

Trees in many US cities may indirectly increase atmospheric carbon

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2

3 **Abstract**

4 Urban trees are a critical part of the "green infrastructure" intended to make our growing
5 cities more sustainable in an era of climate change. The potential for urban trees to modify
6 microclimates and thereby reduce building energy use and the associated carbon emissions is
7 a commonly cited ecosystem service used to justify million tree planting campaigns across the
8 country. However, what we know of this ecosystem service comes primarily from unvalidated
9 simulation studies.

10 Using the first dataset of actual heating and cooling energy use combined with tree cover
11 data, we show that that contrary to the predictions of commonly used simulations, trees in
12 a cool climate city increase carbon emissions from residential building energy use. This is
13 driven primarily by near east ($< 20\text{m}$ from building) tree cover. Further analysis of urban
14 areas in the US shows that this is likely the case in cool climates throughout the country,
15 encompassing approximately 39% of the US population and 62% of its area (56%, excluding

16 Alaska). Our results add geographic nuance to quantification of the effect of urban trees
17 on the carbon budget and could have major implications for tree planting programs in cool
18 climates.

19 Introduction

20 Two global trends of the 21st century, climate change and increasing urbanization, have
21 deepened our need to make cities more sustainable, and urban trees are championed as
22 a means to that end. Several large cities in the U.S. have recently committed to large
23 tree planting programs (see Million Trees New York City and Million Trees Los Angeles).
24 Spending hundreds of millions of dollars, these cities hope that the environmental benefits,
25 particularly the reduction in building energy use and the associated carbon (**C**) emissions
26 from power plants, will outweigh the cost (Young, 2011).

27 A single urban tree has a much stronger impact on the carbon cycle than a non-urban
28 counterpart because an urban tree induces or reduces more C emitting human behaviors
29 than a rural one does. Both trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere, but the urban
30 tree requires more management (planting, watering, pruning, removal, chipping) and, by
31 modifying the microclimate, it can alter building energy use and the associated C emissions
32 (**ACE**) from power plants.

33 Trees primarily alter micro climates by 1) shading, 2) reducing wind speed, and 3) cool-
34 ing via transpiration. With the exception of transpirative cooling, which is mostly active
35 in summer, these effects can both increase or decrease ACE. Shading to the west of build-
36 ings greatly reduces summer cooling loads, but shading to the south of buildings, even by
37 deciduous trees, may increase winter heating loads (Heisler, 1986). Reduced wind speeds
38 have complex effects. They: 1) decrease convective heat loss, which is beneficial for winter
39 heating but detrimental for summer cooling, 2) decrease air infiltration which decreases both
40 heating and cooling energy use, and 3) decrease natural ventilation, increasing the need for
41 mechanical cooling (Huang et al., 1990).

42 Whether the net effect of trees is to increase or decrease ACE depends on the balance of
43 beneficial and detrimental effects on heating and cooling energy use. This is largely mediated
44 by the location of tree cover, the prevailing climate (e.g. number of heating- and cooling-
45 degree days), building characteristics, occupant behavior and the carbon content of a kWh,

which varies across the country depending on the fuel mix in the electrical grid.

Decades worth of research primarily by two research groups, the US Forest Service's (USFS) Southwest Research Station Urban Ecosystems and Processes group and the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab Heat Island Group (LBNL), have reported that, on average, trees reduce C emissions. In 2002, Akbari published a paper summarizing their group's findings: "Shade trees reduce building energy use and CO₂ emissions from power plants". In 1999, McPherson and Simpson wrote a technical report that was the basis of the iTree software, which has been used by thousands of communities around the U.S. to estimate ACE avoided. Their methodology was recently applied to estimate the effects of trees on ACE for the entire conterminous US (Nowak et al., 2017). Despite the number of publications on the topic, the length of time we have been researching the matter, and the many large cities with massive tree planting initiatives, our uncertainty about the effects of trees on building energy use is actually quite high (Pataki et al., 2006; McPherson and Simpson, 1999). The effect of trees on nearby building energy use is difficult and expensive to measure directly and complex to model.

Direct measures of the effect of trees on building energy use are rare, focused on cooling energy use, and limited in their ability to be extrapolated. To our knowledge, there are the only 5 studies that test the effect of trees on measured building energy use data (Akbari et al., 1997; Donovan and Butry, 2009; DeWalle et al., 1983; Parker, 1983; McPherson et al., 1989). Only two of these studies were of actual houses (not mobile homes nor models) and both are from Sacramento, CA and did not measure heating energy use (Akbari et al., 1997; Donovan and Butry, 2009). Only one of the studies was from a cool, heating dominated climate (typical of much of the US) and it studied a single mobile home in a forest (DeWalle et al., 1983).

