



Jeff and Tracey Schween working with clients Jennafer and Paul Rossett on the plans for their new home.

# Rebuilding Santa Rosa

—BY KATHERINE MECHLING

**I**N OCTOBER 2017, the most destructive wildfire in California history crackled through Sonoma County and nearly swallowed the city of Santa Rosa whole. The Tubbs Fire blazed for more than three weeks before it was finally contained, and in that time it obliterated more than 5,000 homes in Santa Rosa alone. Many of those who lost their homes in the fire only barely made it out with their lives.

As the dust began to settle in early November, Santa Rosa-based California REALTORS® Jeff and Tracey Schween were determined to do something to help. Thousands of people — many of them underinsured — needed new homes, and fast.

So, the Schweens reached out to Kevin Skiles, owner of the architectural firm Urban Build-

ing Workshop, to hash out a plan. Together, they formed Santa Rosa Fine Homes, a strategic partnership that offers citizens of Santa Rosa the chance to rebuild swiftly and at a lower price point than market rate. Homes built by Santa Rosa Fine Homes start at \$765,000.

They're able to achieve this through synchronized builds, in which four to six houses go up at the same time, on the same schedule. Each house gets foundation at the same time, framing at the same time, and so on, which saves on time and cost of materials. On top of that, Skiles reduces the standard builder's charge of 20 percent profit in overhead to just 12.5 percent.

"All told, this could save someone hundreds of thousands of dollars on the rebuild," says Jeff.



**BIO :** Since 1990, Jeff and Tracey Schween have been helping people throughout Sonoma County buy and sell residential, commercial, land, and vehicle properties. After the wildfires of 2017, the two formed a partnership with Urban Building Workshop to help Santa Rosa fire survivors rebuild.

“That makes a big difference, especially when many insurance policies don’t cover the full cost of rebuilding.”

When rebuilding a fire-damaged house, those costs can add up fast. First the debris needs to be cleared from the site, and that doesn’t even guarantee that the land underneath can be built on. Insurance fees swallow up time and resources. And to mitigate the risk of a similar disaster in the future, Skiles and the Schweens are purposefully designing these new houses to be more resistant to fire damage, with features like smaller attic spaces and tempered glass windows.

While these modifications can be pricey, the Schweens’ clients have embraced the changes. “In many cases, they’re getting the chance to build an

improved, much more efficient version of their old home,” says Tracey.

The road ahead will be a long one; Jeff, Tracey, and Kevin have committed the next 10 or so years to rebuilding Santa Rosa. But they know the effort will be worth it.

“It feels really good to show these people the light at the end of the tunnel,” says Tracey. “But the story doesn’t end here. So many great people are out there doing whatever they can to help this community rebuild. It’s going to take everybody, and it’s going to take a long time, so we have to work together.”

To date, the first four homes built by Santa Rosa Fine Homes have broken ground and the Schweens are currently working with 25 families to rebuild their homes.



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