

AUDIO SCRIPT

[F1: Female Interviewer; M1: Male Interviewee]

F1: Good evening, listeners. Welcome to the Environmental Report. With me today is Jeremy Northrop, founder of a company called GSRS Inc. It stands for Garden and Solar Roof Solutions. Welcome, Jeremy.

M1: Thanks for having me, Barbara.

F1: Now, tell the listeners a little about your company and why you started it.

M1: Well, I noticed a global trend of planting gardens and installing solar panels on the rooftops of buildings. The idea has been around since the 1980s, but it has become more popular over the past decade. Many governments now offer tax breaks to building owners who install solar panels and plant roof gardens. The French government has even passed a law that requires owners of new commercial buildings to at least partly cover their roofs with plants.

F1: What are the benefits of a green roof?

M1: Well, there are many benefits, Barbara. Green roofs are great for the environment. It's widely recognized that a green roof improves air quality. Plants produce oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Green roofs also capture the water from rain. This is important because rainwater typically flows off a normal roof, enters an underground storm-water system, and ends up in the rivers and sea. This water contains many pollutants such as oil from vehicles and so on. Green roofs capture up to 80% of rainwater compared to 24% for normal roofs.

F1: So green roofs reduce the amount of dirty water flowing into the river ...

M1: Exactly, Barbara. Green roofs also reduce energy costs. Of course, it depends on the climate of the region you live in, but typically during summer a green roof significantly lowers the temperature beneath the surface of the roof. For example, if it's 65 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the temperature underneath a normal roof can increase to 90 degrees. With a roof garden, the temperature decreases to 62 degrees. A study conducted in Chicago estimated a savings of \$100 million in air-conditioning costs each year if all buildings had green roofs. And if you install solar panels, you save even more.

F1: A roof garden with solar panels must be expensive to install, right?

M1: Yes, it's true that the initial cost is higher, but you'll save money over time. Over a green roof's lifespan of about 40 years, people will save about \$200,000. Nearly two-thirds of that comes from lower energy costs.

F1: Wow, that's a lot of money! And roof gardens look beautiful, too.

M1: That's right, Barbara. A roof garden looks stylish on any building. Additionally, studies have shown the positive health effects of green space. It decreases stress, helps lower high blood pressure, and increases feelings of happiness and well-being. Another important benefit is that a roof garden provides a habitat for birds, bees and so on.

F1: Who are your clients, Jeremy?

M1: We have about a 50-50 mix of commercial businesses and private customers.

F1: What happens when someone contacts you about a solar garden?

M1: Well, so...the preliminary stage involves a structural analysis of the roof. Solar panels and gardens are heavy, so our engineer needs to check that the roof is secure, in accordance with the government's regulations. Then the engineer coordinates with our landscape architect and gardeners to design a solar garden that meets the client's needs.

F1: Well, it sounds like a great business to be in.

M1: It is, Barbara. It's very satisfying to educate people about the mutual benefit that green roofs and solar panels can provide, both to ourselves and to the environment.

F1: Interesting. We have to take a short break now. Don't go away ...