

# End of Housing Tariffs? AI Data Centers Poach Land, Labor. Digital Twins for Multifamily.

Congressman Don Beyer of Virginia has introduced the Homebuilding Materials Tariff Relief Act, a bill that would eliminate tariffs on key construction materials including cement, glass, ceramic tile, and particle board. Supporters say those tariffs have added thousands of dollars to the cost of building a new home. One analysis estimates they could increase construction costs by \$17,500 per home and reduce housing production by as many as 450,000 homes by 2030. The proposal would eliminate those tariffs and make it harder to reinstate them unless Congress approves and housing affordability improves. But the debate goes beyond trade policy. At a time when America desperately needs more housing, lawmakers are grappling with a difficult question: How do you protect domestic manufacturing without making it even harder for families to afford a home? Striking that balance may become one of the defining housing policy challenges of the next decade.

<https://beyer.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=9186>

AI isn't just competing with housing for electricity and water. Now it's competing for land, according to a new report from the NAHB. In Northern Virginia, one of the nation's hottest housing markets, data center developers are paying millions of dollars per acre for sites that might otherwise become new neighborhoods. Amazon recently paid \$700 million for 189 acres, while other AI companies are spending several million dollars an acre to secure land. And it's not just happening in Virginia. In Illinois, dozens of homes were demolished to make way for a data center campus. In Texas and Nevada, soaring land prices are making it harder for residential developers to compete. As AI infrastructure expands, communities are facing a new question: How do you balance the demand for digital infrastructure with the need to build more housing?

<https://www.nahb.org/blog/2026/07/servers-over-shelter-ai-data-centers-outbidding-home-builders-for-land>

In more AI news, Across the country, data centers are driving a massive wave of construction. At the same time, builders are trying to close America's housing shortage, strengthen communities against climate risks, and rebuild after disasters. The problem is they're all competing for the same skilled workers and many of the same materials. The construction industry is already facing an estimated 500,000-worker shortage, making it even harder to deliver the high-performance homes Americans need. As

demand for AI infrastructure accelerates, some experts worry housing could fall further behind—especially affordable and resilient homes.

<https://www.housingwire.com/articles/construction-labor-housing-supply/>

One of the biggest challenges in housing resilience is protecting the millions of homes that already exist. The International Code Council has finalized ICC 1300 for inclusion in the 2027 International Codes, creating the first nationally recognized standard for assessing and retrofitting one- and two-family homes to better withstand earthquakes. It's important to note this isn't a mandate. ICC 1300 is a voluntary framework that addresses the most common ways homes fail during seismic events, giving homeowners and communities a practical, cost-effective roadmap to improve safety without requiring older homes to meet new-construction standards. Perhaps most significantly, retrofit projects using ICC 1300 may qualify for FEMA hazard mitigation funding, making resilience upgrades more affordable for homeowners and local governments. It's another sign of a broader shift across the building industry. Resilience is no longer just about the next home we build—it's about protecting the homes we already have, preserving long-term housing value, and helping communities recover faster after disasters.

<https://www.iccsafe.org/committees/is-rsarc/>

Florida's insurance reforms may be stabilizing the market—but at what cost? A few years ago, state lawmakers made it harder for homeowners to sue insurers over denied or underpaid claims, aiming to reduce lawsuits, keep insurers in the market, and lower premiums. Supporters say the reforms are working: more insurers are writing policies again, and some have reduced rates. But a new Bloomberg investigation reports that more homeowners are seeing claims closed without payment and finding it harder to challenge claim decisions after disasters. And Florida isn't alone. Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina are considering similar reforms as they confront their own insurance crises. The broader question is whether resilience ends with building stronger homes—or also requires making sure homeowners can afford to recover after disaster.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2026-07-29/florida-s-fix-for-property-insurance-crisis-puts-more-risk-on-homeowners?>

We've talked about resilience. Now let's talk about the future. The FIFA World Cup delivered world-class soccer, but it also offered a glimpse into the future of smart buildings. Fans used mobile apps for navigation, entered venues with digital credentials,

and moved through stadiums with fewer delays. That same approach is transforming multifamily housing. Resident apps are evolving beyond rent payments to manage building access, maintenance requests, and community communications from a single platform. One of FIFA's biggest innovations happened behind the scenes: centralized command systems monitored all 16 venues simultaneously while allowing each stadium to operate independently. Multifamily portfolios are also moving in that direction. Portfolio-wide intelligence enables owners to compare building performance, detect abnormal energy use, prioritize maintenance, benchmark efficiency, and solve problems before residents notice them. As these technologies become more affordable, they're moving beyond billion-dollar stadiums into apartments and mixed-use developments—helping buildings reduce energy use, predict maintenance needs, improve resilience, lower operating costs, and create healthier places to live.

