



Office of the City Manager

July 3, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Christine Daniel, City Manager *CD*
Subject: Update: Soft Story Ordinance – Mandatory Retrofit

This memo updates the City Council on progress with development of an ordinance to require retrofit of soft story buildings. A public meeting will be held on July 25, 2013 at 7 p.m. at the North Berkeley Senior Center to introduce and take comments on the proposed ordinance.

The July 2012 Council referral requested that staff develop language to require owners of multi-unit residential buildings with five or more units that have been identified as containing soft, weak or open front stories – “soft story buildings” – to retrofit their buildings within an appropriate time frame. In response, staff convened a volunteer “Structural Advisory Committee” that met from August 2012 until March 2013. The group developed recommendations for the minimum design requirements for soft story retrofit, as well as options for alternate standards that would result in equivalent or better performance. Staff also met with the 4x4 Committee of the City Council and the Rent Stabilization Board, and the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission before finalizing the draft ordinance.

The attached notice was mailed to property owners and tenants of the 154 buildings on the City’s inventory. Following this initial public meeting, the proposed ordinance will be presented to the Disaster & Fire Safety Commission, Housing Advisory Commission, Rent Stabilization Board, and Planning Commission for their comments. Another public meeting will be held in the fall before presenting a proposed ordinance to the City Council toward the end of the calendar year.

The draft ordinance, the soft story building inventory, Frequently Asked Questions and other background material are available at the following link:
[http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning and Development/Building and Safety/Soft Story Program.aspx](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning_and_Development/Building_and_Safety/Soft_Story_Program.aspx)

If you have any questions, please contact Deputy Planning Director Wendy Cosin at 981-7402.

Attachment: Public Notice

cc: William Rogers, Deputy City Manager
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Ann-Marie Hogan, City Auditor
Pam Embry, Public Information Officer



Planning and Development Department

WHY AM I RECEIVING THIS NOTICE?

You are an owner or tenant of a building that is on the City's inventory of "soft story" buildings.

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

PROPOSED CITY ORDINANCE TO REQUIRE RETROFIT OF SOFT STORY BUILDINGS

Thursday, July 25, 2013, 7 p.m., North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Avenue

A public meeting will be held on July 25, 2013 at 7 p.m. to introduce and take comments on a proposed ordinance that requires residential buildings with five or more units to be seismically retrofitted if the building is constructed with soft, weak, or open front conditions ("SWOF"). The proposed ordinance requires owners to submit a building permit application to retrofit the building within three years and to complete retrofit within an additional two years.

A SWOF or soft story building can be generally described as a wood-frame building with more than one story that typically has extensive ground story openings, garage doors, or open-air spaces such as parking with little or no enclosing solid wall. These buildings have the potential for sustaining serious damage, including collapse, in the event of strong earthquakes.

There are currently 154 buildings on the soft story inventory prepared by the City in 2005. This notice is mailed to property owners and tenants of buildings that are on the inventory. The draft ordinance, the SWOF inventory, Frequently Asked Questions and other background material are available at the following link:

http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Planning_and_Development/Building_and_Safety/Soft_Story_Program.aspx

Following this initial public meeting, the proposed ordinance will be presented to the Disaster & Fire Safety Commission, Housing Advisory Commission, Rent Stabilization Board, and Planning Commission. Another public meeting will be held in the fall before submitting an ordinance to the City Council for approval.

Questions? Contact Wendy Cosin, Deputy Planning Director, 510-981-7402, or via e-mail: wcosin@cityofberkeley.info