

CAPSS Advisory Committee Summary of January 14, 2009 Meeting

Prepared by Laura Samant

Mary Lou Zoback welcomed meeting participants and mentioned that the focus of the meeting would be to discuss the draft report prepared by the project team. This report had been distributed to committee members the previous week. She reminded all attendees that the project team requested comments in writing by Friday the 16th. She also referenced a meeting handout that summarized comments received during the December 10, 2008 workshop of the CAPSS project.

Laurence Kornfield said the CAPSS project was at an important threshold: this draft report is the first policy recommendation of the project through its entire history. He had just come from a meeting of the Building Code Advisory Committee. That group had discussed the draft report and unanimously recommended it be adopted by the Building Inspection Commission (BIC), with some edits. Laurence would prepare a list of their comments. The BIC will discuss the report at their next meeting, Wednesday January 21. The report will be sent to the Mayor's Office at the end of the month, and there is interest from a couple of Supervisors. He had also met with City officials to discuss how this report relates to City efforts to plan post-disaster recover.

Tom Tobin reviewed the first key report recommendation. The report recommends a mandatory program that covers all 4,600 wood frame buildings with three or more stories and 5 or more residential units. The city should develop a protocol to screen these buildings. All 4,600 buildings should be required to hire someone to complete this screening, which will indicate whether they are likely to be soft-story or not.

Meeting participants made the following points or asked the following questions:

- Clarified that buildings built after May 1973 would not be included in the program
- Asked whether buildings with only residential use on the ground floor were included. The project team responded that they were included. Other participants noted that these buildings may have many interior walls that make them not soft-story, so they would be required to complete the screening but may not be required to retrofit.
- Clarified that the screening protocol was yet to be developed. It should consider interior walls, some other simple engineering calculations, and whether a building has already been retrofitted. Engineers would be best to complete this screening, but the City must allow licensed architects to do this if they feel qualified, according to state law.
- Noted that engineers would be very conservative completing this protocol and would be reluctant to make statements about a building's potential for damage due to liability. If the City spelled out very specific calculation, they would do them.

- Emphasized that a performance objective was different than a technical standard. Clarified that a technical standard still needs to be developed or selected and adopted through the City's process. A caution was raised that the current code for new buildings is not for the standard of shelter-in-place. Many new buildings built to the current code might be safe to occupy after an earthquake, but that is not "guaranteed" by the code. It was emphasized that the project recommends that best performance that can be accomplished by limiting work to the ground floor.
- Recommended replacing the phrase "camp out" with "shelter-in-place" or a longer description of what these terms are intended to mean.
- It was recommended to include the SPUR table of resiliency in the report.
- Clarified that the project recommended a timeline of 10 years for the entire program. Individual owners would have 4 years from the date they are noticed to comply. It should be made clear that the timeline is based on group consensus, not analysis.
- Emphasize that programs looking at other building types should not need to wait until this program is complete.
- Recommended included a table with information about the number of buildings in various categories.
- Recommended deemphasizing recommended priorities, such as allowing longer time frames for commercial and ground floor residential buildings. Those priorities can be ironed out later as the program is implemented. The danger of these buildings is only one factor that will be considered in priorities. The impact of damage to various types of buildings is the key factor to consider when setting priorities. Buildings with ground floor commercial and residential use could be argued to be the most dangerous buildings, which conflicts with the recommendation to allow them more time to retrofit.
- City needs to track seismic retrofits from here on out.
- The report should recommend strong enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions and receivership. The state recommends receivership as a tool for seismic safety mandates.
- Need to mention that there should be no incentives created for owners to skirt rent control and tenant protection laws, in accordance with Prop M. The rent board needs to talk about the pass through issue. Amortization over 20 years is an important component of that.
- Mentioned that all buildings in soft soil are at high risk. Risk categories 1 and 3 should be combined. The City has detailed maps that could be used to supplement state hazard zone maps. NHERP soil category D could be used as a soft soil definition.
- Clarified that all midblock buildings should be included in the mandatory program. The current report only includes a mandate for midblock buildings with gaps. Buildings should be referred to as constrained and unconstrained, not midlock and corner.
- Recommended to calculate FEMA cost benefit to aid securing funding from the agency.

- Noted that supervisors may put reuse of the UMB bond funds on the ballot for a June election.
- Asked whether planning incentives such as density bonuses and easing parking requirements were considered too dicey to be recommended. Advised to include these as recommendations.
- Requested that the style of the report be altered to grab readers more at the beginning. This could be done by emphasizing the loss of rent controlled housing. Important to note the San Francisco is second only to New York City in the percent of occupants who are renters. That's a lot of people without control of the seismic safety of their residence. Tenants and building users do not their risk level.
- Raised concern that retrofit 3 is cheaper than retrofit 2 due to an analysis choice to use cantilevered columns for retrofit 3. Engineers would take exception to the idea that retrofit level 3 is cheaper than retrofit level 2.
- Emphasize that DBI's inventory is not a list of buildings that will be covered by a policy.
- A number of other word and sentence changes were recommended and noted by the project team.
- More graphics were requested, including photos from Loma Prieta showing shelter lines.
- Some report reorganization was recommended.
- Recommendation to refer to cohort of buildings as multi-unit wood frame soft-story buildings, instead of "large".

At the end of the meeting, participants were asked to raise hands if they supported the report. Most, if not all, hands were raised. No hands were raised to express dissent with the report.