commercial clients - condominium projects, office buildings."

While the technology is more economical and beneficial on a larger scale, and is not cheap, Bruntlett said the technology provides tangible dividends.

"It pays for itself fairly quickly. We tout the more collective benefits; the reduced cost of storm water management in a neighbourhood, the absorption of carbon in the atmosphere, the increase of local biodiversity and the ability to grow your own food on your building are all benefits, and are reasons why municipalities and cities are trying to encourage this kind of technology."

Green roofing technology is becoming so prevalent in B.C., said Bruntlett, that the company's latest project - a massive refrigerated warehouse roof in Coquitlam - came about because green roofing is a requirement in new buildings of a certain square footage, and is enforced by local bylaws.

"They're really the first municipality in Canada to require green roofs and Toronto recently followed suit."

While Canada and the U.S. have been slow to embrace green technology, Bruntlett said countries such as Germany have a \$4-billion per year green roofing industry that employs thousands of people.

"Europe is definitely the groundbreaker . . . the German green roofing industry has been going for more than 20 years. North America is catching on and is certainly ahead of places like South America and Asia."



Yee Jee Tso photo

Abbotsford-based Streamline Designs, which specializes in designing sustainable buildings, installed this roof top green space and living wall for a restaurant in Vancouver. Incorporating or adding "green" to new or renovated buildings pay off - using foliage can triple the life of a roof, reduces storm water management costs and boosts the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

