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As Heat Shatters Records, Five Mayors Join With Smart Surfaces Coalition to Announce Major New Infrastructure Initiative to Cool Cities and Advance Environmental Justice

Knowing roofs and pavements can worsen heat and flooding, especially in low-income communities and communities of color — mayors of Atlanta, Boston, Columbia (SC), Dallas and New Orleans seek better solutions

Washington (DC) — Today, five mayors joined with the [Smart Surfaces Coalition](#) (SSC) to announce a multiyear project to cool cities and metropolitan areas with [Smart Surfaces](#): a cost-effective integrated solution including reflective (cool) roofs and pavements, green roofs, solar energy, porous pavements, rain gardens and trees. As cities continue to grapple with record heat, America’s mayors are responding with bold action to implement this no-brainer solution. Smart Surfaces [can cool cities](#) by 5°F, deliver large reductions in flooding and resulting mold, and provide \$10 in benefits and cost savings for every \$1 spent.

The mayors of Atlanta, Boston, Columbia (South Carolina), Dallas, and New Orleans signed up for the Cities for Smart Surfaces program, joining the city of [Baltimore](#), recognizing that Smart Surfaces rapidly deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“This July 4 was the hottest day on Earth in recorded history. City residents worry and need city leaders to understand which surfaces can deliver cooler, healthier neighborhoods, save money and be implemented immediately,” **said Greg Kats, founder and CEO of the Smart Surfaces Coalition.** “When cities embrace Smart Surfaces — from rooftops to roads — residents win.”

Smart Surfaces slow climate change and measurably improve health and well-being by: reducing peak summer temperatures; decreasing flood and mold risk; improving air quality; delivering environmental justice; saving taxpayer dollars; and, ultimately creating thousands of new, high-quality jobs.

Quotes from Mayors and City Officials on Smart Surfaces:

“An investment in Smart Surfaces is a win for Dallas residents,” **Dallas Mayor Eric L. Johnson said.** “Leveraging this intelligent and cost-effective technology will cool our neighborhoods during hot Texas summers, reduce residents’ energy expenses and minimize the impact of flash flooding events.”

“In Boston, climate change is not a far-off future concern — our residents are experiencing its effects now. Temperatures continue to rise, and more frequent and intense storms have led to both coastal and inland flooding across many Boston neighborhoods,” **said city of Boston Mayor Michelle Wu.** “Joining the Smart Surfaces Coalition has given us access to new and vital tools that will help us make Boston a stronger, more resilient city for all of our residents.”

“The Smart Surfaces Coalition is an excellent example of a partnership to achieve city objectives around heat reduction, public health, flood management, equity and more,” **city of Columbia Mayor Daniel Rickenmann said.** “As the city long known as being Famously Hot, we are excited about working to advance Columbia’s goals of becoming a cooler, healthier and more resilient city.”

“Climate change is a lived reality for the city of New Orleans. From rapidly intensifying hurricanes and rainstorms to lengthier heat waves, the city continues to prepare for increased climate risks to our citizens and infrastructure,” **said city of New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell.** “That’s why we have joined the National League of Cities’ Smart Surfaces Coalition to receive technical assistance to study how we can transform our urban surfaces to make them more reflective and porous while increasing green spaces and reducing flood damage and peak summer temperatures. We were impressed by the results from the Coalition’s pilot in Baltimore, particularly the overwhelming cost/benefit savings, and look forward to implementing these types of projects throughout our City.”

In spring 2023, amid increasingly frequent and severe weather events that disproportionately hurt communities of color, SSC and the National League of Cities invited mayors to partner in scaling Smart Surfaces city-wide. **This partnership will ensure more livable, resilient cities including through:**

- **Data:** Providing satellite data, analysis and mapping to optimize city surface interventions that cost-effectively combat the impacts of climate change.
- **Education:** Engaging with and supporting city staff and community members in learning about how Smart Surfaces can enable cities to effectively deliver on their equity, climate and public health goals.
- **[Cost-benefit analysis tool](#) and training:** Customizing SSC’s online cost-benefit analysis tool for and with city partners, enabling comprehensive quantification of the impacts of implementing a range of Smart Surfaces.

