



# **Green Roof: A Case Study: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates' Design For the Headquarters of the American Society of Landscape Architects**

*Christian Werthmann*

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The benefits of green roofs are many: longer roof lifespan, greater sound insulation, reduced heating and cooling system needs, and a cutback in storm water runoff. Green roofs decrease carbon dioxide and increase oxygen in cities, making them cooler in the process and reversing the so-called "urban heat island effect." In short, green roofs are the great green hope of many environmentalists, politicians, and architects interested in more efficient and environmentally aware buildings. From a design standpoint, however, there is less consensus. While some see the roof garden as a visual statement using plants, geometric lines, and sculptural elements, others believe concerns for sustainability should outweigh visual appeal. A green roof that combines aesthetics and mechanics has become the goal of many a landscape architect.

To address this quandary, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) commissioned renowned landscape architects, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in collaboration with the Conservation Design Forum to design a 3,300-square-foot green roof garden for its Washington, D.C. headquarters. In *Green Roof Gardens*, author Christian Werthmann uses this detailed case study to explain the history, methodology, and design process of green roof garden construction, providing a rich source of inspiration and technical knowledge for anybody interested in this simple solution to many of the environmental challenges we face today.

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