

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The previous section provided a detailed look at seismic retrofit programs in several communities throughout the State of California. In this section we would like to give you a glimpse of some additional techniques used by jurisdictions throughout the State to promote retrofitting of privately-owned hazardous structures.

# TOWN OF ARROYO GRANDE

POPULATION:      14,400  
URMS:              20

The Town Council of Arroyo Grande instructed the building department to work with the owners of identified potentially hazardous buildings to retrofit such structures under a "reasonable" timeline. The city originally set a deadline of three to five years for completion of the work, but in recognition of the recent economic downturn, and in the spirit of cooperation on which the program is founded, the city building department is being **flexible with its deadline** for compliance.

The Building Department also provides **reduced permit fees** to owners performing retrofit work. Instead of charging building permit fees on the basis of the valuation of the work, a valuation which the Building Inspector feels is difficult for anyone to make, the city estimates how many inspections it will need to make during the construction process and **charges fees based on the number of inspections and other handling costs the city will incur**. The building department also **allows the continuance of non-conforming uses and waives other aspects of updated zoning regulations** such as parking requirements.

## CONTACT

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Chief Building Inspector

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# CITY OF BERKELEY

67

POPULATION: 106,000

URMS: 517

The City of Berkeley instituted an additional 1/2% transfer tax on property sales which can either be paid to the city or used by the owner to pay for seismic retrofit work on the building. The city believes owners would rather see the monies go into their properties than into the city's tax coffers. The city estimates that on single-family homes the 1/2% tax would help cover the cost of such improvements as bolting structures to foundations, sheer wall improvements, chimney reinforcement and the like. The city also waives permit fees on seismic retrofit projects.

The City of Berkeley ordinance imposes a mandatory unreinforced masonry building (URM) retrofit program. Included in the ordinance is a requirement that owners of such buildings post a clearly visible warning inside the main entrance of the building stipulating as follows: "This is an unreinforced masonry building, which under State of California law, constitutes a severe threat to life safety in the event of an earthquake of moderate to high magnitude."

## CONTACTS

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# CITY OF INGLEWOOD

**POPULATION: 112,500**

**URMS: 60**

Inglewood has developed a program which presents **two options for reimbursement of construction costs** to property owners performing retrofit repairs. An owner may choose either to receive (i) reimbursement of up to \$1,000 of the cost of preparation of plans and engineering studies and (ii) 25% of the actual cost of the required improvements **OR** (iii) reimbursement of up to \$3,000 of the actual cost of engineering studies and plan preparation, (iv) 50% of any cost in excess of \$3,000, and (v) the actual cost of plan checking, building permits and related taxes and fees. The city funds this program with CDBG monies. The predominant choice for reimbursement is the second program. Even though the first reimbursement option (i and ii) could potentially result in a larger rebate, property owners avoid it because of the Davis-Bacon Wage laws with which they would have to comply if they use CDBG monies to pay for construction. Owners generally feel that the additional cost associated with compliance would not be offset by the larger rebate. The city estimates the reimbursements will range from a minimum of \$6,000 per building to a maximum of \$12,000 per building. The seismic retrofit program is overseen by two departments: the Building Department handles the technical aspects of the program while the Department of Community Development and Housing handles the financial components.

## CONTACTS

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# CITY OF LA VERNE

69

POPULATION:      31,100  
URMS:              9

The City of La Verne has developed a program, to be funded with redevelopment agency monies, which will provide **property owners with a grant of up to 50% of cost** of engineering and construction for retrofitting. The city set a 5 year goal to complete the repairs, hoping to be able to fund 2 buildings a year at a cost of approximately \$50,000. However, the number of structures retrofitted is dependent on the funds available each year. The city hopes that in addition to the seismic repairs, owners will be encouraged to do facade renovations/restorations.

## CONTACT

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# CITY OF SAN DIEGO

POPULATION:    1,144,000

URMS:            1,050

The City of San Diego is unique when compared to the other communities pursuing seismic retrofit programs because it is currently not located in Seismic Zone 4 and therefore is not subject to SB 547, the "URM Law." Approximately 6 years ago, San Diego began a **voluntary review of the unreinforced masonry buildings in the community with the appointment of a City Manager's Committee on the seismic retrofit of older buildings.** Initially, the Building Inspection Department proposed a mandatory retrofit ordinance to the City Manager's Committee. It was soon obvious that such an ordinance would raise immediate opposition from property owners and would certainly not be approved by the city council. The City Manager's Committee is now considering an alternative voluntary ordinance with some mandatory aspects. There is disagreement between structural engineers, local architects and property owners on how, or even whether, the issue should be addressed. There is also some local controversy regarding the possibility that San Diego may be reclassified so it is included in Seismic Zone 4. San Diego does have an existing **requirement that may cause property owners to retrofit a structure when it changes use or occupancy to one more hazardous than the existing use.** There has been some voluntary seismic retrofit work done in San Diego by both private owners and public agencies. The city is interested in, but has been unable to identify, a source of funds which would allow it to make construction grants to owners of hazardous structures.

