

GOTHAM

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green house

TO ENTICE BUYERS, DEVELOPERS ARE GOING BACK TO NATURE.

BY JILL SIERACKI

New Yorkers have limited options for green space. However, recent residential projects, and even some commercial ones, are recognizing people's need to feel a little grass between their toes. "Unique and quality outdoor spaces add a new dimension to people's lives that sometimes they didn't even know they were missing," says Steven Hurwitz, vice president of development at GFI Capital Resources Group, whose residences at 144 North Eighth Street in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, include an 18,000-square-foot wraparound deck with expansive lawns as well as space for gardening and yoga. "I think that buyers are starting to look for [outdoor space], and even if they aren't yet, once they experience it, it would feel claustrophobic to live without it."

Besides planted decks, developers are also customizing the last untapped area in real estate to attract buyers who want a little nature with their sophisticated nests—the roof. The secret, according to Harlan Berger, cofounder and CEO of Centaur Properties, is to make the space warm and user friendly. "I've been obsessed with roofs for probably eight years now, because I think it's the most valuable real estate in a building," says Berger, whose property at 305 West 16th Street in Chelsea features Zen rooftop gardens with evergreen-defined zones, and the pièce de résistance—a 34-foot-tall daisy sculpture by artist Robert Buchholz, which Berger discovered in 2006 at the annual Burning Man festival in Nevada. "At the beginning, it's hard to monetize it—it's not \$50,000 and it's not \$100,000. It's a lot of money, and my partner and I didn't always agree about it. But at the end of the day, I think if we had not made that investment, it would have hurt sales."

"Outdoor spaces add a new dimension to people's lives."

—STEVEN HURWITZ



Rooftop greenery, both real and virtual, is the amenity du jour.