

Hi, I'm Ronan and I've got a jam-packed set of stories for you this week, so let's get started.

What will the housing market look like in 2027? New COGNITION Smart Data research points to a mix of pressure and opportunity. Builders are facing rising material, labor, and land costs. In response, many are prioritizing marketing, sales, and customer experience—and looking for better data to guide decisions. Homeowners are staying put, often because they want to keep a low mortgage rate. That's helping drive interest in upgrades focused on comfort, home value, aging in place, energy efficiency, and indoor air quality. Buyers may be more optimistic, but nearly two-thirds say they don't plan to purchase a home in 2027. For those who do, affordability remains a major hurdle. This new free report offers a closer look at how builders, buyers, and homeowners are adapting—and where new opportunities may emerge. Hit the link in the show notes to get your free copy.

The mortgage payment is only part of what it costs to own a home. A new analysis from Zillow and Thumbtack estimates property taxes, insurance, and maintenance add about \$1,380 a month for the typical U.S. homeowner. Together, those expenses total roughly \$16,600 a year—and they've climbed 32% over the past five years. Homeowners insurance rose fastest, up 54%, while maintenance costs increased 32% and property taxes 19%. Maintenance is the biggest expense, but costs vary widely by location. Insurance premiums have jumped at least 50% in 19 of the 30 metro areas analyzed, with some of the largest increases in Dallas, Tampa, Denver, and Houston. The figures are a reminder that housing affordability doesn't stop at the purchase price. Taxes, repairs, and insurance can shape whether a home remains affordable long after the keys are handed over.

Solar and battery storage are helping push wholesale electricity prices down—even as demand rises. A new analysis from the Solar Energy Industries Association found average summer wholesale prices fell 42% in Texas and 51% in California between 2021 and 2026. Over that time, solar generation grew sharply in both states, while battery capacity expanded more than 26-fold in Texas and nearly sevenfold in California. SEE-UH estimates solar and storage saved customers billions this summer compared with 2021. There's an important distinction: overall residential bills still rose—driven largely by higher transmission and distribution costs—but the analysis suggests solar and storage are helping reduce the cost of generating electricity.

Google is trying a new way to power its growing data center needs: paying homes and businesses to use less electricity when the grid is under pressure. The company has partnered with Voltus to build a virtual power plant in the Mid-Atlantic grid, with the potential to provide up to 1,070 megawatts of capacity. That power would come from

thousands of small adjustments—like smart thermostats briefly easing air-conditioning, batteries supplying stored energy, or businesses shifting electricity use away from peak hours. The idea could help meet demand faster and with less pollution than building new power plants, but its success depends on customers signing up and utilities trusting that those reductions will be there when the grid needs them.

Promise Robotics is bringing its factory-based production platform to one of the biggest names in U.S. homebuilding. The company has signed a multi-year agreement with D.R. Horton to support production of more than 1,250 homes. Through its Factory-as-a-Service model, Promise Robotics coordinates robotic manufacturing, factory operations, and onsite installation—giving builders access to automated production without having to build and run their own factories. D.R. Horton says it's looking for ways to improve cycle times, expand capacity, and make construction more predictable. The agreement puts factory automation on a much larger stage in the U.S. housing market.

The Department of Energy has updated its Efficient New Homes Program, formerly known as Zero Energy Ready Home. The new requirements apply to projects with permit dates on or after January 1, 2027. The updates clarify several pathways for builders and raters, including continued acceptance of Indoor AirPlus Version 1 through 2028, changes to California's energy requirements, simpler multifamily documents, and revised FEE-US options for multifamily projects. Builders and raters should review the updated program documents before planning projects for 2027. DOE also plans to release a training video later this month.

Washington State officials are weighing whether homeowners whose houses burned in this summer's wildfires should be allowed to rebuild under older energy codes. Gov. Bob Ferguson says the option could lower upfront costs for families facing large insurance gaps. The state building code council is considering his proposal, along with narrower alternatives, and plans to vote as soon as October 30. Supporters of current standards say more efficient homes can reduce utility bills and emissions over time. But builders and local officials warn that higher construction costs—and today's borrowing rates—could make it harder for some families to rebuild at all. The debate comes as Washington works to meet its climate goals while also trying to build more homes. For fire survivors, the question is immediate: will lower costs now make the difference between rebuilding and not rebuilding?

Want to build unvented attics that are durable, safe, and efficient? Learning Edge is offering a free two-part short course, "Maximizing Performance with Unvented Attics," for builders, architects, contractors, and code officials. For Part 1, you can pick either November 10 or 12, with sessions at 9 a.m. or 1 p.m. Mountain Time. Part 2 follows

November 17 or 19, at the same times. Each class runs about an hour and covers building science, insulation options, and code requirements. Continuing education credits are available from ICC, BPI, RESNET, and ASHI. You must complete both parts to receive CEUs. Register for the dates and times that work for you, by clicking the link in the show notes or visiting LearningEdge LLC dot com

Nearly 50 leaders from across the housing industry came together for Green Builder Media's second annual Leading from the Front event—and the energy in the room was extraordinary. Builders, appraisers, lenders, insurers, realtors, architects and manufacturers all took on the same challenge: how do we move beyond price per square foot and recognize the full value a home delivers? The conversation turned into action. Participants made commitments for the next 90 days, 12 months and 24 months to help bring Value Per Square Foot to the market. This is how transformation begins: people working together, across the industry, to change how we measure value. Visit our Value Per Square Foot website, click "Join Us," and be part of what comes next.

Climate risk is changing the value of a home—but the way we measure housing hasn't caught up. As wildfires grow more costly and insurance becomes harder to secure, familiar tools like price per square foot and past sales may not reflect a home's real exposure—or its resilience. On this episode of The Valuation Metric, Sara Gutterman looks at how climate risk is reshaping housing, why fire resilience needs to be valued across entire communities, and how cleaner energy and better building practices can help. Here's a clip.

This week's Editors' Product of the Week is JinkoSolar's new Tiger Neo 5.0 residential solar module. It's designed for homeowners who want strong performance without compromising the look of their roof. The all-black, 48-cell panel delivers up to 510 watts, with a stated efficiency of 25.52%. JinkoSolar says its temperature coefficient is designed to help the panel perform better in hot conditions. This product is a combination of high output and a sleek, low-profile appearance for premium homes.

With Halloween coming up, Zillow's listings come with a few stories you won't find in a standard home tour. There's a former funeral home in South Carolina, a colonial in Sleepy Hollow, a Victorian that served as a funeral home for more than a century, and a mansion on a haunted tour in South Dakota. The lineup also includes an Alabama estate with a basement bomb shelter, a Tennessee property with its own haunted barn attraction, and a Gettysburg farmhouse believed by the National Park Service to have been used as a Civil War field hospital. Which one would you tour—and which one would you avoid after dark? Watch "Zillow's Scariest Homes For Sale Right Now" tour using the link in the show notes.

And there you have it, folks. Have a safe and happy Halloween, and I'll see you next Wednesday.