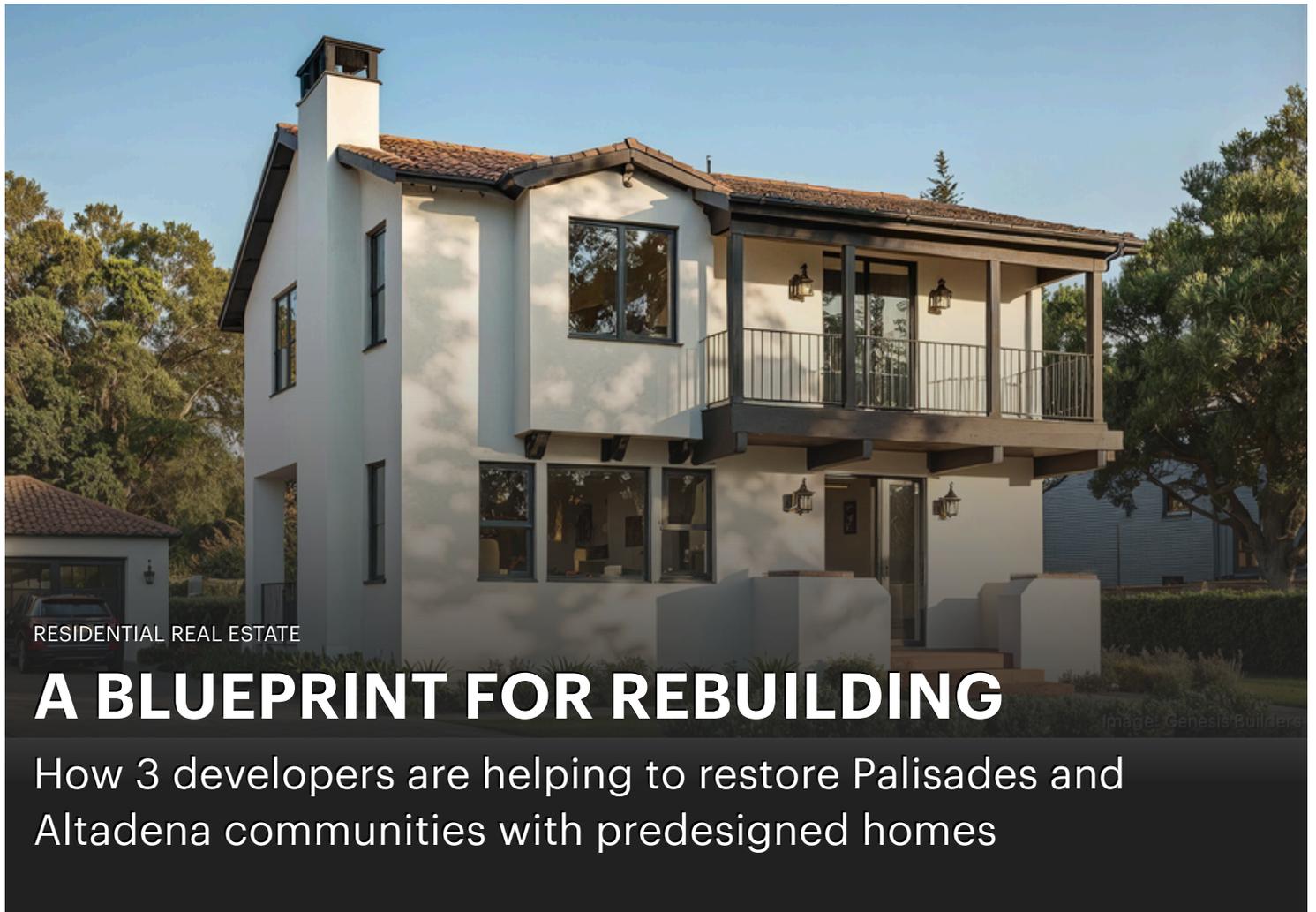


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A two-story home by Genesis Builders in Altadena.

GENESIS BUILDERS



By [Isabel Sami](#) – Staff Reporter, L.A. Business First
Jan 7, 2026

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Story Highlights

- Developers use preapproved fire-resistant designs to rebuild Los Angeles wildfire homes faster.
- Genesis Builders offers turnkey homes starting at \$692,000 with 60-day permitting timelines.
- Thomas James Homes delivered Pacific Palisades' first rebuilt home in December.

Editor's note: On the anniversary of Los Angeles' 2025 wildfires, L.A. Business First is checking in on how businesses and communities are rebuilding, and working to prevent such devastation in the future.

