

CHAPTER 5 • SAFETY ELEMENT

Introduction

The Safety Element is one of seven State-mandated elements of a city's General Plan. Section 65302(g) of the Government Code requires cities to develop, adopt, and implement a Safety Element (shown to the right).

Following accidents and disasters, citizens are sometimes heard to ask, "How did this happen?" or "How can this be prevented from happening again?" or perhaps, "What is the government's policy to prevent or respond to such emergencies?"

The Safety Element in itself can not prevent natural and man-made disasters; however, it can provide standards that may help minimize the impacts of disasters on the human population and structural improvements in the area. It will also provide additional standards for planning structures that may be located in areas where there is a higher probability, or risk, of a disaster occurring.

Safety of the citizens of Firebaugh must be uppermost in the minds of the local decision-makers. This Element will provide a guideline towards developing a safer environment for the community. Local decisions related to zoning, subdivisions, entitlement permits and the like should be tied to this Element's identification of such hazards.

The Element

The Safety Element is the primary vehicle for relating local safety planning to City land-use decisions. The Element's main purpose is to reduce death, injuries, property damage and the economic and social dislocation resulting from natural hazards.

In 1975, the Legislature adopted SB 271, which made the safety element a mandatory part of the General Plan. At that time, the element was required to include policies relating to fire safety, flooding, and geologic hazards.

In 1984, the Legislature adopted AB 2038, which requires that the list of mandatory safety element issues be

Section 65302(g)

“The General Plan shall include a safety element for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wildland and urban fires.”

Source: California General Plan Guidelines

expanded to include seismic safety. Essentially, the Legislature took the issues previously considered in the seismic safety element and made them safety element requirements.

While the focus of the safety element is on fire, flooding, seismic and geologic hazards, it may also address locally relevant safety issues such as vehicle accidents, crime, power failures, and hazardous material spills.

Safety Element Goals

The following goals have been used as a guideline in the preparation of this Element:

1. **Prevent the loss of life and property due to natural and man-made hazards, including earthquakes, floods and fires.**
2. **Safeguard the economic resources of Firebaugh from losses due to natural and man-made hazards, including earthquakes, floods and fires.**
3. **Promote citizen awareness of natural and man-made hazards which exist in the area.**
4. **Safeguard public safety and the protection of property by reducing crime.**

Existing Conditions

Each issue section below discusses existing conditions in the Firebaugh planning area. A more detailed profile of existing conditions (as they relate to safety) is found in Part II of the General Plan.



ISSUE ONE: Seismic Safety

Fresno County is comprised of nine seismic zones, as defined in the Five County Seismic Safety Element (FCSSE) (prepared and adopted in 1974 by the five counties of the southern San Joaquin Valley and their cities). These zones are differentiated by the level of ground motion that can reasonably be anticipated from earthquakes on the principal fault systems affecting the five county area. The generalized location of these zones is shown in the map below. This exhibit shows that Firebaugh is located within the “V3” (Valley-3) zone. The FCSSE states that the V3 zone is:

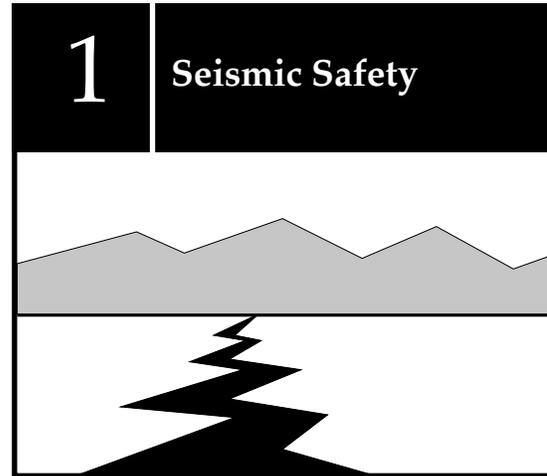
“characterized by a thick section of sedimentary rock. Amplification of shaking is reduced by the damping effect of the thick sedimentary section, but moderate proximity to the San Andreas fault results in a moderate increase in expected shaking over that for the east side of the valley. The requirements of Zone III of the Uniform Building Code should be adequate for normal facilities.”

