

CA Overrides Local Zoning, Mass Timber Moves Into Housing, Energy Tax Credits End

Mass timber has made headlines in office towers and showcase projects. Now it's moving into something housing desperately needs: affordable multifamily construction. In Huntsville, Ontario, construction is starting on a 150-home development that will use mass-timber floor and wall panels across three buildings. The first phase is a four-story, 47-unit apartment building, followed by another 60-unit mass-timber building and then 43 more homes. And these aren't luxury apartments. Forty percent of the development will be permanently affordable in a community where more than half of lower-to-modest-income households are priced out of local real estate. The project is also designed to sit below the mature tree canopy, preserving much of the 7.5-acre site as green space. We've talked a lot about whether mass timber can move beyond high-profile demonstration projects. Huntsville may offer a much more important test: Can it become a practical way to build everyday housing at scale?

<https://canada.constructconnect.com/dcn/news/projects/2026/10/150-home-mass-timber-development-in-huntsville-marks-mclts-first-official-housing-initiative>

New York City is turning a public housing apartment into a testing ground for technologies that could make older multifamily buildings easier to electrify. NYCHA has opened a model sustainability apartment at the Brooklyn Navy Yard featuring window heat pumps, triple-pane windows, and radiant heating panels. Plus, it showcases an induction stove designed to run from a standard 120-volt outlet, which means builders could potentially avoid costly electrical upgrades in older buildings. But this isn't just a showroom. Many of the products were developed through programs that use NYCHA's purchasing power to encourage manufacturers to design specifically for the challenges of existing public housing. And there's real scale behind it. The organization plans to transition 20,000 apartments from fossil-fuel heating to heat pumps and install induction stoves in 10,000 apartments over the next five years. It's an interesting model: instead of waiting for technology to fit old buildings, use a huge housing portfolio to help create technology that does.

<https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/09/mamdani-administration--nycha-and-brooklyn-navy-yard-unveil-mode>

Here's a cautionary tale for cities that fall behind on their housing plans. In Menlo Park, California, a developer wants to replace the former Sunset Magazine campus with a

massive mixed-use project: 665 homes, offices, retail, a hotel, and three towers reaching as high as 458 feet. That's far beyond what local zoning would normally allow. So how could it happen? California has something called the "Builder's Remedy." If a city doesn't have a substantially compliant state-required housing plan in place, it can lose some of its ability to reject qualifying housing projects simply because they violate local zoning. The developer, N17 Development, owned by businessman Vitaly Yusuf, son of a former Russian energy minister, says Menlo Park was out of compliance when its application was filed and that the project qualifies. California Attorney General Rob Bonta has sided with the developer on key issues and says the city has violated state housing laws in its handling of the application. Menlo Park officials argue the project doesn't meet the requirements for Builder's Remedy protection and say its enormous scale would strain infrastructure and emergency services. The city rejected the state's position, and now the developer has sued. Builder's Remedy is a California law, but the fight raises a much bigger question for communities nationwide: As states get more aggressive about solving the housing shortage, how much local control are cities willing—or going to be allowed—to keep?"

<https://nypost.com/2026/10/02/us-news/russian-businessman-son-sues-california-after-city-blocks-skyscraper/>

Speaking of California, the state is doubling down on efforts to get more housing built. Governor Gavin Newsom just signed more than 30 housing bills aimed at cutting regulatory barriers, including measures to make it easier to build smaller starter homes and streamline factory-built housing. The package also advances two major redevelopment projects that could deliver more than 14,000 homes. And voters may go even further. Proposition 45 would speed environmental review under CEQA for projects considered essential, including most housing, with firm review deadlines and limits on legal challenges. Supporters say California can't solve its housing shortage while projects remain tied up in approvals and lawsuits. Opponents say the measure could weaken environmental protections and public oversight. Add in the Builder's Remedy fight we just told you about, and California is testing just how many barriers it's willing to remove to get more housing built.