<https://propmodo.com/what-fifa-deployed-at-the-2026-world-cup-is-a-preview-of-what-building-technology-is-heading/>

What if buildings could adapt to the weather on their own? Researchers at South Korea's Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology have developed a building technology that automatically switches between heating and cooling modes without sensors, software, or complex control systems. Instead, it uses smart materials that change shape as temperatures rise and fall. In summer, the system shifts into a cooling mode that releases heat into the atmosphere. In winter, it reconfigures itself to capture more of the sun's warmth. Early testing showed it could reduce cooling energy use by nearly 7% and heating demand by more than 5%—without homeowners or building managers lifting a finger. While still in the research stage, the technology points to a future where buildings don't just resist the weather—they adapt to it. Could the next breakthrough in energy efficiency come not from smarter thermostats, but from buildings that change with the seasons?

<https://www.telecomreviewafrica.com/articles/technology-pick/29025-new-3d-reversible-technology-cuts-building-energy-consumption/>

What makes a home feel healthy? According to Green Builder Media's latest COGNITION Smart Data survey, it's not flashy technology—it's the basics done well. Natural daylight topped the list, followed by operable windows for fresh air and water filtration systems. Views of nature and biophilic design rounded out the top five, reinforcing just how much consumers value homes that support their everyday well-being. And there's an interesting generational twist. While Baby Boomers gravitate toward natural features like daylight and views, Gen Z is leading the demand for measurable health—with stronger interest in water filtration, indoor air quality monitoring, air purification, and low-toxicity materials.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/the-daily-features-that-define-a-healthy-home>

In a related story, let's look at the luxury market. For decades, luxury housing was defined by bigger homes. That may be changing. According to The Agency, affluent buyers are increasingly prioritizing healthier air, cleaner water, low-toxicity materials, energy management, and flexible living spaces over sheer square footage and showpiece amenities. If history is any guide, those preferences won't stay in the luxury market. Many of today's standard home features—from smart home technology to energy-efficient windows—started as high-end upgrades before becoming everyday expectations. Could wellness be next? If so, it would reinforce a broader shift we've been watching: Value Per Square Foot is replacing Price Per Square Foot as the better way to measure a home's true value. The homes of the future may be remembered less for their size than for how well they help people live.

<https://www.inman.com/2025/11/25/luxurys-next-phase-what-the-2026-buyer-really-wants>

Residential solar is on the rise. The Solar Energy Industries Association projects there will be more than 8 million residential solar systems in the U.S. by 2030, powering about 11% of U.S. homes. But before installing solar, homeowners should ask one important question: Will the roof last as long as the panels? That's why this week's Editor's Product Pick is DaVinci Roofscapes composite roofing. Solar panels are designed to last 25 years or more, while many asphalt roofs need replacement after just 15 to 20 years. Removing and reinstalling panels to replace a roof adds cost and complexity. DaVinci's composite roofing is engineered to last 50 years or longer and features a Class A Fire Rating, high impact resistance, a durable walkable surface for easier solar installation and maintenance, and low-maintenance performance that resists mold, mildew, moss, and algae.

<https://www.westlakeroyalbuildingproducts.com/roofing/davinci-roofscapes>

Do you think you have too much debt to buy a home? Do you think prospective home buyers can't qualify? You might be wrong. Millions of Americans rule themselves out before they ever talk to a lender. But mortgage experts say that's one of the biggest misconceptions in home buying. Lenders don't just look at how much debt you have—they look at whether your monthly payments fit your income. In fact, many buyers with student loans, car payments, and even credit card debt still qualify for a mortgage. And here's why it matters: The average homeowner's net worth is nearly 38 times higher than the average renter's. The question isn't whether you have debt. It's whether you've let debt convince you that homeownership is impossible. Green Builder veteran reporter Michele Lerner digs into all the resources home buyers can access,

such as down payment assistance programs and creative ideas, such as rent to own. Hit the link in our notes for access.

<https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/breaking-the-debt-barrier>

Finally today, we've spent a lot of time talking about resilience, affordability, insurance, and the challenges facing housing. But what happens when builders start thinking beyond the home itself? One Florida community offers an answer. Mattamy Homes' Newfield in Palm City was designed around the idea that sustainability should extend beyond the front door. More than 70% of its 3,400-acre site is permanently preserved as farmland, wetlands, forests, lakes, and conservation land, while neighborhoods are connected by parks, trails, and future civic spaces that encourage residents to engage with the landscape. The community also features a 170-acre regenerative working farm that supplies fresh produce through a Community Supported Agriculture program and offers tours, workshops, and educational events. The Kiplinger Conservancy protects more than 1,800 acres of natural habitat, including Martin County's first permanent gopher tortoise recipient site, while providing hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. As Newfield enters its next phase—with a mixed-use downtown and a planned workforce district—it's expanding its vision of what a sustainable community can be. As Dan Grosswald, President of Mattamy Homes' Southeast Florida Division, says, "We believe great communities are built by balancing thoughtful growth with environmental stewardship, creating places where people, nature and the community can thrive together for generations."

<https://mattamyhomes.com/florida/palm-city-stuart/palm-city/newfield>

That's it for this week's podcast. Please like, share and subscribe! Thanks for watching.