

RESILIENCY IN REBUILDING: DATA-DRIVEN MAPPING

To assist property owners affected by the January 9, 2018 debris flow event, County staff created an interactive GIS map with property damage information and permit history.

After the Thomas Fire swept through Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties burning 281,893 acres, the January 9, 2018 debris flows and flash floods struck the Montecito community, resulting in loss of life, 477 destroyed and damaged properties, and drastically different topography. Rather than creating physical case files and sending affected property owners to multiple County departments to obtain property records, the Planning and Development Department consolidated site-specific information in a web-based GIS map to assist in rebuilding. This GIS map¹ includes the following information for each of the impacted structures: (1) address and parcel information; (2) who a property owner's assigned case manager/planner is, including contact information; (3) the property's permit history and Assessor records; (4) archived planning and building permit records; and (5) an assessment of structural damage (unsafe to occupy, limited entry, and habitable placard postings). In addition, the map consists of various layers that can be switched on and off including zoning designations, 100-year flood hazard areas, and pre- and post-disaster aerial imagery. Having one location for rebuilding information helps property owners and staff planners easily compile the data necessary to apply for and process rebuilding permits. Staff also created a How-To Guide² that describes the map's functionality. This multi-layered GIS map replaces paper case files and reduces staff time spent researching property records.

Within a week of the January 9, 2018 debris flow events, Building & Safety Division staff conducted field inspections to assess structural safety and posted a red (unsafe to occupy), yellow (limited entry), or green (habitable) placard on affected structures. In the months following the

¹ The Santa Barbara County GIS map can be viewed here:

<https://sbcopad.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c1df066590034bfc83f6b1d3d0ea94bf>

² The P&D Interactive Map How-To-Guide for the Thomas Fire and 2018 Debris Flow Events can be found here:

<http://www.sbcountyplanning.org/pdf/misc/How-To-Guide%20Interactive%20Map.pdf>

disasters, staff continues to do inspections and updates the postings as owners begin to remove mud and debris from their property. The interactive map includes red, yellow, and green squares, which represent a structure's current safety posting. The map also identifies the initial safety posting and estimated percent of damage.

While Santa Barbara County currently utilizes GIS for policy consistency information, this unique web-based map contains project-specific information that previously was not available in one location. With over 3,000 views since it was launched in February 2018, the GIS map enables property owners to see the same information after a disaster as staff without the need for staff to print out documents or assemble physical case files, thus improving efficiency and reducing County costs. For each affected structure, the compilation of data saves staff approximately one hour of time that it would otherwise take to research a parcel and compile a case file. With 477 affected structures, the Planning and Development Department estimates that the interactive map could be saving the Department approximately \$105,000 - \$110,000.

Inclusive of planning, assessor, and flood control information, this GIS web-based interactive map was designed specifically to respond to disasters by linking safety assessments with permit history and connecting property owners with their respective case managers. As a critical rebuilding tool for architects, agents, affected property owners, and County departments, the interactive map will continue to be updated with additional data, including the new advisory FEMA Recovery Mapping (i.e. updated 100-year flood risk). The Planning and Development Department looks forward to modeling future disaster mapping after this GIS map in an effort to consolidate parcel data in one easily accessible location throughout the County, and to assist impacted property owners in making challenging development decisions.

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