

Hey everyone, I'm Ronan. Thanks for spending a few minutes with me catching up on the week's most important sustainable building news. Quick question... got a great nature photo sitting on your phone? Then you've got a shot at winning a \$1,000 REI gift card. Our Fall in Love With Nature giveaway is back for its fifth year, and entering is ridiculously easy. All you have to do is upload one photo before August 31. That's it. The link is in the notes. Okay... let's jump into the news.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/fall-in-love-with-nature-giveaway-2026>

Do stronger building codes make homes more expensive? According to a new University of Alabama study analyzing 2.7 million home sales across 26 states, the answer is no. Researchers found that adopting modern residential building codes did not increase home sale prices, challenging one of the biggest arguments against stronger codes. At the same time, updated codes are proven to reduce disaster damage, improve resilience, and help protect long-term insurability.

<https://lesliechapmanhenderson.blog/2026/07/07/the-evidence-is-in-modern-building-codes-dont-harm-housing-prices/>

Why are American homes so much bigger than homes in countries like Sweden or Norway? The usual answers are that we want more space or that builders make more money. But Green Builder magazine Editor-in-Chief Matt Power argues there's something deeper going on. His theory? In America, the house has become more than a place to live—it's become a safety net. That extra bedroom might be for an aging parent. The home office is there because work has changed. The pantry gets bigger because families are preparing for uncertainty. And for many Americans, home equity has become their retirement plan. In other words, when people don't feel certain about the future, they buy more space to prepare for it. It's a fascinating perspective because it suggests that simply telling people to buy smaller homes isn't enough. If we want more sustainable housing, we also have to build confidence that families won't need their homes to solve every problem life throws at them.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/living-large-a-legacy-of-broken-systems>

The EPA has proposed a rule that would exempt many so-called "minor source" air pollution permits from public notice and comment—including permits commonly used for backup diesel generators at data centers. As AI drives a nationwide boom in data center construction, critics say the change could make it harder for communities to understand the cumulative air quality impacts when multiple facilities are built in the same area. The proposal is now open for public comment through August 21, with a public hearing scheduled for July 22. It's another reminder that the race to build AI infrastructure is raising new questions about energy, emissions, and community transparency.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2026/07/epa-proposes-air-pollution-exemption-deal-data-centers>

Meanwhile, New York just became the first state to temporarily pause new hyperscale data centers. Communities across Texas, Virginia, Arizona, and other states are also scrutinizing new projects over concerns about electricity demand, water use, and impacts on local infrastructure. The message is clear: AI may be booming, but communities are demanding that growth come with stronger safeguards.

https://www.reuters.com/world/new-york-becomes-first-state-impose-data-center-moratorium-2026-07-14/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Speaking of development, Seattle is updating its zoning rules to comply with Washington's statewide ADU law. While the city already allowed one attached and one detached accessory dwelling unit on many single-family lots, the new proposal would go a step further by allowing two detached backyard cottages on the same lot, along with updated rules for parking, height, and ownership. It's another example of states pushing cities to make it easier to add gentle density and create more housing without dramatically changing neighborhood character.

<https://www.seattle.gov/construction-and-inspections/codes/changes-to-code/accessory-dwelling-units-code-updates>

Texas is updating the rules for HVAC systems. Beginning September 1, the state will adopt the 2024 Uniform Mechanical Code, bringing new standards for indoor air quality, ventilation, refrigerant safety, and energy efficiency. For contractors, builders, and homeowners, that means safer, more efficient mechanical systems built to keep pace with today's technology and best practices. It's another reminder that building codes continue to play a major role in improving the performance of our homes.

<https://www.phcpropros.com/articles/23760-texas-adopts-2024-uniform-mechanical-code>

What if preserving land actually made homes more valuable? That's the question explored in this week's episode of The Valuation Metric, where Sara Gutterman talks with Curt Johansen, the developer behind Lagoon Valley, California's first conservation community. Instead of maximizing every acre for development, Lagoon Valley permanently protects more than 1,300 acres of open space while creating neighborhoods designed around nature, resilience, and long-term value. The result? Strong home sales, growing demand, and a community that's proving conservation isn't a cost—it's an asset. Watch or listen to the full episode of The Valuation Metric. Here's a clip.

https://youtu.be/e_4NXuglQ7g

Bad News, Good news on this one: The Colorado River Basin just recorded its worst water year on record, and the impact goes far beyond drought. A new report warns that water shortages

could slow future housing and commercial development across the Southwest while threatening agriculture, hydropower, and the water supply for more than 40 million people. The good news? Researchers say solutions already exist—from smarter water management to infrastructure upgrades. It's another reminder that the future of housing depends on having enough water to build the communities of tomorrow. The report builds a foundation to address those challenges at summits in Las Vegas on Aug. 14, Phoenix on Sept. 1, and Los Angeles on Sept. 17. Discussions among community leaders and stakeholders will build on its findings, and culminate in shared ambition to turn awareness into action.

<https://keeptheriverrunning.com/state-of-the-basin-report/#report>

This summer is delivering heat domes, hurricanes, and flooding across the country and homes are getting wiped out or otherwise undergoing irreparable damage. Not to mention the impact to a homeowner's health and comfort, which can be profound both short term and long term. Green Builder Media's COGNITION Hot Take of the Week shows more than a quarter (25.8%) of respondents say they consider the lowest long-term cost when making big home decisions. 16.8% say they consider what would be the best investment potential. Both these data points suggest amping up the marketing of resilient home features. Couched in the right language, home buyers will see the value.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/urgent-consumers-need-more-education-on-resiliency>

Our editor's Product Pick of the Week is Aquor's innovative outdoor hydrants, featured in VISION House Asheville. Unlike a traditional hose bib, Aquor's marine-grade stainless steel hydrants automatically seal, drain, and winterize when disconnected—helping prevent leaks, frozen pipes, and wasted water. They're also lead-free, highly durable, and designed to last for decades.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/water-conservation-and-sustainability-simplified>

Let's wrap up with some sustainable eye candy. A new luxury home in St. Augustine, Fla., is proving that high-performance design doesn't have to sacrifice beauty. Designed by Richard Pedranti Architect, the Lisk Residence uses passive house principles, hurricane-ready engineering, external solar shading, and expansive high-performance glass to create a home that's as resilient as it is stunning. The U-shaped design frames panoramic marsh and water views while maximizing daylight, natural ventilation, and hurricane resilience. It's a great reminder that some of the most beautiful homes are also some of the smartest.

<https://richardpedranti.com/projects/lisk-residence-3/>

That's our show. Click the links in the notes to learn more about all these stories. And please like, share and subscribe to help us grow this important sustainability-minded community. See you next Wednesday!