Since Rebecca Zandovskis lost her Altadena home in the Eaton Fire last January, she's been deep in the rebuilding process – for both herself and her clients.

Zandovskis, one of L.A. Business First's [People to Watch in 2026](#), is a senior director of business development with Genesis Builders, one developer focused on rebuilding in Altadena. Zandovskis worked for Genesis' parent company, Cityview, before the fires. When the company [branched out to help rebuild](#) her community, she jumped at the opportunity to help others in her position rebuild their homes.

Developers have stepped up to patch the burn areas with new homes, signing clients and assessing parcels for rebuilding. Genesis Builders is focused in Altadena, while others including Thomas James Homes are at work in Pacific Palisades.

One year later:

- *How Webster's Community Pharmacy delivered 'normalcy' to Altadena this holiday season*
 - *Investors buying 40% of vacant lots sold in Altadena, Palisades*
 - *How Altadena Girls created a 'third place' for fire-impacted teens with a Pasadena office*
 - *How Sonic Fire Tech is using sound waves to put out fires in Los Angeles and beyond*
-

Over the past 12 months, Zandovskis has heard the same calls from clients for streamlined building and permitting processes that have reverberated across Los Angeles County's burn areas. L.A. Mayor Karen Bass has [issued executive orders](#) to accelerate these processes, but Altadena falls outside the city's jurisdiction.

In Sacramento, Gov. Gavin Newsom has consistently rolled out [resources for rebuilding efforts](#) over the past year, from streamlining the construction and occupancy of accessory dwelling units on properties destroyed by the fires to launching resource hubs for fire victims.

Developers are further speeding up the process by bringing designs to the city or county for preapproval. Homes by Los Angeles-based Genesis and Thomas James Homes use fire-resistant designs and materials, with closed eaves, cement exteriors and sprinkler systems. Thomas James Homes adds a six-foot-high, non-combustible perimeter fence to its homes as well.

“People who have lost their homes have so much to deal with: where they're going to live, where their kids will go to school, the financial considerations dealing with insurance,” Jamie Mead, CEO of Thomas James Homes, told L.A. Business First. “We're just a home builder. We can't deal with a lot of that for folks, but what we can do is to create what we think of as an easy button.”

Both groups have brought their permitting timelines down to around 60 days, Mead and Zandovskis said.



A single-story home designed by Genesis Builders in Altadena.

GENESIS BUILDERS

Preapproved designs speed up timelines at lower costs

When looking to rebuild her home, Zandovskis was quoted more than \$1 million for a custom-built home.

Genesis created a number of home styles, priced around \$400 to \$536 per square foot for houses around 1,250 square feet to 2,200 square feet. The company drew up designs for a handful of styles, each customizable. If clients want to add a porch, they can. If they don't want a garage, Genesis will give them a \$50,000 credit instead. Colors and materials for interiors are also subject to change if the client has a preference.

“Preapproval to a lot of people was just about saving time, but it's also saving mental anguish and energy,” Zandovskis told L.A. Business First. “Everybody rebuilding right now would agree with me when they say that their brains are fried from information overload. If somebody can help me make decisions and do the work I would have to do if I was going custom, I would love to have that.”

Genesis estimates the total cost of a turnkey home to start at \$692,000, Zandovskis said, with appliances included. Site-specific costs can fluctuate, she noted.

As someone rebuilding through Genesis, Zandovskis knows the process firsthand. She got started with the company in September and received her permit from the city to break ground in December.



Altadena resident Rebecca Zandovskis has been working with Genesis Builders to help residents rebuild homes after the Eaton Fire.

GENESIS BUILDERS

After permitting, Genesis estimates four months for preconstruction, with a guaranteed 12-month rebuilding timeline. The company said it has a per diem penalty by which it credits back \$2,000 for the first month, \$3,000 for the second and \$4,000 for the third month or later.

“We hold ourselves accountable as much as our clients hold us accountable,” she said.

Thomas James Homes follows a similar strategy. The developer, backed by groups including Oaktree Capital Management, offers property owners in the Palisades nine preapproved home plans spanning from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet, with the ability to customize designs for their new houses through the company’s virtualization system.

The team will then build the house for \$650 per square foot, promising to deliver one year after receiving permitting. Mead said the group is completing the permitting process twice as fast as standard with the city of Los Angeles and is using the state’s [AI permitting tool](#).

Thomas James Homes also gave homeowners the option to opt out of the cleanup from the Army Corps of Engineers, offering to clean the lot and complete site preparation work ahead of rebuilding as part of their due diligence agreement.

