

Planet Traveler boldly goes greener



► Mayor David Miller and Tom Rand, author of *Kick The Fossil Fuel Habit: 10 Clean Technologies To Save Our World*, on the rooftop deck of Planet Traveler, "the greenest hotel in North America," which Rand co-developed.

► Author and green entrepreneur behind energy-efficient hostel

College buddies Tom Rand and Anthony Aarts took different paths after graduating from the University of Waterloo. Rand became a green-tech venture capitalist; Aarts ran a travellers hostel in Kensington Market.

Four years ago, their paths reconnected when Aarts looked at his business and decided "it was either get bigger or get out." He had his eye on a derelict building at College Street and Bellevue Avenue and needed a financial partner.

Rand agreed to sign on — but there was a catch. He would only fund the project if they aimed to make it "the greenest hotel in North America," with a goal of 75 per cent carbon-emission reductions. Four years and \$2 million later, Planet Traveler is built. About \$200,000 went towards the green retrofit, an investment that should begin paying for itself in eight years.

According to Rand, the money they're saving on geothermal heating alone amounts to more than the loan payments for the green retrofits.

Carbon reduction "makes us more economically competitive, because every dollar I don't spend on energy I can spend on

Cutting way back

Here are some of Planet Traveler's green features.

- Geothermal heat pumps, which draw heat from 115 metres below the Earth's surface through a series of pipes, are "the heartbeat of the building," Rand says. It took six months of slashing through municipal red tape to bury almost two kilometres of piping in an adjacent city-owned laneway.
- The roof bears two kinds of panels: Photovoltaic, for powering the building; and solar thermal, for heating water.
- Copper coils encircling the drainage pipes recover heat lost down the drain and use it to warm incoming cold water.
- The entire building is lit by LEDs, which, all combined, use less energy than a toaster.

something else," Rand said. He hopes the project will be a model for retrofitting larger buildings.

"Everybody could do it."

The hostel holds 114 beds at \$30 per dorm-style bunk or \$75 for a private room. Its doors open in three weeks. "We'll see what the market will bear," Aarts said.

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