**Proposed Best Practice**

**Homeowner Seismic Strengthening Information Program**

*City of San Leandro*

*Development Services, Building Regulations Division*

*Implemented in 1994*

**Description**
San Leandro provides a free brochure and set of standard plans to homeowners explaining how they can survey their home for earthquake vulnerability, and how they can strengthen their homes for earthquake shaking. Local contractors are very familiar with the standard plans, which also simplify the permit process.

**Problem**
San Leandro had no seismic retrofit standards. Homeowners were discouraged from retrofitting vulnerable homes, due to the many options, technical decisions and methods on how to retrofit existing buildings. Design professionals had to develop retrofit plans and specifications for each separate project. This lead to high costs and delays in preparing the plans and obtaining building permits.

**Solution**
The City Council and staff adopted a vision for meeting the challenge of disaster preparedness and embarked on a campaign to develop a community outreach program. The City developed a Homeowner’s Handbook and standard plans for bracing walls and bolting them to foundations. This provides homeowners with simple and cost effective methods for strengthening their wood frame houses. Homeowners benefit by the availability of a standard set of retrofit plans for their home. Contractors benefit by not having to prepare plans and specifications. Checking the plans and issuing the permits is much easier for local jurisdictions when standard retrofit plans are used.

**Examples**
The City offers Earthquake Strengthening Workshops to homeowners, reviews common residential construction weaknesses and introduces the average citizen to basic retrofit techniques that can significantly improve a home’s performance in earthquakes. The course is offered through the City’s Building Division on a quarterly basis and consists of four two and a half hour classes for homeowners who can learn how to “do it yourself” or learn how to get the best service if they hire a contractor. The City offers similar classes to contractors.

**Resources**
Volunteer or paid staffing are needed to tailor the handbook and plans for use in other cities. Printing funds are needed to adapt the standard retrofit plans and the Homeowner’s Handbook brochure explaining the program. Additional staffing is also necessary if jurisdictions wish to provide workshops for homeowners and contractors.

**Adaptability/Sustainability**
Local jurisdictions can tailor San Leandro’s standard plans, brochures and workshops to their most common types of homes. Local jurisdictions will have to periodically review the standard plans, workshops and brochures to ensure that they incorporate the latest research and current building code requirements.