This data indicates that Firebaugh is located in a lower risk area in terms of seismic activity. Building standards contained in the Uniform Building Code for Zone III should be adequate for protection from earthquake events that may affect Firebaugh.

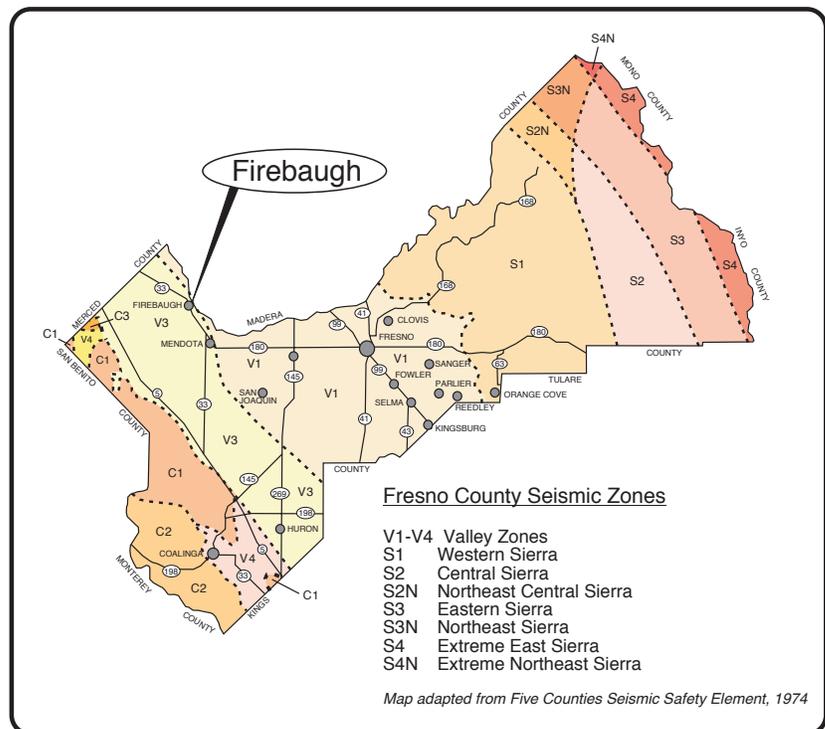
Earthquakes

Although Fresno County does not have any major faults within its boundaries, Firebaugh has been affected by earthquakes in the past. Significant earthquakes that have been felt in Firebaugh include the Coalinga earthquake of 1983, the Tehachapi earthquake of 1952, and the Owen Valley earthquake in 1857. The most notable recent earthquake was the Coalinga earthquake, which occurred in May, 1983.

An earthquake with a measured magnitude of 6.7 on the Richter scale (Rs) occurred near the City of Coalinga about 45 miles south of Firebaugh. The earthquake produced a ground motion which caused widespread damage to the



Map 5-1
 Fresno County Seismic Zones



City of Coalinga.

Although no damage was reported in Firebaugh, the quake was strongly felt by local residents. The Coalinga earthquake and aftershocks were not associated with the San Andreas Fault as most people believed, but rather, occurred in the deeply buried Sierran Block Boundary zone, which is thought to be made up of complex thrust fault systems.

According to the FCSSE, Firebaugh is most likely to be affected by the San Andreas Fault, which lies within the Coast Range mountains, about 60 miles west/southwest of Firebaugh. The distance from the fault to Firebaugh is sufficient enough that the City is somewhat protected from the most severe forms of damage that would result from an earthquake.

Nevertheless, Firebaugh must take actions and remain constantly prepared to minimize the hazardous effects of an earthquake. These are expressed in the goals, objectives and action plans below.

Goals, Objectives Action Plans

I. Minimize the danger to the residents of Firebaugh from seismic events.

1. The City shall ensure that all new and rehabilitated structures are constructed to meet adequate building standards.
 - a. The City of Firebaugh shall continue to update/adopt building code standards for Seismic Zone III as described in the Uniform Building Code.

Time Frame: Ongoing
Responsibility: City Manager, City
Planner, Building
Inspector

- b. The City shall continue the abatement/rehabilitation of unreinforced masonry buildings.