Given the challenges inherent in collecting direct measurements, simulation studies are useful attempts to extend our understanding of how trees affect building energy use and ACE. But these simulations necessarily contain simplifications and generalizations which are

73 sometimes unrealistic or untestable due to lack of data.

74 The work from LBNL assumes: millions more trees are planted in an urban area (ex-
75 tremely ambitious); trees are planted to the west and south of buildings (ideal placement for
76 reducing cooling loads); and winter tree canopy transmissivity is 0.9 (0.7 is more realistic,
77 Heisler, 1986). In later work, microclimate wind effects are ignored (Akbari and Konopacki,
78 2005), and in earlier work, they use a three parameter equation fit to four data points to
79 estimate how wind speed is reduced by canopy cover (Heisler, 1990; Huang et al., 1990). Fi-
80 nally, the LBNL work uses potential evapotranspiration to predict cooling, and their model
81 uses parameters derived from crops. Given these assumptions, the authors note that their
82 work provides an upper boundary for the indirect effect of trees (Akbari and Konopacki,
83 2005; Huang et al., 1987).

84 USFS studies assume: lookup tables for the effect of tree shade on building energy use
85 are reliable (even though they may deviate from more detailed simulations by up to 10%,
86 Simpson, 2002); wind reduction only affects heating use in the winter, even though we know
87 cooling use is also affected, and they also use an overfit summertime leaf-on equation from
88 Heisler (1990). Evergreen trees are modeled as if they are windbreaks for rural farmhouses
89 in winter, even in suburban neighborhoods where other buildings and trees already block
90 significant winds; and estimated evapotranspirative cooling is optimistically high, higher
91 even than the self declared upper limit of Huang et al. (1987) (McPherson and Simpson,
92 1999).

93 The consequence of these assumptions is that simulations may overestimate the energy
94 reducing power of trees. What little validation we have has confirmed the general effects
95 of trees on energy use that we expect in hot climates, but also highlight the imprecision
96 of simulations as well as occasional discrepancies from empirical observations. Simulations
97 of Akbari et al. (1997) were off by 2-fold, though trees were about twice as beneficial as
98 predicted for the two houses studied. Donovan and Butry (2009) found trees to the north
99 actually increasing electricity use, unlike the predictions of McPherson and Simpson (1999).

100 Despite providing estimates for the effects of trees on building energy use and ACE for
101 anywhere in the country (Akbari and Konopacki, 2005) and the entire country (Nowak et al.,
102 2017), we still have no empirical validation of the effect of urban trees in a cool climate. More
103 than 3 out of every 4 people in the U.S. live in places with more heating degree days than
104 cooling degree days, and Americans use much more energy for heating than for cooling (U.S.
105 Department of Energy, 2009). To properly assess simulations of the role of urban trees in the
106 C budget, comprehensive analyses are needed to test the relationship between tree location
107 and energy usage (both heating and cooling). Our work in Madison, WI was the first to
108 address this need.

109 Results

110 Effect of trees on building associated C emissions

111 Trees increased C emissions associated with residential building energy use (**ACE**) in Madi-
112 son, WI. This effect was the result of a trade-off between their electricity (cooling) saving
113 and gas (heating) penalty. We estimated that 100m² of tree cover within 20m of a house
114 increased ACE from gas use by 0.77% (95% CI: 0.68%, 0.85%), and decreased ACE from
115 electricity use by 0.21% (95% CI: 0.34%, 0.080%). Our model for net ACE estimated that
116 100m² of tree cover increased ACE by 0.17% (95% CI: .09%, .27%).

117 The magnitude and direction of the effect depended on tree location relative to the
118 building. Figure 2 shows the percent change in the ACE from 100m² of tree cover. Trees
119 reduced ACE from electricity for all near regions except the east. Trees increased ACE from
120 gas for all regions, especially in the near south and east. For net ACE, tree cover in the near
121 east was the most important, having the only estimate with a 95% CI that excluded 0.



Figure 1: Simulated shadows of trees on a house at the latitude of Madison, WI. In the summer, trees to the west of buildings provide the most effective shade since solar angles are lower and cooling demand highest in the afternoon. In winter, even deciduous trees can significantly reduce solar gain.

