Laws Unlock 100,000-Home Potential, ICC Eyes 2030, and Affordable Geothermal

Hi, I'm Ronan, and you're watching *This Week's Sustainable Building News*. There's a lot to unpack this week so let's get started!

New laws in 10 states could potentially add an estimated 103,000 homes a year to the country's inventory, according to a new study by the American Enterprise Institute. About half of that total would come from accessory dwelling units. California and Washington account for the largest estimates. California's law easing ADU requirements could lead to 48,000 units a year, while Washington's law allowing homes in some commercially zoned areas could add 37,000. Those are projections—not guaranteed construction—but they show how changes to zoning and development rules could expand the kinds of homes available.

https://www.realtor.com/news/real-estate-news/permitting-reform-homebuilders-aei-study-2026/

Incentives, rebates, and tax credits are reaching more homeowners and builders. Green Builder Media's COGNITION Smart Data reports that the percentage of consumers who said they received an incentive for an energy-efficient upgrade rose 48.9% from 2024 to 2026. On the builder side, 66.1% of those surveyed said they received some form of incentive in 2026. State programs led, followed by municipal programs and federal 45L funding. The numbers suggest that helping with upfront costs can make efficient upgrades more attainable—and influence which products builders choose.

https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/consumer-use-of-rebates-and-incentives-grows-49

Three new California laws taking effect in 2027 will change what homeowners associations can restrict. One protects energy-efficient window replacements. Another protects replacing gas appliances with electric models and installing heat-pump water heaters and HVAC systems, provided the work meets code and is properly permitted. A third updates the rules for electric vehicle charging stations, including requiring installers to cover certain losses or damage. The laws add to California's list of property uses and installations that HOAs cannot unreasonably restrict.

https://www.dre.ca.gov/Newsroom/DRE_Updates/2026_11_03_Real_Estate_Related_Bill_Summaries_of_Chaptered_Legislation_2026.html

The International Code Council has opened the submission period for proposed changes to the Group A codes in the 2030 International Codes. Proposals are due by January 12, 2027, with the first committee action hearings scheduled for April in Dallas.

The I-Codes influence building requirements across the country, and the proposal process is open to interested participants. That makes this an early opportunity to weigh in on the next cycle of building, safety, and energy code provisions.

https://www.phcppros.com/articles/24444-icc-opens-2030-i-code-change-proposal-submission-period

A planned affordable housing development in Boise could soon connect to the city's geothermal heating network. Micron Technology has contributed $2.5 million toward extending the system to a project with more than 300 units. The city estimates that residents could save up to 80% on utility bills, though actual savings will depend on the project and its operating costs. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2027, with residents anticipated in 2028.

https://www.canarymedia.com/articles/geothermal/boise-geothermal-network-affordable-homes

A gas leak led to a major home retrofit for a Baltimore retiree—and the work came at no cost to her. A nonprofit coordinated repairs, insulation, new electric appliances and, later, rooftop solar for Sherry Frazier's home. The project totaled about $73,200. Her experience also shows why the details matter: After her heat pump's costs spiked during a cold winter, the nonprofit found that a cover she had placed over the unit was restricting airflow. With the cover removed, and solar added, her bills came down. It's a story about health, home repairs, education, and making energy upgrades work in practice.

https://www.canarymedia.com/articles/electrification/gas-furnace-leak-to-all-electric

Passive House design is making headway in multifamily housing, including projects serving more affordable markets. This year's FEE-US Passive Projects Design Competition featured buildings that apply high-performance strategies beyond single-family homes. The approach centers on climate-responsive design and careful construction to reduce energy demand while supporting indoor comfort. The winning projects show how the standard is evolving as designers and developers take it into larger and more complex buildings. Click the link in the notes to check out these forward-thinking winners.

https://www.prweb.com/releases/phius-announces-2026-passive-projects-design-competition-winners-302903296.html

FEMA has announced $1.3 billion in disaster recovery and resilience funding. That includes a $400 million opportunity for flood-risk reduction, along with nearly $900 million in recovery and mitigation grants for hundreds of projects and assistance programs. The funding is intended to help communities reduce repeated flood damage,

recover from disasters and prepare for future hazards. It's a reminder that resilience can shape not only how homes are built, but also whether communities can recover when disaster strikes.

https://www.constructiondive.com/news/fema-commits-13b-disaster-recovery-resilience/873575/

A home's price tag doesn't tell you what it costs to live there. Matt Power, editor-in-chief of *Green Builder* magazine, has a list of ideas for our country's leaders to make housing more attainable and reducing its full cost. He points to energy bills, insurance, maintenance, taxes and weather-related damage alongside the purchase price. His recommendations include making it easier to build attainable homes, directing infrastructure funding toward housing, rewarding energy performance and resilience, and making factory-built homes easier to deliver. Read his full thought piece on our website.

https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/dear-democrats-get-to-work

Now for our Editor's Product Pick: custom copper range hoods. Thompson Traders' designs show how a practical kitchen fixture can also set the tone for a room. The company offers more than 50 designs, with options ranging from Fired Copper and hammered brass to burnished nickel and mixed-metal finishes. Shapes, finishes and details can be tailored to the space, making the range hood a functional focal point. Copper is considered a wellness element in homes primarily because of its natural antimicrobial properties, which continuously kill harmful bacteria and viruses on surfaces.

https://thompsontraders.com/custom-range-hoods/

Thanks for watching *This Week's Sustainable Building News*. Please like, share and subscribe. We'll see you next week

The latest Green Builder magazine issue is out! You can download your free copy on our website or by clicking the link in our show notes. Thanks for watching *This Week's Sustainable Building News*. Please like, share and subscribe. We'll see you next Wednesday!