MISSION FOR AMERICA · CHAPTER 06 · AT A GLANCE

Upgrading America’s Homes and Buildings

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More than 50 million American homes burn gas for heat, hot water, and cooking, and buildings, counting the electricity they use, produce roughly 30 percent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. Many are also unsafe, with lead paint and lead plumbing, mold, asbestos, failing wiring, and leaking roofs, and public housing alone carries a repair backlog of roughly $90 billion. The country is short on homes after the slowest decade of homebuilding in modern history, and it is short hundreds of thousands of construction workers. The Mission for America will upgrade every existing building in the country and build millions of new homes within 10 years, in what will be the largest peacetime labor mobilization in American history.

This mission will:

- Upgrade every home, business, and public building, starting with public housing, public schools, and government buildings. When a neighborhood signs up together, a crew with every trade it needs will upgrade the whole block in weeks, replacing gas furnaces and stoves with heat pumps and induction ranges and adding insulation, new windows, modern wiring, EV chargers, rooftop solar, and batteries. The repairs a building needs first, from roofs to lead paint, will come with the upgrade.
- Train and hire hundreds of thousands of new workers through unions, contractors, and community colleges, with union wages and apprentice slots on every job the program pays for and federal corps crews for the work private firms will not take.
- Build millions of new homes, including factory-built homes that qualify for the same 30-year mortgages as site-built homes, converted office towers, and a new generation of public housing once Congress lifts the cap on new units. Cities that reform zoning and permitting will get federal housing money first.
- Require every gas utility to plan its wind-down, pay utilities bonuses when whole blocks come off gas, and pay building owners for the solar power and battery storage they supply to the grid.
- Set a national building energy code so every new building is all-electric and efficient from the start.

The federal government will pay for the work directly. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation will charter regional public companies, the American Building Corporations, to pay accredited contractors, buy equipment in bulk, and run the crews. Homeowners will never see a bill, a loan application, or a rebate form, and every household will deal with one phone number and one office. A federal loan and grant program will cover work outside the neighborhood upgrades, and landlords will be able to repay upgrades on the utility bill. Repaid loans and sales of surplus power will recover part of the cost.

By the end of the decade, every public housing unit will be upgraded, every new heating and cooling system installed will be a heat pump, most of the country's buildings will be upgraded or on a financed path to it, and the housing shortage will be largely closed.