

Los Angeles is looking at green roofs:

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L.A. City Council Explores Green Roof Concept

(CBS) LOS ANGELES The Los Angeles City Council is reportedly looking into how green roofs can help improve the environment.

A green roof can be grass over a thin layer of soil on a roof or it can be more elaborate with deeper soil, shrubs and trees. It can have several benefits, said L.A. Deputy City Engineer Deborah Weintraub.

It insulates the building, keeping it cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

It can reduce storm water runoff. It provides a habitat for wildlife, and can extend the life of the roof.

It can also affect the temperature of the city by mitigating what are called "urban heat islands," she said. Heat-absorbing surfaces raise the temperature of the surrounding air, while green surfaces reduce it.

"If you looked at LA a hundred years ago you would have seen a lot more landscaping," said Weintraub. "With all the construction we have now put in the LA basin we have increased the temperature of the basin. By putting green roofs on buildings we would be adding green space that would help to lower the temperature."

Green roofs do require some maintenance, including irrigation, she said.

The council has approved plans for a green roof to be incorporated in a new neighborhood city hall in Council District 9, which covers Downtown and South Central Los Angeles.

The city's Environmental Affairs Department has a web site that private building owners can find additional information regarding green roofs.

The idea of green roofs is attracting interest in several parts of the world, Weintraub said, especially in China. The American architect William McDonough, who is a champion of green roofs, has been commissioned to design several large urban developments there. If a whole city had green roofs the effect on the environment would be very great, Weintraub said.

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