<https://www.realtor.com/news/real-estate-news/california-newsom-hoa-fees-starter-home-legislation-package/>

What happens when homes for sale become harder for buyers to see? An increasing number of homes are being marketed through private or exclusive listing networks rather than immediately appearing across the broader marketplace. An opinion piece in HousingWire argues that this could make an already difficult housing market even less

competitive. If buyers can't see all the homes actually available, they have fewer choices and the market can appear to have less inventory than it really does. The concern is getting policymakers' attention, with several states considering legislation around private listings. It's worth watching because affordability is already stretched. Existing-home prices have now increased year over year for 38 consecutive months, while sales remain sluggish. And there's a connection for high-performance housing. The more buyers have to stretch simply to purchase a home, the harder it becomes to convince them to pay more upfront for efficiency, resilience, healthier materials, or other performance features. Affordability and sustainability may look like separate housing challenges, but increasingly, they're not.

<https://www.housingwire.com/articles/housing-transparency-private-listings/>

If your remodeling clients are planning an energy upgrade, the math changed dramatically this year. Several major federal tax credits for efficiency, electrification, and clean energy expired under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Through 2025, homeowners could generally claim 30% of qualifying improvements, with up to \$2,000 available for heat pumps and heat-pump water heaters. Solar, battery storage, and geothermal also qualified for a 30% credit. On a \$30,000 system, that could mean \$9,000 back. Those credits are now gone. Builders took a hit, too. The 45L credit offered up to \$2,500 for qualifying ENERGY STAR homes and \$5,000 for homes meeting higher DOE efficiency standards. That ended for homes acquired after June 30. Some federal rebates remain, along with state, local, and utility incentives, but availability varies widely. The technology didn't suddenly become less efficient, and energy bills aren't getting cheaper. But without thousands of dollars in federal tax credits, upfront cost just became a much bigger part of the equation.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/energy-saving-tax-credits-that-vanished>

Resilience is quickly becoming a homebuying criterion. New COGNITION Smart Data finds 61% of consumers have personally experienced a natural disaster or extreme temperatures, and that experience changes what they value. Among consumers overall, saving money still outranks resilience as a reason to invest in technologies like solar. But among those who have experienced a climate hazard, that flips: 39% prioritize resilience versus just 23% who prioritize saving money. And they're willing to spend. Nearly 93% would invest in products that protect their homes, with 43% willing to spend \$10,000 or more. Builders are seeing the shift, too. Nearly 63% report increased requests for resilient features. Once people experience climate risk firsthand, resilience stops looking like an upgrade and starts looking like something a home is supposed to do.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/lived-experience-is-turning-resiliency-into-a-core-housing-demand>

Our Editors' Product Pick Duravit's new Ocavo bathroom furniture collection brings Black Forest craftsmanship into a clean, contemporary package. Made from solid European oak sourced from sustainably managed forests, the collection is produced at Duravit's PEFC-certified furniture factory in Germany's Black Forest. The minimalist vanities feature soft-close drawers, beveled integrated handles, and finishes designed to showcase the wood's natural grain. Three tones—Natural Solid Oak, Light Solid Oak, and Black Solid Oak—range from warm and traditional to decidedly modern. Ocavo vanities pair with Duravit's ME by Starck and Vitrium integrated sinks, while console versions accommodate a range of countertop basins. Why we picked it: Solid wood, certified sourcing, long-lasting design, and enough finish flexibility to work across a wide range of bathroom styles.

<https://www.duravit.com/en-us/products/all-series/ocavo/>

And a quick note from us at Green Builder Media: We've just launched The Value Vault, a new collection of real-world case studies showing what Value Per Square Foot looks like in practice. We're highlighting builders, developers, manufacturers, and other housing leaders creating value that goes beyond first cost—from lower operating expenses and healthier homes to resilience, durability, and energy independence. The first companies are already in the Vault, including Babcock Ranch, Fulton Homes, Doug Tarry Homes, and Addison Homes, with many more to come. Check out The Value Vault at GreenBuilderMedia.com and see who's putting long-term housing value into action.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/where-value-per-square-foot-comes-to-life>