



Active RoofTops
South Europe

CASE STUDIES FACTSHEETS **France**



This project has been funded by various national research and development agencies under the Driving Urban Transitions Partnership, which is co-funded by the European Commission.



OPERA DE BASTILLE

Paris, France
Area: 2,500 m²



credits: Topager

Building Typology

Opera House

Roof Type

Flat – Accessible

Rooftop Intervention

Productive urban farm

Intervention Overview

Previously underused technical terraces at the Opéra Bastille have been converted into a productive urban farm within the Opéra national de Paris ecological transition strategy. Operated by Topager, the rooftop combines vegetables, aromatic plants and beekeeping with guided visits, workshops and institutional events. Lightweight cultivation systems and water-retention trays allow food production without major structural reinforcement. The intervention was planned around the continued operation of a nationally important cultural venue, so roof access, maintenance routes and protection of the existing waterproofing were central design considerations.

Why this Case matters

The farm extends the environmental role of a cultural institution beyond its programme and into its building fabric. The project is a reference for integrating urban agriculture into complex, highly managed public buildings.

Key Features

- Lightweight growing systems selected to limit additional structural load.
- Water-retention trays integrated into cultivation areas.
- Existing waterproofing protected throughout conversion and operation.
- Controlled access and safety measures for staff, maintenance and visitors.

LA MANUFACTURE DES TABACS

Strasbourg, France
Area: 1,570 m²



Building Typology

Listed former tobacco factory, adapted to mixed cultural and educational use

Roof Type

Flat – Accessible terraces

Rooftop Intervention

Vegetated roof, productive garden, social / commercial use

Intervention Overview

The nineteenth-century Manufacture des Tabacs has been transformed from a closed industrial complex into a mixed ecosystem for research, arts, enterprise, hospitality and food. Because dense technical networks constrained planting at ground level, the design team treated the roof terraces of the central building as a visible 'fifth facade'. The 1,570 m² rooftop combines planted surfaces, productive growing areas, timber decks and gravel maintenance zones. A layered detention system developed by SOPREMA Entreprises under the name Skywater manages rainfall while supporting vegetation and reducing pressure on drainage infrastructure. This spatial mix supports public use, food production, urban cooling and practical maintenance within one coordinated roofscape.

Why this Case matters

A heritage retrofit showing how productive gardens, public terraces, water management and technical access can coexist where ground-level planting is constrained.

Key Features

- 715 m² of semi-intensive planting selected for high evapotranspiration.
- 252 m² productive garden supplying vegetables and herbs to the on-site restaurant.
- 341 m² accessible timber decking for restaurant and public use.
- 177 m² gravel finish retained for technical access and maintenance.

FRICHE LE BELLE DE MAI

Marseilles, France
Area: 8.000 m²



Source: lafriche.org, credits: Caroline Dutrey

Building Typology

Former Tobacco Factory

Roof Type

Flat – Accessible

Rooftop Intervention

Cultural and social activation

Intervention Overview

Friche la Belle de Mai is a long-term adaptive-reuse project occupying a former tobacco factory in Marseille. Its 8,000 m² roof terrace has become one of the site's defining public spaces, hosting concerts, festivals, open-air cinema, exhibitions, bars and collective events while providing panoramic views across the city. The roof was activated through successive rehabilitation phases rather than a single comprehensive redesign. Existing industrial structures were retained and the programme relies largely on lightweight, reversible event installations, an approach that respects structural constraints and allows the space to change with cultural needs. The terrace therefore functions as flexible civic infrastructure rather than as a fixed architectural object.

Why this Case matters

The project proves that large industrial roofs can become adaptable civic venues through reversible infrastructure, robust access planning and cooperative long-term management.

Key Features

- Regulated as an open-air public venue (ERP Type PA, second category).
- Fire safety, evacuation, accessibility and crowd management shape operations.
- Ramps, lifts and controlled circulation support public and technical logistics.
- Cooperative governance enabled through a 45-year municipal emphyteutic lease.



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CASE STUDIES FACTSHEETS

WP1: Setting the Scene, Co-Design and Consultancy Package.

D1.1A: Regulatory and Technical Landscape on Rooftop Design and Installation. Executive Summary.

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COOPERATION PARTNERS



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