

# GRCC

M A G A Z I N E

News from Grand Rapids Community College

Fall 2008

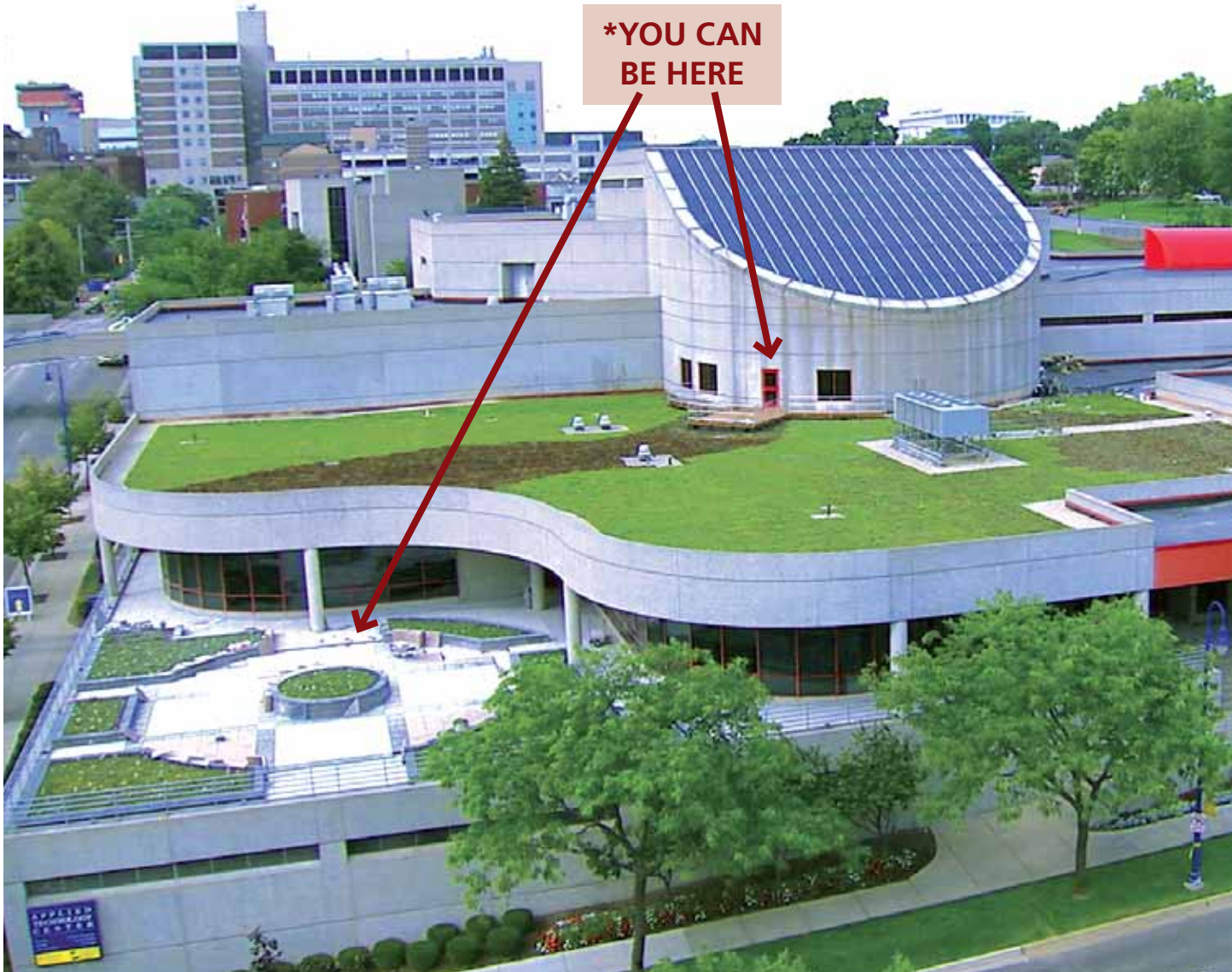


## GRCC's (not so) Secret Garden

Off-Campus  
Sites Bring  
GRCC Closer  
to Home

Nursing Program  
Goes Year-Around

Academic Program  
Boosts Athletes'  
Passing Game



**\*YOU CAN  
BE HERE**

# GRCC's (not so) Secret Garden

## Steelcase Foundation Brings GRCC's Newest Sustainable Space to Life; Visitors Welcome!\*

by Vicki Hudson

*Beyond aesthetics, the roof minimizes energy use, pollution, and lessens the flow of runoff into the city's storm water system*

As the concept of sustainability becomes better understood and accepted, green roofs are frequently in the news. So the fact that Grand Rapids Community College has just completed a green roof on top of their Applied Technology Center (ATC) may not seem like big news. But

the way it will be used is.

You will be able to actually see this green roof up close and learn from it.

The project, paid for with a grant from The Steelcase Foundation, has been a long-time goal of GRCC, especially the college's Sustainability Council. The top floor

of the ATC was chosen because of the space, the structural advantages and, most important, the potential to include a viewing deck. There was also room for a second, lower deck outside the culinary program's Heritage Restaurant that offered space for a natural herb garden for students to



maintain and diners at the popular working classroom to view and enjoy.

## A Project That Kept Growing In Scope

As it was installed, Ter Horst & Rinzema Construction kept the project ahead of schedule and under budget allowing the original pan for 12,000 sq. ft. to expand to 25,000 sq. ft. across the roof, as well as the deck that extends from the Heritage restaurant.

Students of all ages, as well as the public will be encouraged to learn about the plants and the roof's benefits as well as sustainability, the concept of using resources prudently so that those same resources will be available to future generations, too.

"I think The Steelcase Foundation liked the idea that our roof will not only use sustainability principles, but teach them as well," said Andrew Bowne, executive director of GRCC's Foundation, the group that sought the grant. "All the theory and benefits come to life right in front of the observer."