Time Frame: Ongoing
Responsibility: Building Inspector

2. The City shall review the State Mining and Geology Board's publications which define Special Studies Zones for areas along fault lines, and incorporate information into local regulations, as appropriate.

- a. The Planning Department shall review State Mining and Geology maps as they are updated.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as maps are updated

Responsibility: City Planner

3. The City of Firebaugh shall continue the abatement/rehabilitation of dangerous buildings as defined by the Uniform Housing Code.

- a. The building department shall identify dangerous buildings and target them for abatement or rehabilitation, through the process outlined in the Uniform Housing Code.

Time Frame: Ongoing

Responsibility: Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer

ISSUE TWO: Police Protection

Crime prevention has become a major issue in the minds of the public. Firebaugh Police Department is responsible for enforcing the law in the community and responding to various emergencies. The Police Department is headquartered at Firebaugh City Hall, located at the corner of P and 11th Street. The Department is staffed with thirteen officers with at least one patrol at all times. The Department has mutual aid agreements with Fresno County Sheriff's Department and the California Highway Patrol, who can respond to Firebaugh if needed.

Goals, Objectives, Action Plans

I. Firebaugh shall ensure that its residents have police protection, and shall maintain an appropriate ratio of officers to population.

1. The City shall ensure funds exist for police protection.
 - a. The City should undertake and present to Council a feasibility study for the establishment of Mello-Roos Districts for new subdivisions to fund additional police personnel and equipment.

Time Frame: Within three years

Responsibility: City Manager

2. The City should continue to work closely with the Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol to ensure a high level of safety for the community.
 - a. The City Manager shall regularly meet with representatives of the Sheriff's Department and Highway Patrol to address issues of mutual interest.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as needed

Responsibility: City Manager

- b. Representatives of the Police Department should be available to



report their activities to the Firebaugh City Council, on a regular basis.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as needed
Responsibility: Police Chief

- c. The Police Department will review site plans for new development to ensure that security and safety concerns are addressed.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as needed
Responsibility: Police Chief

- 3. The City shall actively involve citizens in crime prevention and public safety awareness.

- a. The City shall continue operation of the Neighborhood Watch and should establish a D.A.R.E (Drugs Abuse Resistance Education) program.

Time Frame: Within one year
Responsibility: Police Chief

ISSUE THREE: Fire Safety

The planning area is characterized by both the urbanized portions of Firebaugh and surrounding agricultural fields. The City is served by the Firebaugh Fire Department, whose station is located at Firebaugh City Hall on the corner of P and 11th Streets.

The station is staffed by a paid chief augmented by a volunteer crew of 25-30 individuals. All volunteers are trained in fire suppression. Emergency medical assistance is provided by American Ambulance headquartered at the North Central Fire District station in Mendota, about eight miles southeast of Firebaugh.

Goals, Objectives, Action Plans

I. The City of Firebaugh shall endeavor to provide the highest level of fire suppression and safety for the community.

1. The Fire Department shall take all actions to provide quality fire services to all residents in the City of Firebaugh.
 - a. The Planning Department shall coordinate with the Fire Department through Firebaugh's site plan review process and the environmental review process to ensure that future development does not exceed the Fire Department's capacity for adequate services.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as needed
Responsibility: City Planner and Fire Chief

2. The Fire Department shall work to provide prevention and public education to residents.
 - a. The Fire Department should initiate a fire prevention education program with the Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District.

Time Frame: Within one year
Responsibility: Fire Chief



3. The City shall require that yards and lots be maintained free of weeds and debris.
 - a. The Fire Department shall send annual abatement letters to property owners who have properties where weed and debris build-up pose a public safety problem and pursue abatement proceedings against non-complying owners.

Time Frame: Annually
 Responsibility: Fire Chief

4. The City shall work to improve the response capabilities of emergency crews.
 - a. New subdivisions should be designed to maximize connectivity into and within the development. The graphic to the right illustrates this concept. In general, grid street patterns will be used instead of designs using numerous dead-end streets and perimeter walls.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are proposed
 Responsibility: City Planner, Fire Chief

- b. Gated subdivisions are strongly discouraged.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are proposed
 Responsibility: City Planner, City Engineer

- c. When new subdivisions are proposed, ensure that new street names are continuations of existing streets for streets that are aligned, and that addresses are logically assigned.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are proposed
 Responsibility: City Planner, Fire Chief

Subdivision Design for Maximum Access and Connectivity



Discouraged

Encouraged

Developments should be designed to maximize access. This increases the effectiveness of crews in responding to an emergency.