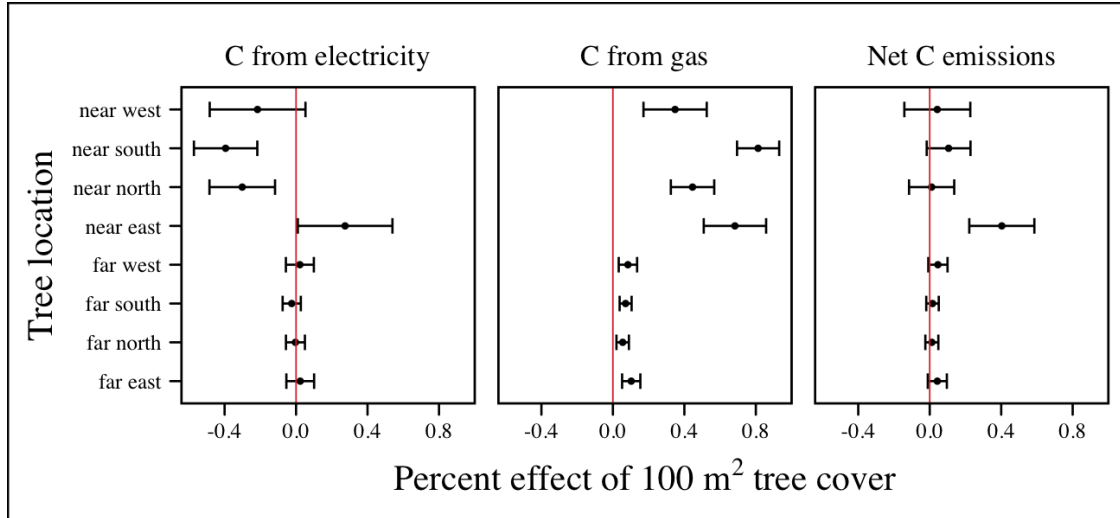


Figure 2: The percent effect of 100m² tree cover in different locations on C emissions from residential building energy use. n = 25095, bars indicate standard errors.

122 Effect of existing tree cover on a typical house

123 The median house in our sample was responsible for 1084 and 954 kg C annual emissions
 124 due to electricity use and gas use, respectively. Multiplying the median tree cover in each
 125 region (see table 1) by its coefficient we estimated the effects of typical tree cover on a typical
 126 house in Madison: electricity C emissions were reduced by 33.8 kg C / yr (95% CI: 14.7,
 127 52.7), but gas C emissions were increased by 102.3 kg C / year (95% CI: 92.9, 111.8). Our
 128 combined model estimated the net effect of existing tree cover is to increase C emissions by
 129 about 62 kg C/year (95% CI: 38.7, 85.3) for a typical house. This is 2.5% of the median
 130 house's annual ACE.

131 While tree cover in far regions had smaller per unit area effects than in near regions,
 132 there was more tree cover in farther regions, so when median tree cover was multiplied by
 133 the smaller coefficients some of the farther regions had larger typical effects than near ones
 134 (figure 3). Typical tree cover in the far east and far west regions had a greater estimated
 135 effect than cover in the near north and near west.

Region	min	mean	median	max
near west	0	193	179	742
near south	0	372	363	1443
near north	0	357	345	1197
near east	0	193	179	764
far west	0	974	960	2640
far south	0	1676	1653	4376
far north	0	1673	1661	4602
far east	0	967	955	2677

Table 1: Summary statistics for amount of tree cover (m^2) in each region around houses in Madison, WI.