- **Funding guidance:** Creating application templates and providing technical support to cities to secure Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding for Smart Surfaces projects, with a focus on low-income neighborhoods.
- **Policy implementation support:** Advancing policy and legal guidance to support the integration of cost-effective Smart Surfaces strategies into city policies and projects to meet city objectives.

The initiative, which the Waverley Street Foundation and The JPB Foundation have funded, is a win-win solution for cities nationwide. The coalition includes 40-plus partner organizations such as National League of Cities, American Lung Association, World Cement Association, World Resources Institute (WRI) and WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

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Quotes from Partners and Smart Surface Champions:

“American cities through their surface choices impose enormous health burdens on our citizens — especially on the most vulnerable. Anyone who walks around a BIPOC community or low-income neighborhood can see how few trees and how much hot dark pavement they have — often making them 10 or 15 degrees hotter in the summer than wealthy neighborhoods that have received more investments in green space. This results in a broad range of health burdens and costs, including surging heat deaths. To reverse these health burdens and provide healthy, cooler, and safer neighborhoods, cities must adopt Smart Surfaces. As a founding partner of the Smart Surfaces Coalition, American Public Health Association is pleased to be accelerating Smart Surfaces adoption in 10 major metro areas through grants that support the most at-risk communities.” — **Georges Benjamin, M.D., Executive Director, American Public Health Association**

“The public health crisis created by the smoke currently blanketing much of the northern half of the United States may be new to many — but human-created health burdens are a daily occurrence in lower-income BIPOC neighborhoods, especially for children and the elderly who are condemned to live in intolerable heat, stuck inside for longer and hotter summers. These same communities are covered in heat-absorbing black tarmac and are largely barren of trees and shade, which are the result of a century of racist and discriminatory public policy, reinforced by decades of redlining and racial covenants. The Smart Surfaces Coalition has built a network of public health, civic, nonprofit and faith organizations to transform citywide and metropolitan-area surfacing strategies. Additionally, drawing upon the strength and social capital of the Black Church as an anchor institution in historically underserved communities, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, in partnership with the Smart Surfaces Coalition, is fostering place-based innovation and

building sustainable ecosystems, which will help make our cities cooler, safer, healthier and more livable.” — **Pastor Jon Robinson, Senior Program Director, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church**

“Dark, impervious surfaces used for parking lots, roofs, streets and sidewalks have shaped the landscape of communities across the country, amplifying extreme heat and stormwater run-off and threatening the well-being of residents and the durability of our infrastructure. The National League of Cities is proud to partner with the Smart Surfaces Coalition to transform urban surfacing decisions to support more livable, equitable communities.” — **Clarence E. Anthony, CEO and Executive Director, National League of Cities**

“Most city officials and residents don’t yet have a clear understanding of all the benefits that Smart Surfaces can provide and what is possible in their city. An essential first step is to use data to show the locally specific benefits of making better infrastructure choices.” — **Eric Mackres, Senior Manager, Data & Tools, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities**

“Extreme heat is the deadliest impact of climate change, and it disproportionately harms communities of color. In fact, here in New York City, 50 percent of the heat-related deaths are among Black/African American people, even though they make up less than 25 percent of the city’s population. That is why we are a member of the Smart Surfaces Coalition – to advance the equitable adoption of local interventions that can help reduce the deadly heat burden in these communities while creating good jobs for their residents.” — **Caleb Smith, Resiliency Coordinator, WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

“The World Cement Association is a partner of the Smart Surfaces Coalition, sharing a commitment to make concrete more reflective and cooler and cutting its global warming impact, including sequestering carbon in urban concrete such as roads and sidewalks. This is an essential strategy to slow and ultimately reverse climate change.” — **Ian Riley, CEO, World Cement Association**

“Smart Surfaces — parks and open space, green roofs and cool pavements — are a smart public health strategy. Not only do they reduce the hazards of extreme heat and severe storms, they also provide people with nature contact, places to be physically active and places to connect with other people — all essential components of health and well-being.” — **Howard Frumkin, Senior Vice President, The Trust for Public Land**