## CONTACTS

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# CITY OF SAN JOSE

71

POPULATION:        782,000  
URMS:                150

The City of San Jose has identified approximately 150 privately-owned unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs) city-wide. Most of the buildings are almost exclusively commercial/retail, with a few providing low-cost housing on the upper floors. Many of the buildings are on the City Historic Resources Inventory. About half of the URMs are located in redevelopment areas. Fifty five of those, housing 121 businesses, are included in the redevelopment agency's retail focus area. San Jose has developed a multi-level set of programs to encourage retrofitting.

San Jose is **exempting permit fees** on retrofit projects, a program expected to cost the city approximately \$250,000 and the redevelopment agency about \$50,000. San Jose is also offering **design grants** to owners, a program to which the city and redevelopment agency are each contributing up to \$1 million. The city council has approved procedures for forming a **Special Assessment district** to provide long-term, market-rate financing for retrofits.

For owners of retail structures in the redevelopment agency's focus area, San Jose has developed **two grant programs to offset construction costs** at a cost to the redevelopment agency of \$4.6 million over 4 years. Retail buildings in the focus area have been ranked based on 4 criteria: historic significance, consistency with the downtown strategy plan, location within the retail focus area, and key building features such as strategic retail value, condition of building, retail desirability, building owners commitment, and tenant status. Owners of buildings receiving qualified ranking will be eligible for the basic grant. Owners of buildings receiving the highest ranking will be eligible for an additional grant, in exchange for which they will be asked to make a corresponding amount of tenant improvements. The agency also is developing a **tenant assistance program** for commercial and residential tenants located in retrofit assisted buildings.

San Jose also assigned one individual to act as **full time liaison with URM owners and the community**. The Liaison is a part of the City Manager's Department Office of Emergency Services. The Liaison provides information and answers questions about the programs offered by the city and the redevelopment agency, interacting with owners, tenants, the media, and other city departments. The Liaison also supplies the city council and the public with information on the progress which has been made towards retrofitting each of the identified buildings. The Liaison is expected to take a particularly active role in development of the financing district, working with the financing team, and explaining the program to and soliciting feedback from URM owners.

CONTACTS

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POPULATION:            87,500  
URMS:                    12

The City of San Mateo adopted a mandatory retrofit ordinance in January, 1990. San Mateo based its ordinance on the Los Angeles model, simplifying it by creating only 2 hazard categories and changing some of the time limits. If an owner installs anchors he or she can take up to 8 years to complete the retrofit; otherwise, the owner must complete retrofit within 3 years. The majority of the buildings affected by this ordinance have historic designations or are contributors to a proposed historic district.

The ordinance also directly addresses the conversion of unused second floors in commercial buildings to residential use. In San Mateo's commercial district there is also an attempt to tie some storefront improvement to retrofit projects. Both second-floor conversion and storefront projects are handled through San Mateo's Housing and Economic Development Division. Assistance in the form of grants and loans is made available for use towards the retrofit of buildings participating in these programs.

Of San Mateo's 12 unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs), 1 has been retrofitted, 3 are presently undergoing retrofit construction, and engineering plans have been prepared for the remaining structures.

### CONTACTS

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# CITY OF VACAVILLE

POPULATION:        73,000  
URMS:                20

The City of Vacaville has established the "Key Building Loan Program," a **3%, 25 year loan program** to finance the cost of seismic retrofit. A property owner can also receive a **50% matching loan** for tenant improvements. The total amount of these loans is based on underwriting criteria which include a loan-to-value determination, setting a limit on total debt on the structure of up to 80% of the estimated post-rehabilitation property value. The city has an associated **facade loan program** providing up to \$15,000 worth of funding for facade renovation. These programs are paid for out of redevelopment funds through incremental tax revenues, and therefore are limited to those buildings located in the redevelopment area.

## CONTACT

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