

References for Mary Comerio: Learning and Adapting in Pursuit of Resilience

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Our Priorities for Disaster Planning

ESTABLISHING CLEAR GOALS FOR DISASTER RECOVERY

When we select engineering standards for buildings and lifelines, we are really choosing how many deaths, how many building demolitions, and how long a recovery time we have for various levels of earthquakes. SPUR believes that San Francisco must adopt clear performance objectives for determining how our buildings should perform, with an eye towards facilitating a rapid and effective recovery after a major earthquake.

TAKING STEPS (NOW!) TOWARD BECOMING A RESILIENT CITY

There are many things we could be doing right now to improve the safety and performance of San Francisco's existing buildings, new buildings (i.e. those yet to be built) and lifelines. In a February 2009 report, SPUR recommended policy steps including retrofitting the most vulnerable structures, upgrading our building code to ensure new buildings are built better, and forming a lifelines council to help coordinate upgrades to our critical utility systems.

CREATING A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS

When disaster strikes, San Franciscans must be prepared. We need to be ready to care for family members, assist our neighbors and work effectively in teams and alongside first responders and other emergency workers. We will need adequate stores of water, food and supplies to support a citywide response. Comprehensive public disaster education and neighborhood-based training and resource coordination are necessary for engaging all residents of the city in an ongoing preparedness effort.

PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM REBUILDING

San Francisco needs to be thinking not just about the days and weeks following a disaster, but the months and years it will take to rebuild our city and our region. This means developing plans for how to access and make the best possible use of recovery funding. When the Big One strikes, we should be prepared to rebuild San Francisco rapidly and in accordance with our best-laid plans to help make our city stronger and more resilient.

Disaster Planning Projects

THE RESILIENT CITY, PART 1: BEFORE THE DISASTER

Which existing buildings must be retrofitted and to what standard of performance? How do we encourage better performance from our new buildings? How do we

shore up our vital services and infrastructure so that our buildings are serviceable after an earthquake? SPUR has established a "Before the Disaster" task force to focus on what we should do now—before a major earthquake—to make sure we can recover quickly. We published our findings and recommendations in a series of policy papers.

THE RESILIENT CITY, PART 2: AFTER THE DISASTER

When a disaster strikes, are we positioned to rebuild our city even better than before? What plans and systems of governance must be in place for San Francisco to be effectively positioned to rebuild? What lessons are to be learned from the recent recovery experiences in New Orleans, lower Manhattan and beyond? These are some of the questions SPUR will address in a forthcoming series of four major policy papers on disaster recovery as it relates to transportation, housing, planning and governance.

DISASTER RESPONSE

This effort focuses on planning for the days and weeks following a major earthquake by creating a culture of preparedness. The first step toward creating a culture of preparedness is individual awareness and self-reliance. The second step is community awareness, cooperation, planning and preparedness. SPUR has recommended several steps towards creating a culture of preparedness, including strengthening the City's Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) program, establishing community disaster response hubs and improving public information in San Francisco's neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN FOR SEISMIC SAFETY

The Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety (CAPSS), a project of the Department of Building Inspection, seeks to develop programs for privately owned buildings that help reduce earthquake risk. In February of 2009, CAPSS project delivered a major report detailing recommendations for the upgrade of multiunit, wood-frame, soft story buildings. SPUR is pleased to be a participant in CAPSS and looks forward to working to help CAPSS continue its important work.

Disaster Planning Updates

To get updates on SPUR's disaster planning policy efforts contact SPUR Deputy Director Sarah Karlinsky at skarlinsky@spur.org.