“Nature is central to Smart Surfaces. Parks and trails, community schoolyards and a robust tree canopy are smart ways to cool our communities while better connecting everyone to the outdoors.” — **Brendan Shane, Climate Director, The Trust for Public Land**

“During the summer, increased heat in cities mixed with pollution from vehicle emissions and other sources can lead to ozone pollution. High ozone pollution can cause shortness of breath, wheezing and coughing, asthma attacks and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) exacerbations. Having our urban community leaders engage with the Smart Surfaces Coalition will help improve lung health now and into the future.” — **Harold Wimmer, National President and CEO, American Lung Association**

“Smart Surfaces offer a tangible means to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change in our urban environments. We’re excited to start analyzing data from the Smart Surfaces Coalition and look forward to uncovering insights that can guide us in effectively implementing these technologies.” — **Barrak Alahmad, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., research fellow in the Exposure, Epidemiology and Risk Program at the Department of Environmental Health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health**

“Smart Surfaces can offset urban overheating and the predicted local effects of climate change in terms of micrometeorology (including surface and air temperatures), emissions and air quality. As such, Smart Surfaces can have beneficial impacts in reducing cooling energy use, improving the thermal environment, and reducing heat- and air quality-related morbidity or mortality. The high-resolution dynamic weather input to Smart Surface Coalition’s cost-benefit analysis tool will allow cities to assess the benefits from implementing various scenarios of Smart Surfaces in their local urban and land-use plans with a high degree of accuracy and location specificity, which will aid in tailoring and optimizing resources for each community.” — **Haider Taha, Ph.D., President and Scientist, Altostratus Inc.**

“We are looking forward to helping cities across the country navigate the laws and legal tools they’ll need to scale up Smart Surfaces, critically important tools to address urban sustainability, racial equity and urban heat impacts.” — **Amy Turner, Director of the Cities Climate Law Initiative, the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia Law School**

“Our cities are essentially being deforested just when we need our city trees the most — for cooling, air quality, equity, stormwater reductions, carbon storage and much more. City budgets do not keep up with tree loss, so how do we fund the reforestation of our cities? City Forest Credits enables local projects to connect to the carbon markets to forge new funding partnerships. And companies can invest in carbon credits from projects in their own backyards.” — **Mark McPherson, Founder and Executive Director, City Forest Credits**

“Climate change poses significant challenges to socially vulnerable populations, exacerbating existing inequalities. U.S. Green Building Council is a proud founding partner of the Smart Surfaces Coalition and its proactive stance in tackling the climate crisis and fostering equitable and sustainable urban environments. The mayoral commitments to implement Smart Surfaces

reflect their dedication to advancing environmental justice and creating healthy, thriving cities for all residents. We look forward to our work with the Smart Surfaces Coalition and our coalition partners.” — **Peter Templeton, President and CEO, U.S. Green Building Council**

“Smart Surfaces deliver a broad range of health benefits, especially to the most at-risk populations. Understanding the health benefits of these surfaces can help enable cities and communities to adopt Smart Surfaces. We’re engaged in the work to quantify these health benefits, which we see as a critical piece to inform and optimize urban health outcomes for those most vulnerable to hazardous heat.” — **Augusta Williams, Sc.D., M.P.H., Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, SUNY Upstate Medical University**

“Smart Surfaces provide a compelling opportunity for city governments and State Energy Offices to work together to leverage the historic levels of federal funding to advance shared goals, such as lowering energy costs for low-income households, reducing air pollution and urban heat island effects, and improving climate and energy resilience.” — **David Terry, President, National Association of State Energy Officials**

“Many low-income and underserved communities face dangerous heat, flooding and other problems made worse by climate change. Federal dollars are available for cities and states to fund cool roofs, efficient windows and permeable pavements for lower energy bills, improved health and safety, and less climate pollution. ACEEE looks forward to working with the Smart Surfaces Coalition to help communities get the funds they need to install Smart Surfaces.” — **Steve Nadel, Executive Director of the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy**