

President's Award

Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects

A Rooftop Haven

Located in a South Shore neighborhood challenged by poverty and crime, the Gary Comer Youth Center offers a welcoming space for indoor activity. And now, its 8,160 square foot green roof is pushing activity outdoors and provides the crowning touch to a building recognized for its bold architecture.

The landscape architect worked closely with the architect and donor to develop a vision for a green roof to include both a working flower and vegetable garden, and suggested that the center employ a full-time gardener to enhance educational program development and manage maintenance. The result is a garden used in extremely creative ways for horticultural learning, environmental awareness and for food production.

Both reducing climate control costs and providing an outdoor classroom, the green roof is able to withstand enthusiastic children digging for potatoes and carrots with garden tools. Soils 18 to 24 inches deep allow for viable food production, including cabbage, sunflower, lettuce and strawberries. Sharp differences between ground temperatures and those on the roof mean that the rooftop is in a different climate zone and can be utilized throughout the winter. The resulting garden, only two years old, is still evolving.

Figure A: A planting plan for the green roof calls for a variety of vegetables and fruits including carrots, potatoes, cabbage, lettuce and strawberries.

Figure B: The two-foot deep garden provides mass that is critical to the acoustical performance of the space below.

Figure C: The master gardener directs garden youth programming and collaborates with the center's chef on food education.

Figure D: Children's first experience in the garden is through color. Youth match paint cards they select with a plant or flower in the garden.

Figure E: An aerial shot shows the scale of the 8,160 square foot green roof with soils that are 18 to 24 inches deep to allow for viable food production.



FIG. A



FIG. B



FIG. C



FIG. D



FIG. E