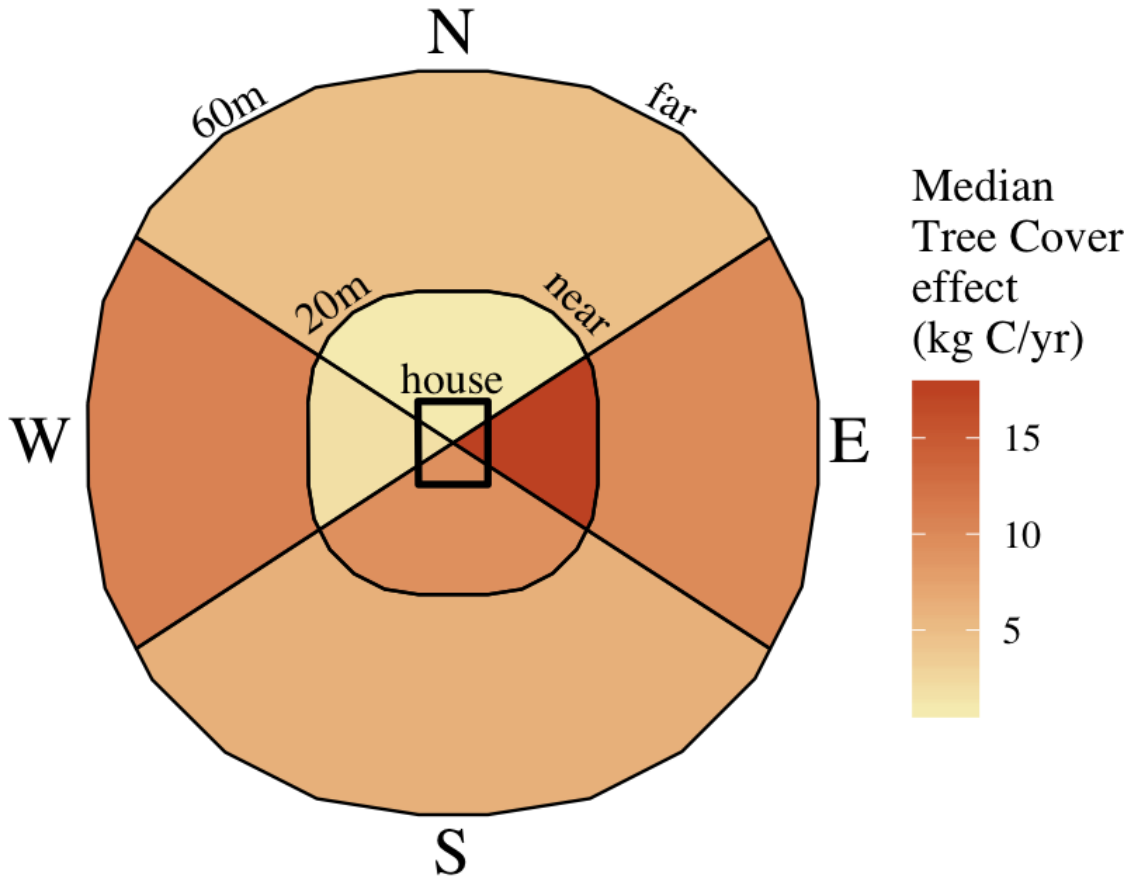


Figure 3: Effect of typical tree cover on a typical building's C emissions.

136 Comparing C emissions from energy use due to trees to C stored and 137 sequestered.

138 For comparison, consider a green ash tree with a crown area of 100m². This tree would store
139 approximately 1360 kg C in above ground biomass and it could sequester around 34 kg C /
140 year. That same tree in the near east region of a typical house in Madison was estimated
141 to increase C emissions by 9.8 kg C/yr (95% CI: 6.7, 12.9). In the near west the estimated
142 effect was 1.0 kg C/yr (95% CI: -2.1, 4.1).

143 Discussion

144 Interpreting Tree Effects

145 The effect of trees on ACE had strong statistical significance: trees increased ACE from gas
146 use more than they decreased ACE from electricity use, resulting in a net increase in ACE.
147 This result suggests that shading was the most important process and that whatever gas
148 savings trees may have provided in winter by reducing wind speeds was swamped by the
149 penalty in reduced solar radiation.

150 By separating tree cover into different locations, it appeared that for the most regions,
151 the beneficial effects of trees on electricity ACE *mostly* canceled out the detrimental effects
152 of trees on gas ACE, with the exception of the near east. This suggests that trees to the
153 east may have been responsible for most of the net increase in ACE. Eastern trees did not
154 provide electricity savings since houses require less cooling in the morning hours, but still
155 caused an increased gas use in winter. This agrees with Donovan and Butry (2009) who also
156 found trees to the east had no effect on electricity use.

157 As expected, trees to the near south had a strong effect on electricity savings, but they
158 also had a stronger gas penalty. Trees in the near west and near north had the weakest gas
159 penalty, which may have been due to the savings they provided by reducing wind speed.

160 Somewhat surprising was the weakness of the estimated electricity savings of trees in the
161 near west, which all simulations have predicted has the strongest effect.

