

# **New wells proposed to reduce earthquake risks downtown**

**Andrew Edwards, San Bernardino County Sun, 5-11-10**

SAN BERNARDINO - Redevelopment agencies and water gurus want to build new wells downtown to reduce future earthquake-related dangers.

A major earthquake, such as the long-feared rupture of the San Andreas fault, could cause groundwater below the downtown area's office buildings and residences to mix with the soil. The result could change the top layer of terra firma into a muddy, shaky mess.

Those risks are greatest when groundwater is 50 feet below or closer to the surface, according to the Water Resources Institute at Cal State San Bernardino. Although recent years have been on the dry side, people who lived in San Bernardino during the 1980s may remember times when excess water flooded areas near downtown and the E Street corridor.

New wells could be used to draw future surplus water to the surface, lowering damage risks and putting the valuable liquid to use, said institute director Susan Lien Longville. A likely approach is to dig two wells in the vicinity of Meadowbrook Park.

"We know what path we're headed on. We don't have the studies done," Longville said.

The Inland Valley Development Agency is the lead government body on the project, which also involves the San Bernardino Economic Development Agency. The IVDA has hired Fontana-based Pacific Advanced Civil Engineering to draw up preliminary studies.

The IVDA did not return several calls for comment.

Any discussion of downtown water supply is likely to conjure the spectre of the Lakes and Streams project.

The grand concept of Lakes and Streams was to build new reservoirs near downtown for water storage and upscale waterfront developments.

Executing that plan would have required hundreds of millions of dollars and the use of eminent domain to seize hundreds of homes and businesses. Lakes and Streams, however, has been a dead letter for about four years.

The new plan is not Lakes and Streams redux, Longville said. The idea does not include any major "lakes," although Longville said non-drinkable water from future wells could be used for Seccombe Lake and a water feature near the new courthouse that is planned to be built downtown.

The plan does not involve exporting any water from San Bernardino's groundwater basin, Longville said.