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The Natural Feature That Makes Some Neighborhoods 15 Degrees Cooler Than Others

Valentin Wechsler/Unsplash

Some New York City neighborhoods are much cooler than others, and it has nothing to do with air conditioning, a new study found.

The Nature Conservancy nonprofit studied every neighborhood across the five boroughs for five years and found that those with limited tree coverage can experience temperatures 10 to 15 degrees higher than those with greater coverage.

Trees naturally lower air temperatures, often significantly. In fact, according to Forests News, a single large tree can provide a cooling effect equivalent to 10 room-sized air conditioners operating for 20 hours per day.

The New York City neighborhoods with the greatest percentage of tree coverage, not including major parks or nature areas, ranked as follows:

- Stuyvesant Town–Peter Cooper Village, Manhattan (36%)
- Morningside Heights, Manhattan (36%)
- Jamaica Estates–Holliswood, Queens (35%)
- Douglaston–Little Neck, Queens (33%)
- Upper West Side–Manhattan Valley, Manhattan (32%)
- Washington Heights North, Manhattan (32%)
- Clinton Hill, Brooklyn (30%)
- Fort Greene, Brooklyn (29%)
- Bedford-Stuyvesant East, Brooklyn (27%)

By borough, Staten Island has the most tree coverage at 33%, followed by the Bronx at 27%, Manhattan at 23%, Queens at 20%, and Brooklyn at 19%.

Trees a major selling point in the city

Mike Plactere, who flips homes in New York City and on Long Island, says he definitely sees a "tree premium."

"I see the tree premium from the buying side: It shows up in what I pay for a house and what it resells for," he tells Realtor.com.

"If you want hard evidence that trees carry real value, look at what happens when one comes down without a permit," he says. "New York City and many Long Island villages enforce civil penalties for unpermitted tree removal. Nobody writes fines for removing something worthless."

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He notes that the trees that add the most value to a property are "unique specimen trees" such as the Japanese maple and older-growth trees such as oaks, as they tend to be larger, creating more privacy.

"A property that already has a mature screen [of trees] or an old oak canopy has something the neighbor can't buy at any price this decade," he adds. "The size matters less than the time. A homeowner can renovate a kitchen in two months.

"Nobody can rush an 80-year-old oak."

City dwellers with an abundance of trees nearby have not only something pleasant to look at, but also a place to go to instantly cool down. And they're willing to pay for the privilege.

Michelle Griffith of Douglas Elliman, who represents Manhattan real estate, says she is seeing a "tree premium" more than she has in years past.

"On the Upper East Side, I have buyers who specifically ask for tree-lined blocks or homes near Central Park because they want that connection to nature without leaving Manhattan," she says. "For families, it's about having easy access to green space. I've seen buyers pay more for that experience.

Mike Plactere, who buys and sells homes in New York City and on Long Island, says properties with plenty of trees definitely command a premium. COURTESY OF MIKE PLACTERE

Griffith says two apartments with similar layouts and finishes can be valued very differently if one has beautiful green views while the other looks directly into a neighboring building.

"You're not just paying for the apartment. You're paying for how it feels to live there every day," she says.

"I've haven't heard of people saying they want to buy a place near trees because it's cooler. But when you in live in New York City, the energy is so high that any level of proximity to trees or Central Park is calming to the nervous system," she says.

Manhattan luxury real estate agent **Frances Katzen** at Douglas Elliman agrees: "When you live in a concrete jungle, access to nature becomes a luxury in and of itself. Buyers might not always articulate it that way, but they instinctively respond to it."

She cites a condo at 300 Central Park West that needed a gut renovation but still sparked an intense bidding war.

"Buyers weren't responding to the finishes. They were responding to the location and the irreplaceable Central Park setting," she says. "In New York, an unobstructed green outlook is one of the rarest amenities you can own, and the market consistently rewards that."

So what's the premium on tree views?

Lisa Lippman of Brown Harris Stevens, who has long represented residences featuring the ultimate

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New York City amenity—a view of Central Park—pegs it as high as the double digits.

"Listing the property with photos of the trees in bloom [out of a window] can easily command 20% more," she tells Realtor.com.

Patrick Anderson-Higgins, a Compass agent with The Reisor Team, specializes in Tudor City, a well-known 13-building prewar complex on the East Side near the United Nations. The development is anchored by Tudor City Greens, two small parks with roughly a half-acre of landscaped greenery. Prices in the building range from $300,000 to $3 million.

"I can say with certainty that views of the green space are a huge motivation for buyers," he tells Realtor.com. "Units with park views tend to trade quickly and often command higher purchase prices than those of non-park-facing units."

Compass agent Patrick Anderson-Higgins says that units in Tudor City in Manhattan that overlook gardens and trees not only sell much faster, but are so desirable they are usually sold off-market. SCOTT WINTROW

Access to greenery commands a premium not just in price, but also in days on the market.

The agent currently represents three units at 2 Tudor City Place with courtyard, not garden, views. Each has been on the market for over 100 days, compared to the two comparable units he formerly represented that had park and tree views and were snapped up within 60 days.

"The main difference is the view of the parks and trees," he says, noting that units on the north side of the building—where the trees are—are rarely available as people tend to hold them longer because of the views. When these tree-facing units *are* available, they're often traded off-market—something allowed by their greater desirability.

Even a lone tree can be immensely treasured. Anderson-Higgins recalls a client who moved to Tudor City in 1959 and planted one outside of her window.

"She still lives in the building and doesn't want to sell because she doesn't want to lose the view of the tree," he says. But if she did sell? No doubt that tree would help her valuation.

Trees: An effective climate change fighter

The increased demand for cooling trees may have something to do with climate change. Whether or not people understand that trees can lower ambient air temperatures, they can certainly feel more comfortable when they walk down a tree-canopied block on a hot day.

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According to the New York State Climate Impacts Assessment, in the past quarter-century, temperatures have been higher in the state than in any period in recorded history, and the state has warmed more quickly than the U.S. average. Among cities in the Empire State, New York City typically experiences the most days with a high heat index.

From 1981 to 2010, New York City experienced approximately 17 days per year with temperatures topping 90 degrees Fahrenheit. By the 2080s, that number is projected to rise to an extremely uncomfortable 69 days annually, or nearly 20% of the entire year.

Higher temperatures can lead to extreme heatwaves (such as the one much of the country suffered through over the July 4 holiday weekend), drought, and wildfires.

More than 1.45 million acres across the Western U.S. have already been ravaged by wildfires in 2026, and multiple states are now bracing for what could be one of the country's most devastating fire seasons, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

But there's hope. Expect more trees —and hopefully cooler temperatures —in New York City's future.

The city has set a goal of reaching 30% tree canopy cover, up from the current 23.4%, by 2040, through its first Urban Forest Plan, a citywide strategy focused on planting, protecting, and maintaining trees.