- d. The Public Works Department shall periodically check street signs to ensure they are clearly visible and legible.

Time Frame: Ongoing,
Responsibility: Public Works Director

- e. Representatives of the Police and Fire Departments should be available to report their activities to the Firebaugh City Council, on a regular basis.

Time Frame: Ongoing
Responsibility: Police Chief, Fire Chief

- 6. The City will continue to upgrade its water system to ensure that adequate water pressure and peak load water supply is maintained throughout the system.

- a. The City should periodically review and update its development impact fee schedule to provide funds for replacement of old, undersized water lines. Further the City should propose and implement a capitol improvement program to accomplish this goal.

Time Frame: Annually
Responsibility: City Engineer, Finance Director

- c. Ensure that all new uses are properly equipped with on-site lighting to promote safety and security. At the same time, ensure that outdoor lighting does not become a nuisance by unnecessarily illuminating adjacent properties. Involve officials from the Police and Fire Department to ensure that safety concerns are addressed in the site design process.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are proposed
Responsibility: City Planner, Police and Fire Chiefs

ISSUE FOUR: Flooding

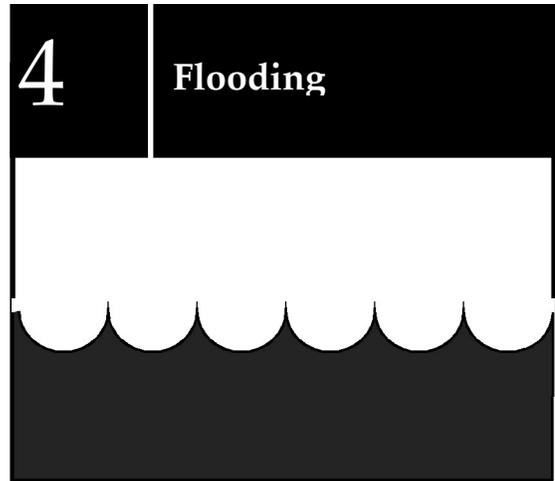
The Federal Emergency Management Agency, a federal agency charged with mapping flood prone areas throughout the United States, has identified flood prone areas in the Firebaugh vicinity. Map 2-3 in Part II of the General Plan identifies the 100- and 500-year flood zones.

The major source of flood threat in Firebaugh is the San Joaquin River. In 2006 flooding was a major issue as a series of storms pushed the river nearly over its banks. Crews were forced to work around the clock placing sand bags to hold back the water. This event highlighted the critical nature of flood prevention – an issue that can go relatively “un-noticed” for years in the minds of the general public.

Goals, Objectives, Action Plans**I. Minimize the danger to people and property from flooding.**

1. For existing undeveloped areas in flood zones, encourage uses that are not susceptible to flood damage. For uses that are susceptible to flood damage, require mitigation measures such as elevation of floors, anchoring of buildings, maintenance of floodways, etc.
 - a. Adoption of the Land Use map helps to implement the foregoing objective. To the extent practical, the Land Use map has been designed to preclude sensitive land uses from being located within flood zones.
 - b. The City should review its flood zone regulations (and if necessary amend them) to ensure they comply with current federal flood regulations.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as needed
Responsibility: City Engineer, City Planner



ISSUE FIVE: Hazardous Land Use Relationships

Identification of existing hazardous land uses is also important to the safety of the citizens of Firebaugh. There are several uses within the City that can generate a "risk" factor. These uses include industrial/agricultural packing operations in the industrial district, major roadways that carry large volumes of truck traffic, the railroad, and Firebaugh Municipal Airport.

Relationships between land use types must be considered, especially when locating residential development.

The Land Use Element has eliminated most of the potential land use conflicts associated with the above uses by ensuring that surrounding properties are designated for uses that will not conflict with the use.

For instance, new industrial development will be directed to locate primarily west of the railroad tracks and south of the existing urban area. This area is downwind of most residential development in Firebaugh.

