



The Cool Roof grant program now gets federal tax credit

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Urban heat islands increase summer peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, heat-related illness and mortality, and water quality.

It's easy to forget as temperatures in Chicago drastically drop, but anyone who goes outside on a sweltering hot summer day knows to dress in light colors so as to not attract heat. The same rationale lies in the federal Cool Roof grant program, which Mayor Daley just renewed for Chicago last week. It aims at installing white or reflective roofs in urban areas so as to reduce the



Urban Heat Island effect and now also qualifies homeowners to a tax credit thanks to the Federal Stimulus Package. Homeowners who update their roofs qualify for a tax credit of 30 percent of the cost, up to \$1,500 in 2009 and 2010 according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

While the financial benefits of the Cool Roof grant program are slow, the environmental benefits are immediate, allowing owners to warm their hearts rather than line their pockets.

“As well as saving building owners money, green roofs and cool roofs improve the environment and contribute to a healthy city,” Mayor Daley said.

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Daley and Department of Environment commissioner Suzanne Malec-McKenna first announced Chicago's participation in the program in October 2007. Since then, the city continues to provide more than \$200,000 in grants. The program gives a rebate of \$0.50 to \$0.80 per square foot for urban buildings that swap shingles for the environmentally friendly, reflective variety.

Chicago's progress with the Cool Roof grant program has proven successful in its environmental impact, yet disappointing in its financial influence, according to a recent report by the federal Energy Star program. The roof installations will save property owners money in energy costs, yet the payback for the cost of construction takes years.

One Energy Star study indicated that Our Savior's Elementary School in Cocoa Beach, Fla. would take seven years to recoup the cost of the reflective coating.

Mike Russo of Roofing/Siding/Insulation said building owners would more easily improve energy costs by adding extra insulation to a new roof.

For those interested in another way of going green, owners of residential, commercial and industrial buildings may apply for the Cool Roof program online at the City of Chicago Web site or at the Department of Environment at 30 N. LaSalle St., Suite 2500.