officials missed possible sign of quake fault in Hollywo

fficials overlooked a report's finding of uneven groundwater levels, ofter
tive of a fault, beneath a massive Hollywood project

ith, Ron-Gong Lin II and Rosanna Xia, Los Angeles Times, 11-22-13

eles officials missed signs in a geological report that suggest a $200-million residential and com
ent now under construction in Hollywood might be located above an earthquake fault, accordi
rds and interviews.

rmation was contained in reports written by a geotechnical engineering consultant hired by the
r of the Blvd6200 project and filed with the city. The report, obtained by The Times under
ornia Public Records Ac, said groundwater levels varied by as much as 30 feet below the prope

sts generally consider uneven groundwater levels in California a strong indicator of an earthqua

Department of Building and Safety did not raise concerns about an earthquake fault when it rev
oved the report in 200 without requiring any in-depth seismic study.

ia state geologist John Parrish said the uneven groundwater cited in the report suggests that the
on top of the Hollywood fault, which is capable of producing a devastating 7.0 earthquake

the most common indicators of the existence of a fault is the presence of an offset groundwater
aid. "It can be logically construed that the break in groundwater table elevations is because of th
of a fault.'

nd another geologist who read the report said the differing water levels should have prompted f
und investigation, such as digging a trench and deep holes in the ground to determine whether t
a fault

sman for the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety said Thursday that the agency stil
a seismic study was unnecessary

ee that variations in groundwater levels are sometimes the result of faulting," Luke Zamperini sa

gency determined Blvd6200 was far enough away from the Hollywood fault that a fault study
y, he said

g back in time, we don't think we made a mistake," Zamperini said. "We're not going to go back
em remove the building that they've built so far to do a fault investigation.'

es built ontop of faults are particularly vulnerable to damage or collapse during the violent shaki
ake. Because of this, California law generally requires seismic studies for any new building pro
ughly 500 feet of a fault in a state-designated earthquake fault zone.

lywood fault has been known for decades. But California geologists have not yet formally certifi
one, and the law is not in force in Hollywood until they do.

report filed by the developer's consultant to the city cited an even earlier fault map produced in
the Blvd6200 project was 1,000 feet away from the Hollywood fault

elopers, Clarett West Development and DLJ Real Estate Capital Partners, said in a statement tha
0 "obtained all necessary approvals and is under construction in compliance with those approva

d the environmental impact report certified by the city says "that the project site is not located w
ke fault zone, and that no active or potentially active faults lie beneath the project site. Each of
ons remains accurate today.'

elopers also said a geologist was on site when construction crews removed 220,000 cubic yards
way for construction

logist confirmed the absence of any subsurface faults on the project site. This excavation was n
e than exploratory trenching," the statement said.

elopers declined to provide The Times with further documentation about the geologist's conclus
eles Department of Building and Safety received the same assurance over the phone from one o
r's consultants in thelast few days, but has not received a written report that makes that declarat
ni said

0 is one of several developments near the Hollywood fault that have come under scrutiny in rece
because of their proximity to the fault

ect is a massive six-story development next to the Pantages Theatre that would remake the block
od Boulevard and Argyle Avenue.

proved by the City Council in 2007 called for 500 apartments and 74,000 square feet of retail sp
phase of the development

eloper's consultant found groundwater 30 feet higher on the north side of the property than on th

rt was filed withthe developer by engineering geologist Reinard Knur of Geotechnologies Inc. o
, and eventually submitted to the city. It said the uneven water levels could be related to a clay

tions in the level of groundwater may occur due to variations in rainfall, temperature, and other
ent at the time of the measurements reported herein," the report said

erred questions to the developer

eloper's geology report was signed off on by the city geologist's office. But Zamperini said the ci
t, Dana Prevost, was unaware of the uneven groundwater levels because the soil reports were re
oved by a lower-level staffer.

d Robert Sydnor, a retired senior engineering geologist who worked for 25 years with the Califo
cal Survey, said the water level difference by itself is not conclusive of a fault without further
und investigation. But it's an important piece of evidence

son why the groundwater can get trapped that way is because when it comes to a fault … the wa
through," Clark said

sts have used uneven groundwater levels to pinpoint the path of the Hollywood fault in other sp

huenga Boulevard north of Hollywood Boulevard, there's a difference of 30 feet in elevation bet
ndwater levels on the north and south sides of a section of the Hollywood fault, according to da
d in the 1990s

n act as a barrier for water because during repeated earthquakes, rocks areground up into a fine
and clay

ps water from flowing through it, said U.S. Geological Survey seismologist Lucy Jones.

arning sign" of a fault, Jones said, "without being definitive."