

Soft Story Retrofit Ordinance

**City Council
Building and Safety Division
Community Development Department
December 2, 2024**

Soft Story Retrofit - City Council Priority

- City performed an extensive soft story survey in 2007
 - Compiled a detailed inventory of 368 potentially hazardous soft-story buildings with over 4,000 units
 - Primarily residential units but a few commercial too
- City Council allocated Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to develop a soft story retrofit program in 2021

What is a “soft story” building?

- Refers to multi-story wood frame buildings with a weak, flexible or otherwise vulnerable first story
- Identified by large openings on the ground floor walls, typically due to garage doors, open parking stalls or large storefront windows



What are the potential consequences of soft story collapse?

- Injuries and fatalities
- Loss of housing
- Economic repercussions
- Property damage
 - Damaged buildings
 - Crushed vehicles
 - Utilities (gas, electric, water, sewer)



Public Outreach

- Rules Committee meetings held in January 2023 & July 2024
 - In July 2024, Rules directed staff to prepare Ordinance for Council review
- Community meetings were held in Summer 2024
 - Zoom (June 25) & in person (June 27)
- Mailing list established with all 368 impacted property owners, along with other housing owner associations such as:
 - East Bay Rental Housing Association, Rental Housing Associations of Southern Alameda County, East Bay Association of Realtors)

Summary of Proposed Ordinance

| | San Leandro Soft Story Ordinance (mandatory screening- incentivized retrofit) |
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| APPLIES TO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All wood framed residential buildings 5 or more units. • Permitted before January 1, 1985 • On the existing City soft story inventory list |
| MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering screening/seismic structural analysis • Installation of earthquake actuated gas shut off valve (within 60 days of notice) • Notification to all building tenants • Posting warnings in building |
| TIMEFRAME | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 18 months compliance period for mandatory screening |
| FEES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building will establish a new engineering report review fee in annual City Master Fee Schedule approved by City Council |

Staff researched Hayward, Oakland & Alameda. San Leandro Ordinance based on Alameda's due to similar size and over 60% retrofit success rate.

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| INCENTIVES TO RETROFIT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing mandatory engineering screening, includes financial relief for building permit/inspection fees: 1) 100% waived for reports submitted within 6 months of official notice on the City inventory list, 2) 50% reduction within 12 months & 3) 25% reduction within 18 months |
| APPEAL PROCESS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 days to challenge determination of soft-story status to Building Official • Appeals of Building Official final decision to Board of Appeal • Board of Appeal exists under Municipal Code for building permit concerns. • Board consists of 3 City Manager appointed management staff from various City departments including staff with expertise in civil engineering/building. |

Next Steps

- Staff recommends approval of first reading of Ordinance
 - Proposed 2nd reading at December 16 City Council
- Staff outreach/implementation from January-May 2025:
 - Prepare public information for affected property owners & post on City website
 - Courtesy notice on new ordinance, public info & warning of forthcoming formal notice
 - Issuance of formal notice that property is on the City inventory