

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



## POLICIES AND DETERMINATIONS

DATE: January 9, 2023  
TO: Community Development Department  
From: Adam Tekunoff  
Building Services Manager / Building Official  
SUBJECT: Alternative to Foundation and Soil Investigation Reports

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### **OBJECTIVE:**

Provide an alternative for foundation and soils investigation report requirements for California Building Code for projects that are limited in size or scope.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The provisions of Section 1803 of the adopted 2023 Edition of the California Building Code require that a foundation and soils investigation report be prepared for all new buildings and structures in Seismic Design Category (SDE) D, E, and F with no exceptions for small projects. The code further requires that potential for corrosivity be evaluated and that the report shall be prepared, stamped, signed, and dated by a licensed soils or geotechnical engineer.

Given the limited nature of the size or scope of some small projects, the requirement to provide the evaluation could become a significant cost of the work and become an undue financial hardship for the project. The intent of this policy is to provide an alternative for small projects provided specific design criteria be met.

### **POLICY:**

When in the opinion of the Building Official, a project is deemed to be a small project, is located in an area not designated to be prone to landslide or liquefaction, is not within an Earthquake Fault Zone or Seismic Hazard Zone, is on a property of less than ten-percent (10%) slope, maintains building clearances from slopes in accordance with CBC Section 1808.7.1, is not located within an area of earthen fill materials, the soil type is non-expansive, and the minimum foundation design may not be required. The Building Official shall reserve the right to require a foundation or soils investigation report where soil or slope stability conditions warrant investigation for any project.

### **Examples of exempt small projects:**

1. Non-structural alterations of any type
2. Interior alterations to existing one and two-family dwellings
3. Interior tenant improvements or alterations to existing buildings and structures not involving modifications to floor or roof structural design loads
4. Fences, concrete masonry-unit (CMU) or brick walls, and monument signs where the maximum height above the lowest adjacent grade is 8 feet
5. CMU block walls retaining soils with a level grade and no other structural surcharges where the maximum height above the lowest adjacent grade is 6 feet and the toe of the slope has not been excavated
6. Trash enclosures and similar structures constructed of CMU block walls where the height of the walls are a maximum of 8 feet above the lowest adjacent grade, the walls are not retaining soils, or are carrying other loads (other than a roof)
7. Light standards, flag poles, pole signs, and similar (including base) where the total height above the adjacent grade is 30 feet or less

### **Minimum Design Requirements:**

Foundation designs shall comply with all provisions of Chapters 16 & 18 of the 2023 California Building Code except as follows:

1. Values for Class of Materials Type 5 per Table 1806A.2 shall be used at a minimum except that the allowable soil bearing pressure shall be limited to 1000 psf. An increase of one-third shall be permitted when using the alternate load combinations in Section 1605A.2 that include wind or earthquake loads.
2. Minimum depth of new footings below undisturbed ground surface shall be:
  - 18 inches for one-story structures
  - 24 inches for two-story structures
3. New continuous footings for buildings shall have a minimum reinforcement of:
  - (2) #4 at top and (2) #4 at bottom, OR
  - (1) #5 at top and (1) #5 at bottom