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## NEWS AND OPINION

## Seeing Green

### Will Roxborough be Philly's first sustainable neighborhood?

By Erica S. Brath

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Poised for fresh development:  
Yoga and meditation teacher Sati  
Rose is an eco pioneer in  
Roxborough.

Last week in this space we presented plans to improve Roxborough's distressed Ridge Avenue corridor. Funds have been secured for improvements to the retail district in the hope new streetscapes will attract new businesses.

And while the area east of Manayunk could benefit from an influx of new arrivals scurrying up the Ridge en masse, a small group of determined business owners is working to ensure the rebirth is sustainable.

"Roxborough is a very green neighborhood in the sense that there's a lot of green space, and sustainability is something we believe in, in our own business strategies, so why not try to attract other like-minded businesses?" says Rick Diamond, who owns Roxborough Real Estate, a real estate investment and leasing company.

Diamond has two decades of experience in the real estate industry, and also sits on the Roxborough Development Corporation's (RDC) Promotion Committee. He says he started his company two years ago because the historic neighborhood has potential.

"We have almost 40,000 inhabitants here in Roxborough. It's a very strong neighborhood. They have such a sense of ownership," says Bernard Guet, executive director of the RDC. "Very often [residents] will tell you, 'We've been here for three generations or four generations.' It's really interesting that in the middle of the city it's like its own independent neighborhood."

And many believe an infusion of new blood dedicated to local growth is just what the area needs.

Both Diamond and Sati Rose, owner of GreenLife Health and Wellness Center, which shares the building with Roxborough Real Estate, are working to attract green businesses to the area.

"We've targeted other businesses that are sustainable types of businesses, and GreenLife was the first business besides ourselves to occupy this space in this corridor," says Diamond, referring to the Roxborough Green Corridor, an initiative he and Rose are spearheading.

Tucked into the back of the building on the 6200 block of Ridge Avenue, GreenLife's bright rehabbed yoga studios and shared space are a model of what Rose would like to see Roxborough become.

"Basically what my role is in the corridor outside of the business is just to help use my business as an anchor to really draw other business in," says Rose. "We're doing a lot of marketing, doing everything possible to get this going. I want people to know it's safe to move here now."

The plan is for the green corridor to extend from Gorgas Park to Lyceum Avenue.

"We're actually soliciting investors now, and will continue to try to get grants if possible," she adds. "We're just basically reaching out and saying, 'Come and check us out. We're legitimately doing this. See what you can do,' because we want them to become involved."

For Diamond and Rose, who teaches yoga and meditation, living green isn't just a hot marketing concept.

"We've tried to embed sustainability into everything we do," says Diamond, who notes that his company recycles and uses environmentally friendly paints and building materials in its renovations. Additionally, both businesses are powered by PECO wind energy.

GreenLife is a registered member of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, a nonprofit coalition of businesses and entrepreneurs working to build a more socially, environmentally and financially sustainable local economy.

The green corridor has already attracted interest from a range of businesses, including a massage therapist, an acupuncturist, a green cleaning products company and a recycled clothing boutique.

"Philadelphia needs this now. It's a time when people are coming and saying it's the worst, most dangerous city with the highest crime rate and all this stuff, and I don't see any of that on my street," says Rose, who lives a few blocks from GreenLife.

And while attracting entrepreneurs with a similar vision remains the goal, creating an inviting business corridor for everyone just makes good business sense.

"The reality is we're a nondiscriminatory renting facility. If someone comes in and says, 'I run this kind of business--we're not green and we're not sustainable. Will you still consider us?' Sure, we'll still consider them,"

says Diamond. "Because hopefully, by what we're doing and what others are doing, we can encourage others to slowly, progressively move toward a more sustainable lifestyle."

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