



Two Ways Cities Can Reduce Summer Heat

By Ian Smith and Lucy Hutyra

When summer turns up the heat, cities can start to feel like an oven, as buildings and pavement trap the sun's warmth and vehicles and air conditioners release more heat into the air.

The temperature in an urban neighborhood with few trees can be more than 10 degrees Fahrenheit (5.5 Celsius) higher than in nearby suburbs. That means air conditioning works harder, straining the electrical grid and leaving communities vulnerable to power outages.

There are some proven steps that cities can take to help cool the air—planting trees that provide shade and moisture, for example, or creating cool roofs that reflect solar energy away from the neighborhood rather than absorbing it.

But do these steps pay off everywhere? Which is best, urban trees or cool roofs?

We study heat risk in cities as urban ecologists and have been exploring the impact of tree-planting and reflective roofs in different cities and different neighborhoods across cities. What we're learning

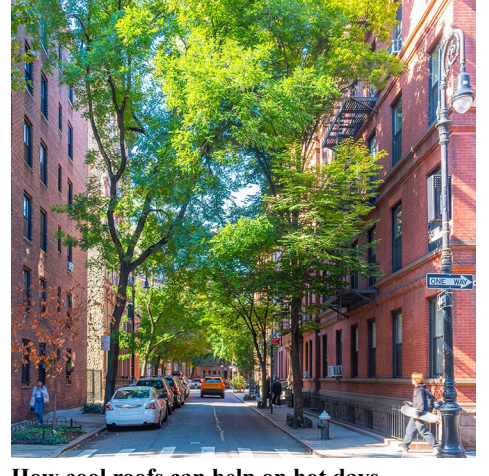
can help cities and homeowners be more targeted in their efforts to beat the heat.

The wonder of trees

Urban trees offer a natural defense against rising temperatures. They cast shade and release water vapor through their leaves, a process akin to human sweating. That cools the surrounding air and reduces afternoon heat. Adding trees to city streets, parks, and residential yards can make a meaningful difference in how hot a neighborhood feels, with blocks that have tree canopies nearly 3 F (1.7 C) cooler than blocks without trees.

But planting trees isn't always simple. In hot, dry cities, trees often require irrigation to survive, which can strain already limited water resources. Trees must survive for decades to grow large enough to provide shade and release enough water vapor to reduce air temperatures. Annual maintenance costs—about \$900 per tree per year in Boston—can surpass the initial planting investment.

Most challenging, dense urban neighborhoods where heat is most intense are often too packed with buildings and roads to grow more trees.



How cool roofs can help on hot days

Another option is "cool roofs." Coating rooftops with reflective paint or using light-colored materials allows buildings to reflect more sunlight back into the atmosphere rather than absorbing it as heat.

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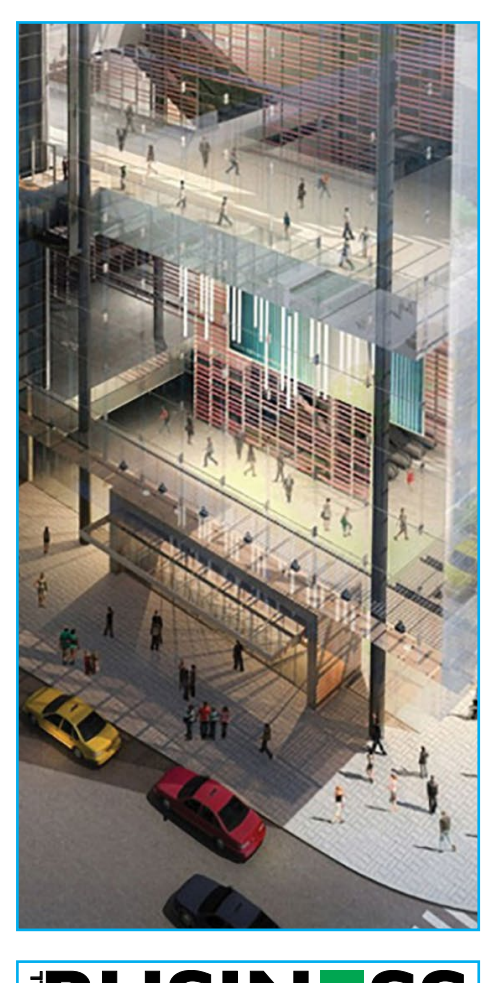
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The building will include a 2-story high Technology arena, second story observation space, offices, meetings and training rooms, break rooms with pantries, a wellness room, restrooms with showers and lockers, and an open work area for workstations or touchdowns. The facility will also contain various meeting spaces that are flexible, and capable of being subdivided into three or more rooms that may be utilized as bunk areas to house storm riders. All necessary and required mechanical, electrical, emergency back-up equipment, and systems with also be constructed.

The project construction duration is from Q1 2026 through Q4 2027.



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VIRTUAL EVENTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS 2026

Federal Contracting for Small Businesses Webinar
Tuesday, July 14, 2026, 12:00 pm–1:30 pm Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Irene Gonzalez, 208-334-1673, irene.gonzalez@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

Learn the essentials of federal contracting for small businesses. This event will cover the basics of navigating the federal contracting process, as well as the various certifications available to help your small business succeed in the government marketplace. Certifications include: 8(a) Business Development Program, HUBZone Certification, Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB/EDWOSB), and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB). Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable insights and resources to help your small business. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/federal-contracting-basics-and-certifications-for-small-businesses-tickets-1977729664666

SBA 101: Introduction to SBA Programs Webinar
Wednesday, July 15, 2026, 10:00 am–11:00 am Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration, Rhode Island District Office
Contact: Brian Hopkins, 401-528-4575, brian.hopkins@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

This free workshop, presented by the Rhode Island District Office, is designed to help entrepreneurs understand the various SBA programs and services available to help them as they start, expand, grow, and recover their businesses. This overview presentation covers: Introduction to the SBA; SBA Resource Partner Network—Business Training and One-on-One Counseling; Selling to the Federal Government—SBA Contracting Certification Programs; Access to Capital—Loan and Surety Bond Programs; International Trade Assistance; Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Assistance Loans. Register online for the free workshop webinar at https://www.sba.gov/event/80672

Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Webinar
Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 2:00 pm–4:00 pm Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Patrice Dozier, patrice.dozier@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

SBA is creating a space for Woman-Owned Small Businesses, via WOSB certification! Are you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions include an overview of the self-certification process, and a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-1986914400458

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