



Whitehall opens 30,000 s/f green roof designed by G. Masucci Architects; Site Works also consulted on the \$6.5 million project

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Bronx, NY The Whitehall, a high-rise co-op in the Riverdale community, has completed its new, fully landscaped green roof at 3333 Henry Hudson Pwy. The project represents one of New York City's largest and most innovative apartment building amenities – a landscaped, park-like green rooftop encompassing two-thirds of an acre.

“We had this unbelievable asset that was severely underutilized,” said Jeffrey Moerdler, president of The Whitehall’s board of directors, referring to the 30,000 s/f deck that sits one story above street on the building’s health club and pool level.

He said, “We knew there was real potential to turn this neglected space into a tremendous amenity that would add value to the property and to individual units. So, we came up with a world-class design and got total buy in from the board and sponsors.”

The \$6.5 million project was designed by Genie Masucci, principal of G. Masucci Architects, LLC, in consultation with Site Works, one of the major landscape architects of Manhattan’s High Line. The Whitehall roof-top park sits above the Henry Hudson Pwy. at almost the same height as the High Line’s right-of-way above Manhattan’s West Village streets.

Its winding, tree lined walking path is long enough to wander and surrender one’s thoughts to the natural landscaping that comprises a variety of grasses, flowering shrubs and wildflowers indigenous to the Hudson Valley. Because of its large area and off-street location, the rooftop park can support a range of activities from quiet and personal to large active groups.

Considerable thought and planning achieved the crucial balance between aesthetic design and programming.

According to the architect, “Sundecks were included that also serve as areas for large gatherings, a playground for young children, areas for small group gathering such as a fire pit and a gazebo, quiet intimate areas for reading or contemplation under beautifully shaded arbors, and several gardens, all connected by a walking track designed to make the ‘journey’ between different areas that are full of variety and interest. A cascading waterfall feature symbolizes The Whitehall’s unique perch overlooking the Hudson River.”

For the co-op owners (who represent about half of the building’s 440 apartments), it’s much more than a first-class amenity. Financed with the proceeds of a major recapitalization of the building, the project is also a major boost in equity and cachet, increasing collective and individual property values, impressing prospective owners, and re-affirming The Whitehall’s status as Riverdale’s premier luxury cooperative apartment residence.

Moerdler said, “The architect, along with the residents’ board of The Whitehall, spent a great deal of time at the beginning of the project, developing the functional program of the park to create the right mix of activities to serve both the residents and the health club. Several test fits were created to get the combination of the different activities that made sense to all, as well as determining the sizes of the areas, taking care not to try to fit too many activities which might make areas inadequate in size, nor too few activities, which would not take advantage of the unique size of the roof.”

The Whitehall opened in 1970 and has been home to television entertainment pioneer Ed Sullivan and baseball legend Willie Mays.

The aesthetics of the design are rooted in a strong basic geometry. A main path which is formed by a wide arc from the entrance to the roof connects the most active areas of the roof with each other. This main path is covered with a teak pergola, designed as a trellis for vining plants. Its shape echoes the arc of the path and forms the east edge of the main gathering area which takes advantage of views towards the Hudson River. The centerpiece of the main gathering area is a cascading water feature which buffers the area from the urban noises below.

The main path ends in a gazebo area large enough for about 20 people, architecturally detailed with the same rustic contemporariness of the pergola. The main path breaks down into meandering paths connecting the quieter activities. These meandering paths double as a walking track paved with a resilient material for comfort. Along the way, the user can find many alcoves with park benches for rest, the main pool sun deck around the corner hidden behind bermed gardens, the fire pit, and the playground, which is located away from everything, to segregate the noise.

The walking path design purposely limits views and vistas, by creating twists and turns creating surprises around corners and behind earth berms and heavy landscaping, until the straightaway of the west edge which creates a promenade with spectacular views.

Mood lighting is designed into the landscaping to extend the variety of moods into the evening hours. The exterior environment is in full view from the glass enclosed health club pool which is located at the east side of the green roof, and from the residential towers which look down on the roof.

Beyond the aesthetics of gardens and structures, the project upgrades handicapped accessibility for users to the roof, added security for the health club, and wireless internet throughout the roof area.

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