Hi, I’m Ronan and we have a packed lineup of sustainable stories for you this week. Let’s get into it.

Airbnb is getting into the housing supply business. The company just launched its Housing Accelerator, committing $250 million in “last-dollar” financing for affordable and mixed-income projects that are ready to build but short on funding. Airbnb says that could unlock more than $5 billion in housing development over the next decade. Its first investment is $6.4 million toward 201 affordable homes in Austin. Airbnb will also support zoning and permitting reforms and launch a City Index comparing housing policies around the world. And builders should watch this: Airbnb is offering five $1 million Housing Innovation Prizes for technologies that make homes faster and cheaper to build, including offsite construction, jobsite productivity, permitting, and design.

https://news.airbnb.com/announcing-housing-accelerator

Fourteen major housing and real estate organizations are joining forces around a pretty simple message: Let America Build. The new national coalition includes Realtor.com, Zillow, NAHB, Habitat for Humanity, ICON, eXp Realty, and others. It expands a campaign Realtor.com launched last year focused on the connection between housing supply and affordability. The coalition wants to build public support for changes to zoning, permitting and other regulations that can make housing slower or more expensive to build. The campaign points to a national housing supply gap of roughly four million homes. And the timing is interesting. New-home sales have been struggling, builders have been pulling back on projects, and local battles over development continue even as communities wrestle with affordability. So Let America Build is trying to take what has largely been an industry and policy conversation and bring it to consumers: If Americans want housing to become more affordable, the coalition argues, communities have to make it easier to actually build more of it.

https://www.realestatenews.com/2026/09/15/real-estate-groups-join-up-to-push-housing-policies-forward

In a related story, Austin is changing the rules for developers who want to build bigger near the city’s future light rail stations. Under new rules approved by the Austin City Council, developers using the city’s density bonus program near Project Connect stations will have to include affordable housing directly in their projects. That’s different from the rules elsewhere in Austin. Developers there can build larger or taller projects in exchange for affordable housing, but they can also pay into the city’s Housing Trust Fund instead of providing those units on site. Near the future rail stations, that buyout option is now gone. The goal is to make sure lower-income residents can actually live near public transit rather than concentrating affordable housing in other parts of the city.

But there's a debate over whether the policy could backfire. Some housing advocates argue that making on-site affordable units mandatory could make projects harder to finance and ultimately discourage some of the higher-density development Austin is trying to create. It's a familiar housing dilemma: require more affordability from each project, or make it easier to build more housing overall? Austin is betting it can do both.

https://www.planetizen.com/news/2026/09/138413-large-projects-near-austins-light-rail-must-include-affordable-housing

Speaking of affordability, D.R. Horton has pulled a major Virginia development after months of community opposition. The nation's largest homebuilder originally proposed 1,066 homes in James City County, then scaled the project back to 770 homes, with 38 percent designated affordable. It still wasn't enough. D.R. Horton withdrew its rezoning application just before a public hearing, without publicly giving a reason. The move comes as the builder faces hundreds of legal claims, largely involving alleged construction defects, with about $1.1 billion reserved for legal contingencies. And it highlights a larger problem: America says it needs more housing, but even hundreds of proposed homes from the nation's largest builder can struggle to make it through local approvals.

https://www.whro.org/news/local-news/2026-09-09/developer-for-a-700-housing-development-withdraws-plan-after-citizen-protest

The U.S. is short nearly 300,000 construction workers, and labor shortages are costing builders an estimated $11 billion a year. So, are robots coming to the rescue? Sort of—but not the humanoid kind. One robotic system prints building plans directly onto the floor, helping plumbers, electricians and framers work from the same layout. One contractor reported 75% less rework, while another building system cut shell construction from about 21 days to 11 or 12. And in Japan, some companies are already building up to 80% of a home in highly automated factories. The construction robot revolution may be coming. It just looks very different than you might expect.

https://www.cnbc.com/2026/09/12/housing-shortage-home-construction-robots.html

The Department of Energy is offering builders something they don't hear about very often: free technical help. DOE just launched the Building America New Construction Support program, giving builders direct access to experts from DOE and the National Laboratories to help solve problems that are slowing construction or driving up costs. Support can include product and materials innovation, factory optimization, and AI and digital tools that catch design problems earlier and automate workflows. The program is open to builders of all sizes, and there's no direct cost to participate. So, if you've got a construction problem costing you time or money, Uncle Sam would like to take a crack at it.