162 **Comparing to past work**

163 Our findings agreed with some though not all of the past simulation studies, and the modeling
164 of wind is the main cause of discrepancies. Thayer Jr and Maeda (1985) modeled the shading
165 effects of south trees on building energy use and reported that trees increased emissions in
166 cities with more heating degree days than cooling degree days. McPherson et al. (1988)
167 investigated the shading and wind effects on building energy use in 4 cities, one of which
168 was Madison, WI. Converting their results into C, trees in Madison caused a small increase
169 in emissions, though their method for modeling wind was later criticized and abandoned
170 (Simpson and McPherson, 1998). Akbari and Konopacki (2005) developed a method to
171 predict the effect of a tree planting program and increasing roof albedo for any city in
172 the U.S. Figure 4 illustrates an application of their method to every census tract in the
173 conterminous US for pre-1980s houses using updated energy emission factors. About 40%
174 of the US population live in areas where the Akbari and Konopacki (2005) model predicts
175 that trees increase C emissions. While their methods were limited as mentioned above, and
176 they modeled theoretical, not existing, tree cover, their work suggests that many large cities
177 especially in New England, the Northwest, the Mountains and the Upper Midwest would
178 need to carefully consider the C implications of large tree planting programs.

179 Our empirical findings disagree with those simulation studies that model the relationship
180 between tree cover and wind speed following Heisler (1990) and McPherson and Simpson
181 (1999). When the beneficial effects of wind are excluded for models of several cool climate
182 cities: Toronto (Akbari and Taha, 1992), Chicago (Jo and McPherson, 2001), Minneapolis,
183 Sacramento, and Washington (Huang et al., 1990), trees either have no effect or increase
184 energy use and ACE, which agrees with our general findings. The iTree model of McPherson
185 and Simpson (1999) predicts that the shading effects of a large deciduous tree in the Norther

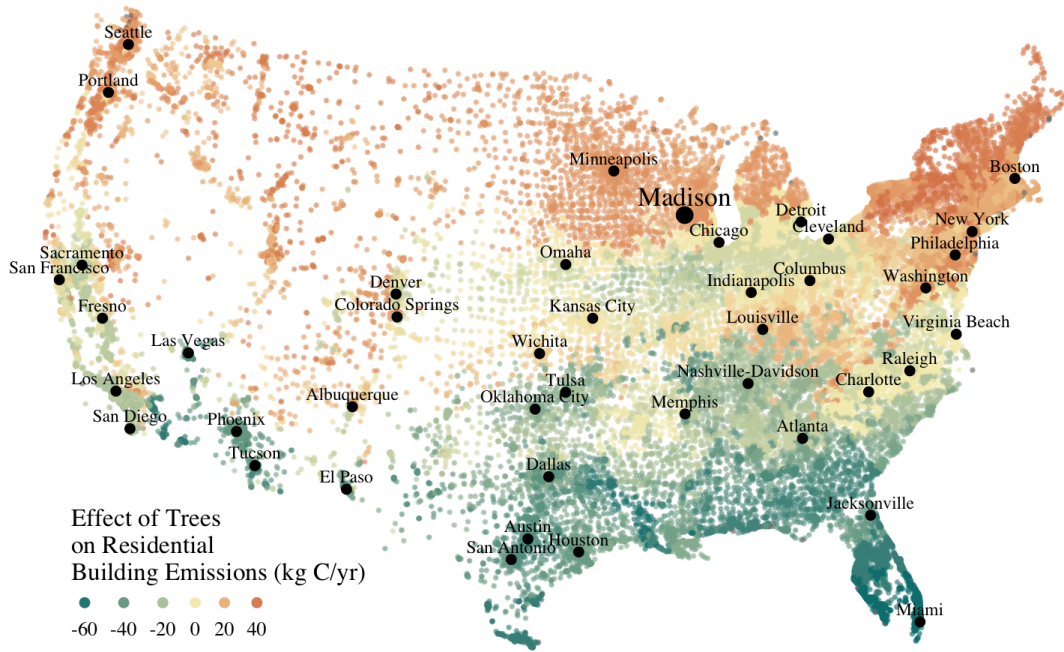


Figure 4: Each census tract in the conterminous US colored by magnitude of building C emissions effect of trees planted to west and south of a pre-1980's home and increasing roof albedo. Differences in regional emission factors (C/kWh) cause deviations from climate trend. New England has especially high ACE for the climate because their electricity is cleaner (low C/kWh). About 40% of Americans live in places where trees increase ACE. Model based on Akbari and Konopacki (2005).

