

[Postfires reconstruction hums along in Santa Rosa's Coffey Park](#)

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This story originally appeared on PressDemocrat.com. The morning sun had risen nearly to the top of three burned trees when Samuel Garcia began framing the wall for a new home in Coffey Park. The mustachioed Garcia, wearing a soft-brimmed hat and suspenders that held up his carpenter tool belt, methodically lined up 2-by-6 boards atop a covered subfloor. At each joint, his nail gun fired three times. When he needed leverage drawing two boards tightly together, he partially sank a nail in one and then grabbed it with a cat's paw, a small bar with a V-shaped cleft used for prying nailheads. After less than 20 minutes, the middle-aged framer and two younger coworkers raised the first wall into place at the building site on Nina Court. Two more workers joined in, helping lift the frame and secure it in place. The time was 7:19 a.m. Already the dull hum of cars on the distant Highway 101 freeway was giving way to the buzz of saws and the rumbling of construction vehicles on nearby streets and lots. The course of a summer's day in Coffey Park offers hundreds of scenes of workers in all stages of rebuilding homes burned in last fall's wildfires. Meanwhile, in the same neighborhood, often on the same streets, utility workers dig trenches and place conduit pipes for a new underground system of natural gas, electric and communication lines. The neighborhood's rebuild involves construction crews from general contractors both large and small working next door to each other. Those building multiple homes often find their projects separated by several blocks. "It looks like the most unorganized subdivision I've ever built," said Aaron Matz, president of APM Homes of Santa Rosa. Matz, whose grandfather, Art Condiotti, built several hundred homes in the neighborhood three decades ago, is on track to rebuild about 50 homes for Coffey Park fire survivors. That work comes first, he said, but the company also has purchased about 16 of the burned lots put up for sale after the fires. The October wildfires claimed 24 lives and burned nearly 5,300 homes in Sonoma County, including more than 1,200 homes around Coffey Park. Nearly nine months later, the neighborhood is bustling with activity, with some 220 homes in construction. Resident Scott Saucedo noted the progress Tuesday morning while visiting his own house construction project on Dogwood Drive. "I stood here and I could count 32 homes," said Saucedo, an eight-year resident of

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Coffey Park. “And two months ago there was two.” Saucedo’s future home also received a visit Tuesday from city building inspector Jeremiah Parizon, who’s among a large contingent of building professionals brought in on a contract basis as part of the city’s rebuilding efforts. Parizon strode around the house exterior, checking on the nailing pattern of the shear walls, composed of a widely used wooden panel known as “OSB,” or oriented strand board. The inspector later examined the sheeting on the roof, climbing onto a ladder with Ronnie Duvall, a project superintendent for the Windsor-based builder Gallaher Homes. Duvall, known to many Coffey Park fire survivors for his volunteer role organizing Christmastime festivities in the neighborhood, said Gallaher has 11 homes in various stages of framing and another 18 with foundations ready or under preparation PG&E recently reported it had completed in the neighborhood more than 30,000 feet of trench work, or more than 40 percent of the project. John Costanza, the utility’s natural gas superintendent for the region, came Tuesday to Coffey Park to review the work. He said the crews that volunteered to work in Coffey Park are coming from throughout the region, which extends from Galt north to the Oregon border. Each crew seeks to build a 110-foot length of the system on a typical day, and 11 crews are working around Coffey Park, said Ron Villa, one of two supervisors for the project. The work is slated to continue until the end of the year. “It’s a huge project and we’re not used to working where we have all these houses being built at the same time,” Costanza said. As such, the crews seek to ensure their 54-inch deep trenches disrupt as little as possible home builders and nearby residents whose homes didn’t burn. “Everybody’s on a schedule,” Costanza said, “not just us.” Construction workers are in demand for the rebuild, and many crews are coming from outside the county. Matz of APM Homes said his framing company is preassembling wall sections in the Central Valley and trucking stacks of them over to Coffey Park, so houses can be built without importing as many workers. To keep things running smoothly, the city appointed staff member Bob Oller to coordinate the rebuild of Coffey Park and the other neighborhoods burned by the fires. A longtime building inspector and manager, Oller oversees the city inspectors who review home construction, utility work and various public improvements. He also addresses any concerns of builders, utility managers and residents. “This is so much different than building a subdivision,” Oller said. On Tuesday, Oller stopped by Saucedo’s house during the building inspection. After speaking with the homeowner, he agreed to contact city park officials about the need to haul away a large pile of metal debris still sitting on the edge of the neighborhood park across the street. Just up the road on Nina Court, Garcia and his fellow framers had raised more exterior walls by 10 a.m. They took a break when they heard a bugle-like horn and saw El Coronel Taco truck rolling into the cul de sac. Nearly a dozen workers from various job sites soon lined up to order soft tacos and sodas. Garcia’s foreman, Humberto Mata, shared one of his tacos with a stranger. He said his crew came from JD Framing in Pittsburg in the East Bay. Mata was unsure how many

more homes the company will build in Coffey Park, but he expects the crew will stay busy throughout the summer. The crew returned to work after the break, and by 3:30 p.m. they had raised all of the Nina Court house's exterior walls, including one with a great beam over the entrance to the two-car garage. Garcia and two younger workers cut 10-foot sheets of OSB and nailed them in place vertically along the walls. When a reporter suggested he had done considerable work that day, Garcia replied with a common Spanish phrase of the working man, "Mucho trabajo, poco dinero," or "a lot of work, a little money For Oller, the city rebuild coordinator, Tuesday was a typical day, but a noteworthy one on a personal level. Oller lost his home to the fires in the hills near Mark West Springs Road. That morning a new foundation was poured, a moment he said he had to watch. "To me," he said, "it seems I'm immersed in rebuilding." You can reach Staff Writer Robert Digitale at 707-521-5285 or robert.digitale@pressdemocrat.com. On Twitter @rdigit.