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## This Morgan Hill builder believes the solution to fire-safe homes is already hiding in your office

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Along with millions — perhaps billions — of people around the world, Eugene Yu watched the past few years as tens of thousands of homes went up in flames up and down California.

He wondered why and what he could do about it.

And then, before building his new family's new home in Morgan Hill, he decided he needed to abandon the career path that had taken him from the automobile industry into tech and form a construction company. Its first job is the 6,000-square-foot hilltop home he designed for his own family. The house is a prototype of the steel frame residential construction he believes the state needs.



JODY MEACHAM

Yu said he could not find a residential builder that could work with steel instead of wood.

"In 2018, just in Paradise Valley alone, there were 19,000 homes destroyed by fire and 85 lives lost and over \$12 billion paid by the insurance companies so far," Yu said at a press conference Thursday inside the home he's building. "We have this very simple desire. We don't want our future homes to have any fire danger."

If successful, the YuHu Building Corp. would disrupt the residential construction business in California — not through high tech, but by applying building materials and techniques that now are nearly exclusively confined to commercial buildings.

Yu says he's finding ways to source steel for framing and to train carpenters into becoming steel workers that can eliminate most or all of the cost difference.

"This is a custom home," he said. "It's for my wife. But I formed my company to build homes for the middle class."

Jim Levesque, CEO of Equal Partners Contractors and Development in Santa Monica, which is doing some of the same things rebuilding homes in Malibu that were destroyed by fires there, said what Yu wants to do can be done but it will require buyers and builders to break old habits.

“These fires may have created the situation where people may be open to this,” he said. “You can’t get insurance to rebuild a lot of these homes where they were.”

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