A hazardous land use relationship that is more difficult to address involves trucks carrying hazardous materials along the major roadways in and around the community. Significant volumes of truck traffic pass through Firebaugh on Highway 33 and also on 13th St/Avenue 7-1/2 as well as Nees Avenue to Interstate 5.

It is difficult to ascertain the number of trucks carrying hazardous waste. The Land Use Element has addressed this issue by directing residential development away from major roadways. In addition, the Circulation Element designates truck routes that will channel trucks away from most sensitive land uses.

Finally, Firebaugh Municipal Airport presents a land use and noise hazard. The presence of the airport also constrains growth of the community as residential development in particular is restricted from locating near the airport. Members of the General Plan Committee voiced their desire to see consideration given to eventually moving the airport to a location further away from the urban area.



Goals, Objectives, Action Plans**I. Minimize the potential for hazardous land use relationships through proper land use planning.**

1. Residential development in close proximity to industrial zones and the wastewater treatment plant shall be avoided.

a. Adoption and implementation of the Land Use Element prevents residential development from encroaching too close to industrial zones and the wastewater treatment plant.

2. Review the zoning ordinance (and amend as necessary) to ensure adequate safeguards are in place to reduce/eliminate hazardous relationships.

a. The City Planner shall work with the Planning Commission to review the Zoning Ordinance's standards as they pertain to minimizing hazardous land use relationships and initiate the process to make any necessary amendments.

Time Frame: Within three years

Responsibility: City Planner

3. Businesses that use, produce, or generate any type of hazardous materials shall be conducted in a safe manner.

a. The City shall require that proposals for developments using, producing, or generating hazardous materials, such as cold-storage facilities; include an emergency preparedness plan acceptable to the City. All new industrial uses shall be required to prepare and file a Business Plan as required by the Fresno County Health Department.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are proposed

Responsibility: City Planner, Fire Chief

4. Undertake a study to re-locate Firebaugh Municipal Airport, and present the study to the City Council. As discussed in the Circulation Element, the airport presents an impediment to future residential and commercial growth on the west side of Firebaugh. Further, the airport poses hazards to existing uses in Firebaugh.
 - a. The City Manager shall identify funding and conduct a study to analyze relocation of the airport.

Time Frame: Within five years

Responsibility: City Manager

ISSUE SIX: Site Plan Review

In order to ensure safety of the residents of Firebaugh and their property, it is critical that good communication be maintained in the development review process. Communication between various city departments and other affected public agencies can result in projects that are safer and better-planned.

Many cities utilize a Site Plan Review Committee process to achieve this objective. In this process, representatives of various city departments and other affected agencies (such as the fire district, irrigation district, etc.) meet with the project developer to review concerns pertaining to the project. This type of “pre-application” meeting can work to reduce delays downstream in the development process by getting information “on the table” in an up-front and timely manner. The result will be better-planned, safer development.

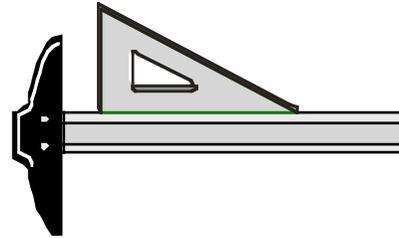
As such, a Site Plan Review procedure should be established to ensure that maximum communication occurs when projects are reviewed.

Goals, Objectives, Action Plans

1. The City shall establish a Site Plan Review Committee to provide early review of development projects. This goal will ensure that communication between various departments/agencies and project applicants is maximized in the development process. The committee should be comprised of individuals representing agencies that may serve or otherwise be affected by a project, including:

- Building Inspector/City Planner
- City Manager (as needed)
- City Engineer
- Public Works
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Local utility companies (as needed)
- Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District (as needed)

The project applicant/agent should also attend the committee meeting.

6**Site Plan Review****Site Plan Review Committee
(Proposed Process)***Maximizing Communication and
Understanding in the Planning Process*

- I. Applicant submits site plan to City Planner.
- II. City Planner distributes copies of site plan to Committee members.
- III. Committee members review plans and submit comments/questions/draft conditions to City Planner at least three days before Committee meeting.
- IV. Committee Meeting: Site Plan Review Committee meets with applicant and goes over the project.
- V. After meeting, committee members formalize conditions of approval and submit them to City Planner.
- VI. City Planner prepares staff report and resolution on project, incorporating conditions of approval received from committee members.
- VII. Public hearing on project.