https://basc.pnnl.gov/building-america-new-construction-support

And some exciting news from right here at Green Builder Media. Did you know COGNITION Smart Data has officially launched? COGNITION is a new decision intelligence platform built specifically for the housing and building-products industries. It connects homeowner demand, builder behavior, construction activity, product trends, rebates, utility rates, economic conditions, and even emerging media signals. The goal is to answer the questions the industry really wants answered, like what do homebuyers actually want? Where is opportunity forming? Check out the new portal at GreenBuilderMedia.com

https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/cognition-smart-data?utm_source=chatgpt.com

On the latest episode of The Valuation Metric, Sara Gutterman talks with DuPont's Alan Hubbell about something we don't value nearly enough: the parts of a home you can't see. Weather barriers, air sealing, flashing, and other details hidden behind the walls can determine how a home performs for decades. So why does our industry still focus so heavily on what a home costs today rather than what it delivers over time? Alan and Sara dig into durability, building science, affordability, and why shifting from price per square foot to value per square foot could change the conversation. It's a great discussion. Check out the full episode of *The Valuation Metric*.

https://youtu.be/4rp--1jwcb4?si=ICOa1DlmSioNO27R

Extreme heat isn't just a weather problem anymore. It's becoming a housing and insurance problem. In San Diego County, enrollment in California's insurer-of-last-resort FAIR Plan jumped from about 9,500 homes to 37,000 in 2024. And one estimate suggests a California home that gets an insurance nonrenewal could lose 12 to 39 percent of its value. The problem goes beyond wildfire. Higher temperatures can mean more flooding, vegetation stress, humidity and damage to homes. And here's another striking divide: COGNITION Smart Data found just 16% of Boomers say climate events have affected their ability to get home insurance, compared with 77% of Gen Z. Check out the full story in our show notes.

https://www.greenbuildermedia.com/blog/extreme-heat-and-fire-risk-upend-home-insurance-and-mortgage-markets

And for our Editor's Product Pick of the Week, UK-based Paint Zero has developed an interior paint that replaces the acrylic and vinyl binders commonly used in conventional paints with a plant-based, bio-mineral binder made from plant proteins, starches, and minerals. But what really caught our attention is how it's delivered. Instead of shipping cans of liquid paint that are largely water, Paint Zero ships a concentrated dry powder in paper pouches. Just add warm tap water and mix. One pack makes about two-thirds of a gallon of paint and sells for roughly $49 before shipping and import costs. The company says eliminating the water cuts shipping weight by more than 70 percent while also reducing packaging. And because the formulation contains no synthetic plastic polymers, Paint Zero is positioning it as an alternative to conventional acrylic and vinyl paints. The product is now available to U.S. customers at paintzero.com

https://www.paintzero.com/

Here's a new twist in the housing-versus-nature debate: Should trees have rights? LEWIS, England, has become the first town in the country to formally recognize the "right to flourish" for its trees, forests, woodlands, and hedgerows. The measure isn't legally binding, but supporters hope it will influence planning decisions and give trees greater protection when developers want to clear land for housing. Communities need more homes, but should building them come at the expense of mature trees that provide cooling, carbon storage, and flood protection? And this may not stay in England. Rights-of-nature movements already exist in the U.S., so don't be surprised if this debate comes to an American planning meeting near you.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/09/14/lewes-east-sussex-first-town-recognise-tree-rights/

I'll leave you with a fascinating look at where clean energy could be headed, Bloomberg Originals has a great short documentary called *The Big Business of Drilling Into the Earth.* Geothermal has enormous potential because it can provide clean power, but traditionally it only works where you have three things: underground heat, water, and porous rock. Now, companies are borrowing technology from the fracking boom to create those underground pathways themselves. It's called enhanced geothermal, and it could dramatically expand where geothermal power is possible. So what will it take for geothermal to really take off? Better and cheaper deep drilling. The farther down companies can drill economically, the more places they can reach the heat needed to generate power. There are still cost, technical, and environmental challenges to solve. But the irony is hard to miss: Technology developed to unlock oil and gas could ultimately help unlock one of the most promising sources of clean, 24/7 energy. Bloomberg's 24-minute film is definitely worth a watch.

That's This Week's Sustainable Building News. Thanks for watching and I'll see you next Wednesday.