



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Niall Connolly, Director of Community Development
Date: October 30th, 2026
Re: Geologic Hazard Ordinance

Introduction

The Planning Commission commenced a discussion in the September work meeting about potentially making amendments to section 10-15F (Geologic Hazards) of the Town Code. There was general agreement amongst the Commissioners that some clarifications would be beneficial. Following that discussion, here are some suggestions from staff:

When is a geotechnical report required?

Currently, geotechnical reports are required in the following circumstances (section 10-15F-5(A)):

A geotechnical report is required for the approval of any of the following:

- 1. Subdivision approval process;*
- 2. Design/development review process for any new building over 500 square feet in area; and*
- 3. Any addition to an existing building when the combined area of the existing building and new addition exceed 1,000 square feet in area;*
- 4. Any structure intended for human occupancy; and*
- 5. In any other instance where the DCD determines the site or soil conditions warrant a geotechnical report.*

In previous Planning Commission meetings, it has been concluded that this definition leaves some gaps. Some examples are provided later in this report. The requirement for a geotechnical report should be carefully balanced to ensure that developments can proceed safely and resiliently, while recognizing the additional cost and delay to projects that such reports incur. A standard geotechnical report can *cost around \$5,000, with an additional cost for a slope stability analysis. A geologic hazard study can cost in excess of \$50,000, and the third party review period can be a lengthy process. On the other hand, Springdale is a geologically active area, and so it is important that those risks are properly understood and mitigated during the development process.

*These are estimates based on staff experience working on projects involving geologic hazards.

Example 1

Sections 10-15F-5(C)-9 and 10 of the Town Code list instances where a slope stability analysis is required *as part of the geotechnical report*. However, there are instances where this could arise for a development where a geotechnical report has not been required. This has created some ambiguity.

Recommendation: This could be addressed using the following, or similar, language (proposed language inserted in red):

*9. The geotechnical report must contain a slope stability analysis as described in section 10-15F-5(C)(10) if the horizontal distance from the edge of an excavation to any of the following features is less than twice the depth of the excavation. **If a geotechnical report is not otherwise required, a slope stability analysis is still required in these circumstances.***

- a. A property line,*
- b. A natural slope with a grade of 30% or greater that is not defined as microtopography,*
- c. A floodway (as defined in section 10-13A-9 of this title), or*
- d. The top of bank of a natural wash which is mapped as a Special Flood Hazard Area by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on the Flood Insurance Rate Map or on the Draft Hydraulic Work Maps for Springdale (this does not include the Special Flood Hazard Area associated with the Virgin River).*

Example 2

Another point that would benefit from clarification relates to grading or excavation in geologic hazard study areas. Grading is not listed in 10-15F-5(A) as automatically requiring a geotechnical report. The DCD may require one, if deemed necessary, but there is uncertainty about what a reasonable threshold for this would be. Staff does not recommend that all grading automatically triggers the requirement for a geotechnical report. Much of the Town lies within geologic hazard study areas, and many grading activities are relatively low risk.

Grading in geologic hazard study areas however can be problematic if it is done in close proximity to steep slopes.

Recommendation: The Commission should seek to find the appropriate balance between ensuring that geologic hazards are properly addressed, but at the same time avoiding unnecessary expense and delay for property owners carrying out small scale grading. Suggested language that could be inserted into the code is shown in red below:

A geotechnical report is required for the approval of any of the following:

- 1. Subdivision approval process;*
- 2. Design/development review process for any new building over 500 square feet in area; and*

3. *Any addition to an existing building when the combined area of the existing building and new addition exceed 1,000 square feet in area;*
4. *Any grading or excavation within a geologic hazard study area that would require a grading permit, and that is within 3 horizontal feet of an area of 30 percent or greater natural grade, excluding areas defined as microtopography.*
5. *Any structure intended for human occupancy; and*
6. *In any other instance where the DCD determines the site or soil conditions warrant a geotechnical report.*

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discusses the examples above, and provide direction to staff on possible adjustments to chapter 10-15F of the Town Code.