The City Planner shall establish a procedure for the site plan review committee that should include the following:

- Set a regular daytime meeting date/time (once a month is recommended)
- Copies of site plans are mailed to agency representatives two weeks before the meeting.
- Agency representatives should review plans and submit comments to the City Planner at least three days prior to Site Plan Review Committee meeting.
- At the meeting, agency representatives can explain their comments and/or ask questions of the applicant, regarding the project.
- After the meeting, agency representatives should formalize their comments into conditions of approval for the project.

Time Frame: Immediately, and ongoing,
as needed

Responsibility: City Planner

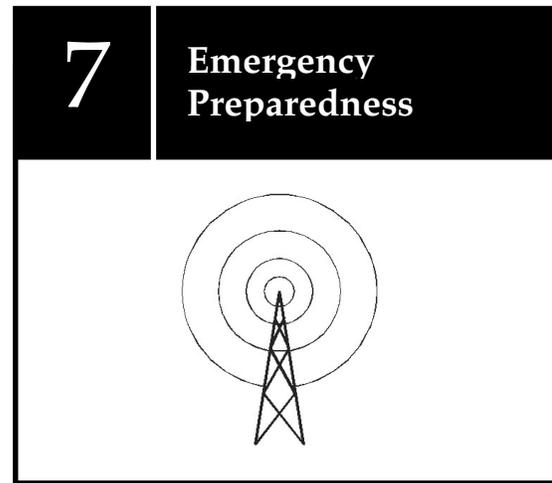
ISSUE SEVEN: Emergency Preparedness

Communities must be prepared for any emergency. Sometimes when disasters occur, it is not the initial disaster itself, but the lack of preparedness that causes much misery and suffering. With this in mind, the City of Firebaugh can take actions to ensure that it is ready to respond to emergencies.

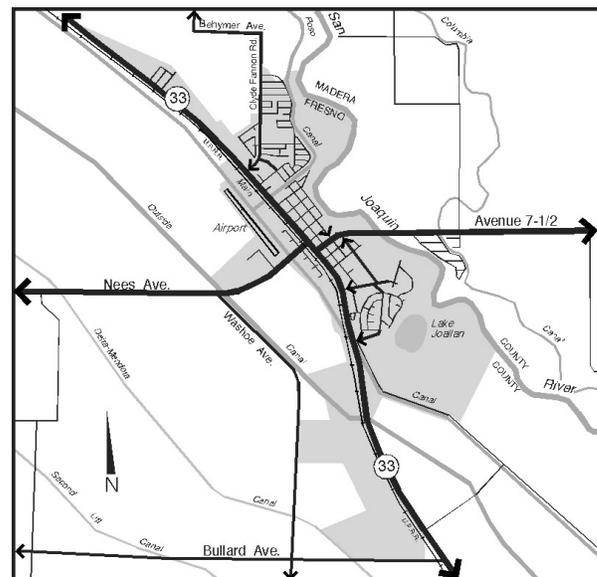
Goals, Objectives, Action Plans**I. Keep Firebaugh prepared to respond to emergencies that can be reasonably expected to occur in or around the planning area.**

1. Establish an emergency preparedness team composed of City Department heads. Coordinate with other heads of other local agencies to provide a coordinated response to emergencies, including Firebaugh Police and Fire Departments, Fresno County Sheriff's Department, Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District, Central California Irrigation District and other agencies as may be appropriate. Require that this team meet on a twice-yearly basis to review emergency preparedness tactics, share information, discuss needs and develop action plans to address those needs. Issues to be explored include:

- Establishing emergency shelters at key locations, such as the community center, school campuses, etc. Ensure these facilities are stocked (or will be stocked) with emergency supplies such as blankets, water and food.
- Ensuring key roadways stay clear in the event that evacuation is necessary (see Map 5-2).
- Lines of communication are open in the event that equipment or manpower must be shared between agencies.
- Other issues that may be identified.



Map 5-2
Primary Evacuation Routes



Time Frame: Within six months
Responsibility: City Manager