Because the home plans are always similar, the city’s permitting department knows what to expect from predesigned homes, Mead said.



Thomas James Homes completed the first model home in Pacific Palisades.
TIFFANY ROSE

Thomas James delivered the first home in the Palisades last month, a model home that was in development before the fires swept through the community. The model home, around 3,800 square feet with four bedrooms, serves as a vision for the future of the Palisades.

Thomas James plans to deliver more than 20 houses next year starting in March. Genesis Builders has 25 clients with similar timelines.

Both Mead and Zandovskis said they receive more inquiries from interested homeowners every day.

“The first question we faced was whether we can really deliver a nice house for \$650 square foot,” Mead said. “That’s why we wanted to deliver a model home, so people could walk through and see we actually can deliver a nice house at a very good value, and it’s also beautiful house and we did it in six months.”

Zandovskis said she's seen a similar reaction to Genesis' model. More than a dozen potential clients expressed skepticism, she said, especially around the accuracy of the all-in pricing model.

"They think it's too good to be true," she said. "It makes me wonder how many people aren't looking into preapproved options because they don't understand or they don't believe it."

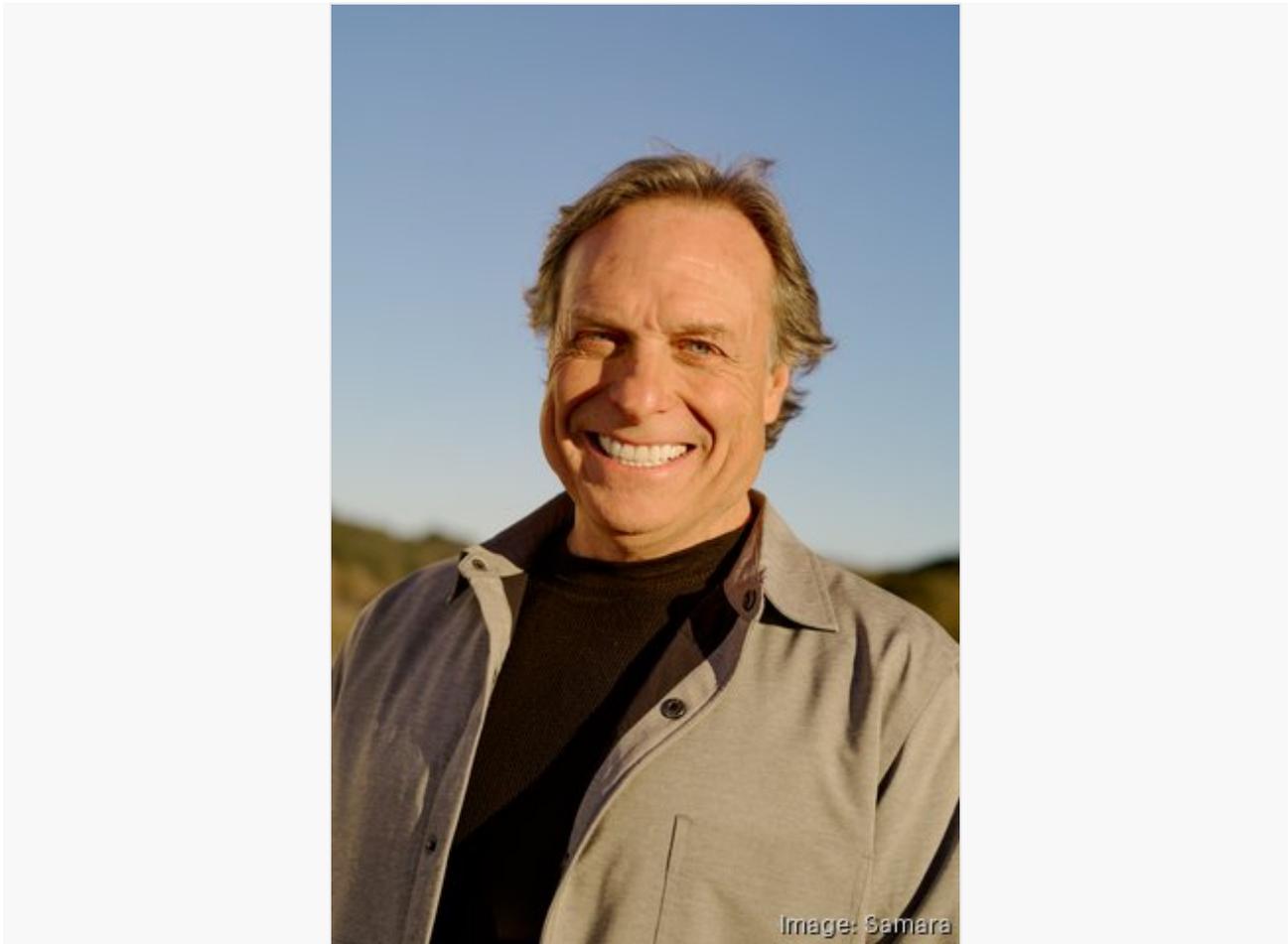
The thought of fire victims spending unnecessary money and time by working with developers not using preapproved designs bothers Zandovskis, she said.

