

CAPSS: Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety



A Project of the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection
ENewsletter #2 February 2009 www.sfcapss.org

In This Issue

CAPSS Releases Policy Recommendations: First Step to Protect San Francisco's Housing and Public Safety

Lately at CAPSS: Background and Recent Activities

Future Activities of CAPSS

Advisory Committee Meetings

Contact Us

CAPSS Releases Policy

Recommendations:

**First Step to Protect San Francisco's
Housing and Public Safety**

In July 2008, Mayor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Directive asking CAPSS to focus first on ways to reduce risk in wood frame buildings with "soft" or weak first stories.

This month, CAPSS delivered to Mayor Newsom the report titled *Here Today-Here Tomorrow: Earthquake*

Safety for Soft-Story Buildings.

This report focuses on multi-unit, wood frame buildings with three or more stories and five or more residential units, built before May 21, 1973. Many of these buildings have a soft-story, meaning the ground floor is weaker than the stories above and can be heavily damaged or collapse in earthquakes. These buildings house thousands of residents, local businesses, and rent-controlled apartments, and contribute to the unique look of the city. Their loss in future earthquakes would significantly impact the community.



Sketches of representative multi-unit wood frame buildings that may have soft-stories

To address the risk of collapse in these buildings, the CAPSS project recommends that:

- A seismic safety standard be established in San Francisco for soft-story buildings that would allow them to be occupied after a large earthquake.
- The Department of Building Inspection establish a program that requires owners of soft story buildings to evaluate the seismic safety of their buildings and retrofit them if they are seismically deficient.
- The City of San Francisco should immediately offer incentives to encourage voluntary retrofits by owners. These incentives

need not be limited to the buildings addressed in this report.

Please visit <http://www.sfcapss.org> for the full report, as well as a summary of the complete document.

Lately at CAPSS: **Background and Recent Activities**

The CAPSS (Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety) project is working to identify ways to minimize damage from earthquakes and facilitate San Francisco's post-earthquake recovery.

CAPSS is focused on:

- **Minimizing Damage:** The project will recommend city policies to reduce damage to buildings in future earthquakes and preserve the unique character that makes San Francisco a great city.
- **Rapid Rebuilding and Repair:** The project will develop an updated repair policy so city residents and businesses can get back on their feet rapidly following a major earthquake.

The CAPSS Advisory Committee hosted a workshop on December 10, 2008, where project advisors discussed the risks of soft-story buildings and potential city policies to make them safer. Local engineers, representatives from neighborhood and community organizations, officials from the City of San Francisco and members of the public participated in the extended discussion. Many of the comments and questions raised during the workshop were incorporated into the recommendations released this month.



Attendees of the CAPSS Advisory Committee Workshop on December 10 discuss potential city policies for building owners in San Francisco.

A number of other city agencies and groups are also looking at San Francisco's earthquake risk. San Francisco Planning and Urban Research (SPUR) released a report this month about earthquake issues, available on their website:

<http://www.spur.org>.

Future Activities of CAPSS

The CAPSS project recognizes soft-story buildings are not the only building type susceptible to damage in the event of an earthquake. To address this, CAPSS is continuing its work on a report about the overall risk to San Francisco from earthquakes, to be released in January 2010. This report will focus on all building types found in San Francisco.

CAPSS also plans to release a report regarding post-earthquake building repair requirements in March 2010. The finalized Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety is slated for completion in August 2010.

Advisory Committee Meetings

The CAPSS Advisory Committee is made up of volunteer

members of the San Francisco community, including representatives from neighborhood and community groups and the City of San Francisco. The Advisory Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Department of Building Inspection, 1660 Mission Street, Room 2002. The next meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2009. Advisory committee meetings are open to the public.

Contact Us

For further information on the CAPSS project, please visit our Web site at <http://www.sfcapss.org>.

If you have a question or would like to contact a CAPSS team member, please email info@sfcapss.org.
