

DATE ISSUED: October 7, 2005

REPORT NO. 05-204

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of October 12, 2005

SUBJECT: Update on the Status of Post Cedar Fire Reconstruction in
Scripps Ranch and Tierrasanta

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to a request from the offices of Council District Five, the City Manager was requested to provide an update to the Natural Resources and Culture Committee on the progress of the on-going rebuilding efforts for buildings damaged or destroyed during the 2003 Cedar Fire.

DISCUSSION

On October 25, 2003, the City of San Diego was subjected to a fire storm caused by the Cedar Fire. The wildland brush incident resulted in a total of 335 structures being destroyed and total of 71 structures damaged (includes accessory structures, an HOA recreation center, and a private school). The total damage figures recorded for the fire were \$135,973,838 for structures and \$67,986,919 for contents.

Post Disaster Safety Assessments:

Following full containment of the Cedar Fire within the City of San Diego, Development Services and the Fire-Rescue Departments deployed Post Disaster Safety Assessment teams to evaluate fire-damaged buildings and to collect data required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The teams were comprised of Structural Engineers and Building Inspectors from Development Services and were coordinated by Fire-Rescue. All damaged and destroyed buildings within the City of San Diego were evaluated by State certified evaluators under the State of California Office of Emergency Services adopted ATC-20 process, as developed by the Applied Technology Council.

Development Services also provided resources to the County of San Diego for a similar post disaster evaluation effort within the county's jurisdiction.

Local Assistance Center:

The City established a "one stop" San Diego Local Assistance Center to provide recovery assistance to the residents of Scripps Ranch and Tierrasanta. The center was located in Scripps Ranch. In addition to City services, various local State and Federal relief and assistance agencies as well as Insurance companies and private relief agencies were also co-located at the center.

- The center began 14 hours per day operation during the weekend following the commencement of the fire storm.
- The center eventually evolved into a construction permit review and issuance center to review plans and issue permits for the repair and reconstruction projects for fire damaged buildings.
- Staff from Development Services made copies of construction plans for damaged and destroyed buildings available at the Center to aid designers and building owners in developing construction plans to submit for permit approval.

Expedited Permit Review and Approval Process:

The City Council adopted Resolution R-298577 on November 17, 2003, and directed the City Manager to develop an ordinance to waive building permit fees, demolition fees, and waste disposal fees for reconstruction of properties damaged by the Cedar Fire.

Development Services also implemented an expedite permit review process that included designated plan review, permit issuance, and inspection staff assigned to the permit assistance center established within the Scripps Ranch Community Center. The permit assistance center was open on a full time basis from November of 2003 through December of 2004. The permit assistance center service days have been scaled back to three days a week effective January 1, 2005 and the center remains in operation.

Of the 335 buildings destroyed within the City of San Diego during the Cedar Fire, 317 buildings were single family dwellings (SFD). Please refer to Attachment No. 1 for more detail.

- 308 single family dwelling projects have been submitted for review, and a total of 303 combination building permits have been issued. Of those permits issued, a total of 192 permits have received final inspection and approval for final occupancy.
- 96% of the destroyed SFD projects that have been submitted for review have been approved and permits issued. The reconstruction of 61% of the destroyed SFD projects has been completed and final occupancy granted.
- Nine multi-family dwelling project plans have been submitted for review and building permits have been issued for all nine projects. Of those permits issued, a total of six permits have received final inspection and approval for final occupancy.

- Of the partially damaged building projects submitted for review, 52% have been approved and permits have been issued. The reconstruction of 27% of the partially damaged building projects has been completed and final occupancy granted.

Regulatory Revisions in Response to Cedar Fire:

On Tuesday January 20, 2004 the City Council heard a list of thirteen proposed revisions to the Building and Fire Regulations to address concerns raised from the Cedar Fire.

- The City Council approved emergency regulatory revisions to the roofing assembly requirements by banning the use of wood shakes and shingles and requiring a Class A roofing assembly for all new roofs Citywide.
- The City Council returned the remaining eleven items for further study. The City Council also directed staff to seek input from affected parties and other stakeholders.

On Tuesday, September 6, 2005, the City Council heard and adopted additional building regulations designed to improve the survivability of buildings subjected to wild fires of adjacent Hazardous Areas of Native or Naturalized Vegetation. The regulations address the unique exposure to buildings located immediately adjacent to brush management zones, and to all new construction within 300 feet, in any direction, of the boundary between brush management zones 1 and 2.

- The adopted construction standards are intended to improve public safety and provide an enhanced level of protection when used in conjunction with the brush management requirements in the landscape regulations in Chapter 14 in the Municipal Code.
- A companion ordinance was also approved to provide for a uniform defensible space of 100 feet City-wide and uniform brush management zone depths of 35 feet and 65 feet within that defensible space. Alternative brush management methods were also approved.

CONCLUSION

The City of San Diego has successfully expedited the reconstruction and recovery efforts in the communities of Scripps Ranch and Tierrasanta through the waiving of permit fees, the establishment of the permitting services center within Scripps Ranch dedicated to the effected communities and by providing expedited plans review and inspection services.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Halbert
Development Services Director

Approved: Ellen Oppenheim
Deputy City Manager

OPPENHEIM /AMF

Attachment: [1. Tabulation of Reconstruction Status.](#)