186 Tier, North Central, Mountains, Pacific Northwest, and California Coast regions increases
187 ACE of a 1950-1980 vintage house by 0.136 to 9.52 kg, depending on the region. This is
188 comparable to our results. However, the wind effect in the iTree model of that same tree
189 on the same house decreases heating ACE by 1.23 to 66.14 kg depending on the region and
190 existing canopy: an order of magnitude greater savings for gas ACE from wind reduction than
191 the penalty from shading. However, our model coefficients derived from measured gas use
192 suggest shading is a more important process than wind shielding. McPherson and Simpson
193 (1999) note that the uncertainty in their methods was high, and, given our contradictory
194 findings, it is clear that more data and improved models are needed to better parameterize
195 the complex and uncertain relationship between tree cover, wind, and building energy use.

196 **Considering the larger C cycle**

197 The effect on ACE of a tree with a 100 m² canopy area is an order of magnitude smaller
198 than that tree's C sequestration. However, it is important to make the distinction between
199 different pools of C. Discounting increased ACE as irrelevant because C sequestration more
200 than compensates, fails to recognize that ACE is an input of fossilized C while sequestra-
201 tion is a temporary transfer of C from the atmosphere to biosphere. Unless forested land is
202 permanently expanded or wood products are forever prevented from decay, in the long run
203 (hundreds of years) sequestration by trees can never offset fossil C emissions. Indeed this
204 same conclusion was made for fossilized C emissions due to tree management (Nowak et al.,
205 2002). The avoided ACE from trees had been estimated to more than offset these manage-
206 ment emissions in a life-cycle analysis of the Million Trees Los Angeles program (McPherson
207 and Kendall, 2014). However, our results suggest that for cool climate communities in much
208 of the US, trees actually increase ACE and, especially when combined with the C emissions
209 from management, are atmospheric C sources.

210 **Trees relative to other factors that affect ACE and the ACE effect** 211 **of trees relative to other ecosystem services/disservices.**

212 Considering all of the factors that determine building energy use and ACE, trees play a
213 very minor role, which we estimated to be about 2.5% of the ACE of a median house. Far
214 greater ACE savings are possible with improved construction and savvy occupant behavior.
215 However, the effect of trees on energy use and ACE is one of the most often cited ecosystem
216 services of trees (Roy et al., 2012), and evidence that ACE is increased by trees highlights
217 the large uncertainty in software used by thousands of communities to justify urban forest
218 costs.

219 Still, effects on ACE are just one of the ecosystem effects that trees have in cities. Trees
220 may also improve air quality, reduce stormwater runoff, reduce noise, and provide wildlife
221 habitat. The aesthetic value of trees is often far greater than the value of the ecosystem
222 services or disservices provided (McPherson et al., 2005). Even after publishing that trees
223 reduced ACE on average, Akbari (2002) noted that this benefit alone may not justify the
224 cost of tree planting. Our opposing results have a similar caveat: even after finding the
225 detrimental impacts of trees on ACE in cool climates, management decisions need to consider
226 these results as just one of the many benefits and costs of trees. Our results suggest that
227 trees planted on all but the near east side of a house are net neutral in terms of ACE, so
228 that the other benefits of tree planting, such as aesthetics, could be accomplished in cool
229 climates through careful selection of planting locations.

230 **Future work**

231 Using actual energy use data from over 25,000 houses, we provide a much needed complement
232 to simulation models of tree effects on ACE in cool climates. However, there is need for
233 continuing work to address remaining shortcomings. The observational nature of our data is
234 strengthened by the size of the dataset, but ultimately causal inference depends on our physical

235 knowledge of how trees alter building energy use. More experimental studies are needed
236 especially in cool climate cities to better understand that relationship. Not all coefficients in
237 our model agree with our existing physical understanding of how trees affect building energy
238 use. For example, it is surprising that trees to the near west have such a weak effect on
239 electricity use. Our data on tree cover was also limited by a lack of information about tree
240 height, which means we could not address how adjusting the size of trees planted in an urban
241 area affects ACE. Incorporating lidar could provide more accurate estimates of tree shading
242 and wind reduction. Furthermore, the scale of the effects that our study could detect is much
243 smaller than the city-wide effects many simulation studies address. Ultimately, this work is
244 a sample of one year from one city with the accompanying limitations. The warm December
245 during the sampling period may mean the effect of trees is even more detrimental than we
246 report, but more years are needed to say. The location of Madison near the boundary that
247 Akbari and Konopacki (2005) identified between trees being a sink and a source is useful,
248 but more cities are needed to empiracally determine this boundary.

