

Active quake fault found at Hollywood development

Robert Jablon, Washington Post, 11-06-14

LOS ANGELES - A new state earthquake map on Thursday identified an active fault running through the proposed site of the largest planned development in Hollywood history, potentially complicating efforts to build the project called Millennium Hollywood.

The Hollywood fault is located on a portion of the site near the famed Capitol Records building and has moved in the last 11,000 years - the definition of active - but there is no way of knowing when it might break again, said Tim McCrink, supervising engineering geologist for the California Geological Survey.

"I think that it has the potential to produce a magnitude-6.5 or more earthquake," he said, adding that it would create an "economic catastrophe."

By comparison, the magnitude-6.7 Northridge earthquake of Jan. 17, 1994, caused 60 deaths, thousands of injuries and extensive damage in the metropolitan Los Angeles area.

The fault is identified on a final map produced by the Geological Survey. Its existence has long been known, but the map pins down specifics of its path for regulatory purposes.

McCrink said it would be illegal to build over an active earthquake fault and developers who want to build in quake zones on the map will have to perform detailed studies to ensure they aren't constructing anything over a fault.

Opponents of the Millennium Hollywood project have argued that it represents a seismic safety risk. The developer, Millennium Partners, wants to build 1 million square feet of hotels, offices, stores, restaurants and housing. Two proposed skyscrapers, of 35 and 39 stories, would dwarf existing buildings.

The City Council approved the concept last year, but the final say is with the city's Department of Building and Safety, which issues construction permits. The department can allow or ban the construction, order more study, or demand changes in the design.

The developer found an inactive fault in its own testing at the site, but McCrink said it is not the same as the larger, active segment of the Hollywood fault - although it is possible the two may be related.

Philip Aarons, a founding partner of Millennium Partners, said the developer will continue to work with the Building and Safety Department "to safely construct our project" and is finalizing its own report "that confirms there is no active fault on our site."

"We've said it before and we've said it again: Millennium Hollywood is steadfast in its commitment to building a safe project that conforms to the highest earthquake resiliency standards," he said.