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Q I own a building that has un-reinforced masonry bearing walls and will be making earthquake safety improvements. Will the improvements cause an increase in my property taxes?

A New construction generally causes a reassessment if it adds a building, adds space, converts a building to a new use, or renovates the building to make it like new. In contrast, the assessed value is not increased for normal maintenance and repair, such as replacing a leaking roof. Under California law, owners of un-reinforced masonry buildings are subject to a property tax reassessments 15 years after they make seismic upgrades. Seismic retrofitting improvements to other types of structures are not subject to property tax reassessment. On June 8, 2010, voters approved an amendment to the state Constitution allowing property owners to seismically retrofit any structure without property taxes being reassessed. Call your accountant or a RINA real estate expert before making building improvements.