



ERIC RICHARDS PHOTO

The rooftop of the new 42-story Optima Chicago Center | luxury rental building in the Streeterville neighborhood includes an area covered with grasses and ground cover, and a hot tub.

ROOFTOP RETREATS

Elevated terraces offer a place to unwind and watch the world go by

BY LESLIE MANN | Special to the Tribune

After moving to an apartment in the four-story Greenview Place building in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood in February, Burton Nelson thought he had lost a link to the great outdoors. No longer could he walk out his door to his yard.

But Greenview Place's 2,000-square-foot rooftop terrace is a compromise, said Nelson, 83. In fact, it is the go-to place for residents of the age-restricted building. "We walk or we sit around and tell each other stories — at our age, they're lies," Nelson said. "And, we use it for our soirees."

The rooftop gives Greenview Place residents an outdoor haven and a link to the church/school next door, which also has a rooftop terrace. "The kids play basketball and we watch, mostly," Nelson said. "I made one shot, but I admit I was only 6 feet away."

Rooftop terraces have been around almost as long as there have been roofs. But in recent years they have taken on creative designs, with some mimicking grassy suburban backyards and others offering a spalike ambience with hot tubs and mood lighting.

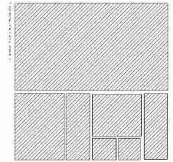
Homebuilders are more often looking to the roof for additional space.

Rooftop terraces are a must for the residences that Renaissance Cos. builds in Chicago, said Nancy Kapp, chief executive of the company that developed Greenview Place. "In the city, this is your safe, secure outside space," she said.

Jeff Benach, co-principal of Lexington Homes in Chicago, put rooftop terraces on the builder's row homes at the Lexington Square 2 development in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood, and made them optional at the new Lexington Square 3, although they added to his costs.

"The flat roof costs more than a pitched roof because it requires a different kind of truss to support the weight. And, you need a water drainage system," Benach said.

On a high-rise, the builder's cost of another elevator stop is incidental by the



time the cost is spread over all the units. As a result, rooftop terraces are sprouting on “boutique rentals” in Chicago’s hip neighborhoods.

“If you don’t use the rooftop, it’s a missed opportunity,” said architect David Hovey, who designed colorful rooftops on the new 42-story Optima Chicago Center I luxury rental building and its future neighbor, the 60-story Optima Chicago Center II, in Chicago’s Streeeterville neighborhood. Optima I’s rooftop includes an area covered with grasses and ground cover, a hot tub and kivas (semicircle seating areas) with fire pits.

The Seneca on Chestnut, a new boutique apartment building across from the John Hancock Center and Water Tower Place, sports a rooftop terrace on the 17th floor. The former historic hotel was renovated by Chicago-based owner Waterton Residential.

Many of The Seneca’s tenants are medical students, who use the 300-square-foot terrace to retreat from their studies. During the Chicago Air & Water Show, residents gather on the terrace for panoramic views of the annual event.

Owners of private properties can turn ordinary roofs into extraordinary terraces by incorporating their personal style.

For instance, marketing consultant Jill Maremont



LEXINGTON HOMES

Rooftop terraces were included on row homes at Lexington Square 2 in the Bridgeport neighborhood.