249 Our work reveals a blind spot in urban forest ecosystem studies. In an extensive review of
250 the effect of the urban forest on CO₂ emissions, Weissert et al. (2014) did not consider that
251 trees could increase ACE. In a paper critical of many ecosystem services provided by trees,
252 Pataki et al. (2011) nevertheless state that trees reduce energy use and ACE. While this
253 may be true in most of the US, and the potential ACE reduction is larger than the potential
254 ACE increase, it ignores geographical nuance (Akbari and Konopacki, 2005). In many ways
255 it is not surprising, given the climatic diversity across the country, that the effects of trees
256 on ACE might also vary and that our prescriptions for how to plant trees to minimize ACE
257 could be different between Los Angeles and New York City. However our study is only the
258 first study to use both gas and electric energy use observations, and the first study of its
259 kind in a cool climate. Much more work with observed energy use is needed to identify the
260 border between atmospheric C sink and source.

261 **Conclusion**

262 Using observed energy use data, we have shown that trees near residential houses in Madison,
263 WI increase energy use and associated C emissions and near east tree cover has the strongest
264 net effect. Extending past simulation studies, we show that this is likely the case for a large
265 area of the US. The magnitude and direction of the effect is dependent on tree location
266 relative to buildings, climate, building characteristics, occupant behavior, and the C content
267 of electricity. Disagreements between our results and past work is due to how wind effects
268 are modeled and much more work is needed to better understand this process. We add
269 critical geographic nuance to research that could have major implications for tree planting
270 programs in cool climates.

271 **Methods**

272 **Building Energy Use**

273 In April 2016, we obtained the annual energy use summary table (April 2015 - April 2016)
274 from Madison Gas and Electric's publicly available website for approximately 32 thousand
275 single family residential houses in Madison, WI. This included average monthly gas and
276 electricity use. This period exhibited a much warmer than average December (about 6° C)
277 and had low snowfall. We removed from our sample outliers that used fewer than 120 therms
278 (which is less than the 0.5% quantile) or fewer than 240 kWh (which is less than the 0.05%
279 quantile) annually. We included only buildings that used natural gas for heating and had
280 central air conditioning. Our final sample size used to build models was 25095.

281 **Carbon Emissions**

282 We converted energy use to C emissions using emission factors published by the US EPA's
283 Emissions & Generation Resource Integrated Database, eGRID (Emissions & Generation

284 Resource Integrated Database, 2016). 100% of the carbon in natural gas is oxidized to CO₂
285 when burned for heating. The carbon coefficient for natural gas is 1.446 kg C / therm
286 (United State Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). For electricity, Madison, WI is a
287 part of the Midwest Reliability Organization East (MROE) region of the North American
288 electric grid. The estimated carbon coefficient for power generated in this region is 0.2063698
289 kg C/kWh (Emissions & Generation Resource Integrated Database, 2016). We had originally
290 used emission factor for MROE from 2012 (.1567988 kg C / kWh) and by switching to the
291 updated and higher 2016 emission factor (0.2063698 kg C/kWh), the overall detrimental
292 effects of trees on ACE was diminished from about 3.4% to 2.5%.

293 **Building Characteristics**

294 Energy use is strongly determined by building characteristics. For every address in the city,
295 the City of Madison releases the assessor's property information, which includes information
296 on building age, size, materials, type of heating and cooling, as well as which schools serve
297 the address. We removed any houses that had bad or missing data. Many of the covariates,
298 such as size and price, were strongly correlated. Given that our primary interest was how tree
299 cover affected building energy use, not how building characteristics affect building energy
300 use, we reduced the dimensionality of building characteristics using principal components
301 analysis. This reduced the number of building covariates from 20 (Lot area, length of water
302 frontage, year built, number of stories, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms (full and
303 half), number of fireplaces, living area on each floor, finished attic area, finished basement
304 area, total basement area, crawl space area, year roof was replaced, number of stalls in each
305 garage, land value, improvement value) to 5 orthogonal vectors, accounting for 55% of the
306 variance.