## What it Means to be Green

Why cover a roof with plants, you may ask. Let's have a mini-lesson right now.

Before there is anything built on a piece of land the area is usually covered with grass and trees. When buildings come, plants go. This often creates an "urban heat island," an excess of cement structures that produce a hot spot that can actually affect weather, even contribute to violent storms. But when that lost green space is replaced, the heat is reduced—the vegetation cools and slows the air and even helps settle and detoxify pollution.

Thomas Smith, director of facilities for GRCC, points out that there are many benefits to a green roof, some less visible than others. "There's the ecological side to it all," he said, looking out over the recently completed roof

from the third-floor vantage point. "The roof itself can actually save the college money because it enhances the roof's longevity and provides insulation year-around. It even enhances acoustics in the building."

Smith added that the surrounding community gets a bonus as well. Green roofs absorb rain, a feature that provides some relief to the city's storm water system—lessening the threat of overflow that pollutes our rivers that flow into Lake Michigan.

## We've Covered Everything

All this and it is pretty, too.

The little Sedum plants are drought-tolerant succulents that come in shades of green, purple, yellow, pink and white, and are found around the world but only north of the equator, including above the Arctic Circle. Most have five petals, five sepals (leafy structure around the base of the flower), five carpels (seed pods) and ten stamens, but some do vary.

GRCC's roof has two green shades and a purple variety, though from late Fall to Spring, it will be just as brown and snow covered as most of our Michigan foliage.

**\*Come visit soon and see for yourself.  
Or, If you would like a preview, visit  
[www.grcc.edu/sustainability](http://www.grcc.edu/sustainability)**



**For additional information,  
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## GRCC Green Roof

Initial Project Size: 17,450 sq. ft.

Project Architect: GMB

Landscape Architect: GMB

General Contractor: Ter Horst & Rinzema Construction Co.

Green Roof System: LiveRoof LLC

Green Roof Supplier/Installer: Summit Landscape Management, Inc.