Prefabricated housing offers compact option

Another developer, Samara, is building homes in Altadena and Malibu. Rather than building on-site, the Bay Area-based ADU company manufactures its homes in a factory, installing the homes on a lot with plumbing and electrical utilities over the course of a few weeks.

The approach bypasses delays and rising costs challenging L.A.'s traditional construction environment, said Samara co-founder and CEO Mike McNamara.

The homes are around 1,000 square feet and include landscaping. The process takes around six months for design and permitting, with an additional six weeks for installation, varying by model and site specifics.



Samara co-founder Mike McNamara is bringing free housing to fire victims.

SAMARA

“About 600 of the homes that burned down in Altadena were around 1,000 square feet or less,” McNamara told L.A. Business First. “People really need this size factor in that community, and we have the perfect product. It's ready to go and highly fire-resistant.”

Samara partnered with [Rick Caruso's nonprofit Steadfast LA](#) earlier this year to provide free prefabricated homes to low-income wildfire survivors. The Steadfast LA Foundation covers the costs, and Samara builds and installs the units without taking any profit.

After the wildfires in L.A., Samara co-founder Joe Gebbia, also co-founder of Airbnb, donated around \$15 million to fund installing the homes on fire victims' lots, McNamara said.



Image: Samara



Samara installs its homes in a single day, said Samara co-founder and CEO Mike McNamara
SAMARA

Samara homes are fire-resistant, with fireproof exterior cladding and metal roofs. McNamara said the team designed the homes for California's fire conditions.

"Not only do they get the unit, but [the homeowners] get the steps and landscaping and the fence," he said. "They get their lives rebuilt, and the cost to them is zero."

The group is in the process of getting its first home in the ground. McNamara said the permitting process takes around five weeks. Their goal is to get this down to one week, a process that they're working toward with the city.

Outside of L.A.'s burn areas, Samara has installed homes in Northern California and around Greater Los Angeles. The price for a home ranges from \$100,000 to \$150,000 for site work plus \$150,000 to \$250,000 for the home itself, McNamara said.

Meeting future demand for predesigned housing

Thomas James Homes only develops in the Palisades. Genesis Builders is only in Altadena. Both developers have received requests from customers to build in other burn areas, but neither group has plans to expand their reach.

Zandovskis said Genesis' homes meet Altadena standards, and Mead said Thomas James' homes are built for a Palisades price point. Mead said Thomas James is currently the only developer that can scale building in the Palisades.

“We’d love other professional home builders to be building in the Palisades,” Mead said. “What we don’t want to see is folks in the Palisades engaging with homebuilders that don’t meet the high standards of expectations that we provide.”



“What we can do is to create what we think of as an easy button,” said Jamie Mead, CEO of Thomas James Homes.

TIFFANY ROSE

Zandovskis said she foresees future demand for preapproved housing.

“A tragedy shouldn’t need to happen to make building a home easier,” she said. “I think there’s a pretty bright future for Genesis just because of how well we’ve been received.”

In McNamara’s line of work, demand for prefabricated is just getting started, he said.

Samara’s manufacturing takes place in Mexico. He noted that because the labor pool is 200 miles away, Samara doesn’t stress nor rely on Southern California resources. Those local resources can focus on building other homes that the community needs while Samara builds homes in another location without stressing the same labor pool.

“In L.A., you now have a huge competition for building and construction resources,” he said. “Whenever there’s more competition for those resources, often the timelines get pushed down or the costs get pushed up. Because we’re building off-site, we’re not competing for that same resource. We could be very additive to the whole L.A. rebuild process.”

When Mead and Zandovskis look around the Palisades or Altadena, they see communities that are on their way back up.

“When I drive through Altadena, there are sticks in the air and businesses are open,” Zandovskis said. “I think our community is going to come back faster than anybody thought.”

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