



Photo by Rafael Najarian / OUTLOOK

Five Acres Gala Is Golden

Five Acres Board Chair Shoshana Puccia, CEO Chanel Boutakidis, event chairs Tera Wild and Trish Gonzales and Vice Chair Leo Bolanos were among those who enjoyed the Golden Five Acres Gala, which was held June 6 and celebrated the 100th anniversary of its historical Altadena campus. Coverage will appear in the next issue of the Outlook.

NCL Roses Bloom



Photo by Keira Wight / OUTLOOK

Leah Mason (from left) and Melissa Lanchantin, who served as the Rose Gala co-chairs, are pictured with National Charity League's Pasadena Chapter President Kathryn Schotthoefer-Dreyer at the organization's annual formal event. See coverage, page 24.

Nonprofit Beacon Housing Rebuilds Bungalows for Eaton Fire Victims

By Amanda Coscarelli
 The Outlook

The city of Altadena has long been known for its deep architectural history. From late 1800s bungalows to early 1900s craftsman homes and fireplaces adorned with Bachelor tile, these structures house more than just residents. They're a capsule of the region's rich cultural history, laced with stories of the diverse community around them, including marginalized groups and low-income residents.

In 2025, the Eaton Fire ravaged many of these historical structures, leaving some residents unhoused and unable to rebuild. Renters who didn't own property were left with even less and many have resorted to living in their cars or in tents.

Now, a community threatened by gentrification is seemingly more vulnerable than ever as empty lots are sold to new buyers with plans to build luxury apartments and modern housing.

But one nonprofit organization is fighting to preserve affordable housing, the diverse community and its historical architecture with a new 14-unit project breaking ground this year.

Beacon Housing has been



Rendering courtesy Beacon Housing

Beacon Housing, with support from the Altadena Builds Back Foundation (which is a subsidiary of the Pasadena Community Foundation), is helping residents who lost homes in the Eaton Fire with the Pine Project along Pine Street in Altadena, as shown in this rendering.

working to preserve affordable housing since its founding in 1996 by Bob and Jack Samuelson. Their goal is to provide housing for low-income families at a rate that keeps each complex self-sustaining while ensuring long-term affordable housing rather than a temporary solution. For their 30th anniversary and with the help of the Altadena Builds Back Foundation, a subsidiary of the Pasadena Community Foundation, they're working on their largest-funded project to date: rebuilding an affordable

housing complex on Pine Street, including 10 bungalows and two duplexes that burned down in the fire.

"For me, it was very important for Altadena to remain what it was before the fire: this diverse, cool community," said Palin Ngaothepitak, executive director at Beacon Housing. "We need to have a diversity of residents, and that really does include renters. We are very grateful to be part of the solution

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AbilityFirst Hosts Festival of Fall



Photo by Keira Wight / OUTLOOK

AbilityFirst President and CEO Sergio Rizzo-Fontanesi, event chairs Mary Spellman and Anita Lawler, host Mary Urquhart, and honorees Supervisor Kathryn Barger and Richard R. Frank were among more than 400 attendees at AbilityFirst's annual Food & Wine Festival on June 7. Coverage will appear in the next issue of the Outlook.

Fire Victims Thankful For Designer's Award-Winning Effort

By Jessica Doherty
The Outlook

It's often a personal thing to welcome someone into your home.

One might say it is even more personal to have someone else design it.

Casey Martin is a commercial interior designer based in Portland. Her parents live in Pasadena where her father is the president of La Salle College Preparatory.

Martin was in Las Vegas with her family when the Eaton Fire broke out in January 2025, sparks flying on her parents' security camera feed. As the fires continued and the number of impacted La Salle families grew, Martin offered her design services pro bono to those rebuilding their homes and lives in Altadena and Pasadena. She also brought a cadre of students from her interior design program at George Fox University to conceptualize a hypothetical redesign of the historic structure that housed Steve's Bike Shop in Pasadena to be fire resistant.

Last week, Martin's efforts were recognized with an award for her work in Altadena and Pasadena from the International Interior Design Association's Campus Center of the Year Award.

"I really believe design work can change lives," Martin said. "I went into my career [in school and education design] in the middle of the recession in 2009 ... because it was the only job available. But I am so thankful for that because it has shown me how much space impacts people."

Since January 2025, Martin has worked with seven families in Altadena and Pasadena. One of those families is the Guzmans, who lost their home in the Eaton Fire. One of the family's daughters, Annalis Guzman, attended La Salle. Hence, the connection to Martin and her father, Perry, who leads the school.

"You go through this and the people



Casey Martin

that you trust have lost your trust," said Kelly Guzman, Annalis' mother. "You should trust your utilities, you should trust your county. And then for someone like Casey to offer this while we are wallowing and doing everything ourselves and have decision after decision to make ... has been a blessing. I think the biggest thing is that it helped ease a lot of emotions."

The process has also been helpful to the family in understanding the workflow of what needs to be built and in the correct order. Colors and window frames sometimes need to be decided as the house is still being planned. As the Guzmans work with a contractor, Martin has sent ideas from tiles and color options to floor plans for the family to consider as they frame the house and rebuild from the ground up.