307 **Tree Canopy**

308 For tree cover we used a 1m resolution landcover map derived from 2013 National Agriculture
309 Inventory Program (NAIP) visible and near-infrared digital aerial imagery (Erker et. al, in
310 review). Using building footprints from the Dane county, for each house for which we had
311 energy use data, we divided the space around it into 8 regions defined by 2 buffers around
312 the house of distance 20 m and 60m and 4 rays from the building's centroid. Tree cover
313 closer than 20m was considered near, tree cover farther than 20m and closer than 60m was
314 considered far. These buffers were subdivided into north, west, south, and east regions by
315 rays of angles 57, 123, 237, 303 degrees from north. These angles are within 1 degree of the
316 azimuth angle of sunrise and sunset at the two solstices. This defines the south region as
317 the region that is exposed to direct sunlight year-round, and the north region as the region
318 that is never exposed to direct sunlight (this relationship is approximate and complicated by
319 individual building geometry). Within each of the eight regions we summed the area covered
320 by trees, and then use the tree cover in each region as predictors in our models.

321 We tested buffers of different widths (every 3m from 3m to 60m), but found because
322 of the observational nature of our data that we needed to aggregate regions to remove
323 multicollinearity that caused unstable coefficient estimates. Using a distance of 18, 21, or
324 24 m instead of 20m to separate "near" from "far" cover only slightly changed coefficient
325 estimates.

326 **Building Cover**

327 Nearby buildings likely also affect the energy use of a building. To test this hypothesis
328 we calculated the area of buildings in each of the eight regions around every building and
329 included these as covariates in our modeling.

330 **Modeling**

331 We fit linear models where the response was log transformed annual ACE for gas use, for
332 electricity use, or for gas and electricity combined (net). Because a separate model was
333 built to explain net C emissions, coefficient estimates for the net model were not precisely
334 the sum of the coefficients from the electricity and gas models. ACE was log transformed
335 to meet assumptions of normality and diagnostic plots were assessed to check other model
336 assumptions and potential sensitivity to influential observations. Variables in our model were:
337 5 principal components of building characteristics, building cover in each of the 8 regions, tree
338 cover in each of the 8 regions and a random effect for elementary school which might capture
339 neighborhood characteristics such as culture. We used AIC as a variable selection criterion
340 and in our final models only used the first 5 building characteristics principal components
341 and we dropped all the building cover covariates. Estimates for the coefficients of tree cover
342 were not sensitive to the inclusion or removal of these covariates, but model fit improved.
343 Although some tree cover covariates increased AIC, we kept all tree cover covariates in the
344 model because we wanted estimates of their effects, however uncertain they might be. We
345 fit models using the R package lme4 (Bates et al., 2015).

346 **Interpreting coefficients**

347 To improve interpretability of coefficients, we back transformed them to the original scale
348 and expressed the multiplicative effects as a percentage (Gelman and Hill, 2007). We then
349 multiplied this percent change by the median ACE (a better estimator of the central tendency
350 because of the right skew in our data) to estimate the typical effect in absolute C terms.
351 To get typical effects of tree cover, we multiplied median tree cover in each region by its
352 coefficient estimate and back transformed to the original scale.

Estimating C storage and sequestration of a green ash with 100m² canopy

To estimate C storage and sequestration by a single green ash tree with a canopy cover of 100m², we used allometric equations to estimate that tree's diameter at breast height (DBH) and mass and then, assuming an annual DBH growth of 0.61 cm, predicted the change in mass to get C sequestration Nowak and Crane (2002); McPherson et al. (2016).

Extending Analyses from Published Literature

To compare our work to past simulation studies we converted results that were in Therms or kWh to kg C. We did this for Thayer Jr and Maeda (1985), McPherson et al. (1988), and Huang et al. (1990) using updated emission factors corresponding to each study city's eGrid subregion (Emissions & Generation Resource Integrated Database, 2016). To extend Akbari and Konopacki (2005), we joined climate data (heating and cooling degree days) from the nearest NOAA weather station to census tract centroids U.S. Census Tract Centroids (2010); Arguez et al. (2012). Then for each census tract we predicted the effect of trees and increasing roof albedo on the energy use of a pre-1980's building with gas heating following their table that bins houses according to heating degree-days and using emission factors corresponding to the eGrid subregion containing the census tract centroid. Separating out the indirect effects of trees from the indirect effects of increasing roof albedo was not possible because these were not modeled separately. However, the general trend would be similar, but with a decreased electricity savings and a decreased heating penalty. Akbari and Konopacki (2005) found the effect of tree shade to be stronger than the indirect effects of increased roof albedo and transpirative cooling. We also used the join of climate and census tract data to estimate approximately 77% of the U.S. population lives in places with more heating than cooling degree-days.

377 Code

378 All of the code and data for these analyses are present on Github ([https://github.com/](https://github.com/TedwardErker/energy)
379 [TedwardErker/energy](https://github.com/TedwardErker/energy)). Code is provisional pending review.

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