

severe damage in areas of liquefiable sediments topped by high-population-density buildings constructed of older, inadequate design (such as URMs, tilt-up concrete wall, nonductile concrete frame or soft story construction). While we cannot predict which ground will liquefy, nor which particular buildings will fail catastrophically, we can guarantee that evacuation and reoccupancy of such buildings are issues that will arise.

During the short-term recovery period, which can last up to two years, decisions would have to be made about demolition vs. repair and the financing found to do either. As was the case with the community of Santa Cruz, which was heavily damaged by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, discussions will be heated when considering demolition or repair of buildings of historic value. Equally as difficult is branding whole neighborhoods as too damaged to repair. Restoration of infrastructure can also be a long-term concern.

Long-term reconstruction issues emerge early in the short-term recovery period, but characteristically continue for several years. In a heavily-damaged community, major rebuilding can last up to ten years. During such periods, County personnel and leadership will see greater than normal job turn-over, accelerated by the early and sustained stress of recovery decisions. In Santa Rosa, after a major earthquake in the 1960's that leveled 20 blocks in the downtown area, a number of top officials took early retirement and, in a few cases, were reported to have died from the stress. Santa Rosa ultimately rebuilt a better downtown area, but property owner lawsuits took years to settle.

For all of these things, a community can prepare. But such preparation requires commitment at the policy level to undertake such substantial pre-event planning effort. The new Riverside County Safety Element provides the policy framework for the initiation of such an undertaking.

5.7.4 Recovery Ordinance as a First Step

The California Disaster Recovery (and) Reconstruction Act of 1986 authorizes local governments to plan, organize and prepare in advance for speedy recovery and reconstruction after a disaster. Among the activities authorized is the pre-event adoption of an ordinance, to be activated with the declaration of emergency, which clearly spells out the recovery organization and the duties and responsibilities of its member departments and officials.

Such an ordinance can be extremely useful in organizing recovery efforts. It saves time when time is at a premium, makes plans at a time when thinking is clearer, and

provides a stronger legal basis for potentially controversial post-event decisions. The ordinance can dictate authorities and powers of different County officers, distribution of responsibility and accountability, authorization of extraordinary procedures for streamlining repair permit issuance and simplifying public notice, interim joint powers and contract procedures, criteria for establishing building moratoria, standards for expedited repair permit processing, criteria for restoration of standard operating procedures, and organization for planning and implementation of long-term reconstruction and redevelopment programs.

The new Safety Element should be accompanied by such an ordinance, for consideration by the County Board of Supervisors. This ordinance should structure the framework of a recovery and reconstruction planning effort as well as all post-event organization and duties that can be anticipated. There will still be many long hours required to work out and maintain a detailed recovery and reconstruction plan. The ordinance provides a springboard to a comprehensive emergency and disaster management strategy.