"One thing people keep saying is, 'Well, now you get to build your dream home,' and they don't understand we weren't looking for our dream home — we had our dream home," Kelly Guzman said. "This was our home and we weren't looking to change it. Even if I rebuilt it exactly how it was, I don't have all the things that were in it so it still can't be what it was."

The house is only one part of what



Photo courtesy Josh Spangler

The Guzman family, which lost their home in the Eaton Fire last year, are rebuilding with the help of award-winning interior designer Casey Martin. Pictured above are Annalis Guzman (from left), parents Kelly and Sergio Guzman, and children Domenic and Karina Guzman.

makes a home — with other aspects being a lot harder to reconstruct. "Things can be repurchased, but everything has some kind of value," said family patriarch Sergio Guzman. "It could have been a little block my son carved ... we lost all of his Pinewood Derby cars, which he won [an award for] in Boy Scouts. We can make another one, but it's not the winning car."

Although Annalis was not living at home at the time of the fires, it remains her childhood home. She was heartened by the level of community help they received.

"It was shocking, overwhelming, but pleasantly surprising how many people were like, 'Do you need blankets?' 'Here's a bunch of socks,'" Annalis said. "I didn't know you thought enough about us to care."

For families in a similar situation, Kelly Guzman encourages them to accept help.

"The community completely stepped up," she said. "Accept help because everyone wants to give you help. At first you're like, 'No, no, I'm fine.' People want

to help and they feel like they don't know what to do because they're not in our situation."

Sergio, the father, also encourages people to take their time when rebuilding. "Take your time, finish everything. Draw it out. Imagine it, because it's hopefully going to be the home that's, like Kelly said, it's going to be either your dream home or just a home that you're just going to be happy with and not walking back to and saying, 'Dang it, I wish I would have done this,'" he said.

The family members are all looking forward to coming home once the build and design is complete. Sergio is excited to return to tinkering in his garage — working on models and Italian scooters with his son. Annalis hopes to bring her family together when she hosts her bridal shower at the home. And Kelly's home projects take her outside to the garden, where she hopes a new patch of sunflowers can help remediate the soil alongside a collection of plants native to California.

HOUSING

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to help bring renters back affordably to Altadena."

The "Pine Project" is 100% funded by the Altadena Builds Back Foundation (ABBF), thanks to a \$5.85 million grant that covers both the acquisition of the property and the cost of construction. Once built, the property will be self-sustaining, meaning that the cost of maintenance and taxes will be covered by rent, but the goal is to make these units as affordable as possible. The hope is to have enough of the grant money left over at the end of the project to create a

reserve to help fund future improvements at the property.

Currently, Beacon Housing has 260 people on its interest list, meaning that these people are actively looking for affordable housing. The majority of them make less than \$3,000 a month, and some make less than \$1,000. These individuals face roadblocks such as fixed income or low credit scores that make it even harder to rent.

"We have a number of folks that are working but have been living in their car for the last year for a multitude of reasons, but the majority of which is that they cannot access housing in the area," said Ngaotheppitak. "We have folks that are parents who want to keep their kids in

the school system and so they're trying to stay within the local area to be connected to their networks and their support."

To support local residents who lost their housing in the Eaton Fire, the organization is giving priority to people who previously lived at the complex before it burned down. After that, tenants who qualify for affordable housing will be chosen via a lottery system.

As Altadena largely rebuilds itself from the ground up, long-term residents fear that a new crowd could change the community dynamic that is so special to them. But a key part of protecting that community involves supporting affordable housing, not just property owners. While many homeowners have been forced to sell their plots because of financial barriers, affordable housing units offer an opportunity for residents to return. And developments like the Pine Project often largely receive the community's support.

"As we rebuild, affordable rental housing isn't just a necessity — it's the foundation for recovery and essential to preserving the vibrant, inclusive character that makes Altadena home," said Candice Kim, project director at ABBF. "While a lot of the recovery focus has been on homeowners, renters are an important part of our community that has been significantly impacted and displaced by the fire. They consider Altadena their home and wish to return."

Looking forward, Ngaotheppitak hopes that the Pine Project will be completed by the end of the year to celebrate the organization's 30th anniversary. But for now, it's a moving picture. Thanks to support from community organizations such as Door of Hope, Shepherd's Door and Day One, the development is already



Palin Ngaotheppitak

well underway.

Outside of this project, though, Ngaotheppitak believes there is a need for a county-wide, long-term rental assistance program that will focus on the evolving needs of this community apart from federal funding from Section 8.

ABBF continues to play an essential role in supporting the community through grants and other resources.

"The mission of Altadena Builds Back Foundation is focused on the rebuilding of residential Altadena," said Kim. "Our grants to date have been focused on solutions that rebuild housing for homeowners and renters. We are also looking into solutions that create pathways back to permanent housing, such as remediation and repair of standing homes. Through this Beacon Housing grant, we aim to send a clear message to our community and fellow funders: renters are vital to Altadena's future and deserve to be part of its renewal."



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