



Planning Department
Building and Safety Division

Retrofit Requirements for Removal from Inventory of Soft Story Buildings

This document provides an overview of retrofit requirements to remove a building from the Inventory of Potentially Hazardous Buildings due to a Soft, Weak, or Open Front story (SWOF) as provided by Berkeley Municipal Code 19.39.

Please complete the following:

A. Apply for a building permit at the City of Berkeley Permit Service Center (PSC), 1947 Center St:

1. Make an appointment by calling the Permit Service Center at 510 981-7502.
2. At the appointment, bring digital copies of the construction drawings and structural calculations on a flash drive and submit those along with special inspection forms and any other supporting documentation to the (PSC). Pay the required fee based on the valuation.
3. Plans shall be prepared by a registered design professional and shall be stamped and signed prior to issuance. Provide a registered design professional's seal with expiration date and signature on all drawing sheets and cover pages of structural calculations or reports.
4. State the scope of the seismic upgrade on the cover sheet of the drawings including a statement that the seismic upgrade was designed in compliance with the criteria of the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Chapter 19.39 allowing the building to be removed from the Soft Story Inventory.
5. See <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Triggers/> for information about other work that may be required based on the type and valuation of this permit.

B. Engineering Criteria for Seismic Retrofits

1. Potentially hazardous SWOF buildings shall be retrofitted in conformance with one of the engineering standards listed in the Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 19.39. Engineers should review the Framework Guidelines available at: <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/softstory/>.
2. Regardless of which standard is selected, the City of Berkeley does not require retrofit actions above the critical story (typically the ground story) and the floor diaphragm immediately above it.
3. For projects with previously submitted engineering evaluation reports, engineers should incorporate the report into the submittal documents for plan review purposes if it is available. Owners are encouraged to share the report with the engineer preparing the retrofit design.

4. The engineering standards specified in Chapter 19.39 of the Berkeley Municipal Code have the intent of reducing earthquake risks by limiting structural damage in the vulnerable first stories of typical wood-framed SWOF buildings. These retrofit provisions are not intended to make the entire structure conform to the current code. Instead, provisions aim to reduce the risk by addressing the principal seismic weaknesses of a SWOF building with significantly less design effort, construction cost and tenant disruption. Risk reduction does not take a comprehensive approach to life safety, does not aim to protect property and is not necessarily equivalent to new construction under the current Building Code. Owners have the option of retrofitting to a higher standard to better protect their investment.

C. Once the building permit is obtained:

1. Complete the seismic upgrade, including the required city inspections;
2. Provide the City of Berkeley building inspector completed special inspection reports, structural observation reports, and any other documents as required;
3. Obtain an approved final inspection.

D. To be removed from the Inventory, provide

1. A final letter of structural observation wet-signed from the responsible engineer indicating the site visits have been made and the seismic upgrade work has been completed in conformance with the approved plans. This letter should be addressed to the Building and Safety Division, 1947 Center St, Berkeley, CA 94704 OR the area inspector.
2. The final affidavit from the special inspection agency for projects requiring special inspections.

For further information:

For information specific to a building permit application for your project, contact the Permit Service Center at 1947 Center Street or by telephone at 510 981-7500 or via email at permits@cityofberkeley.info.

For further information regarding the Soft Story program, contact Jenny McNulty at 510 981-7451 or jmcnulty@cityofberkeley.info or by mail at the Building and Safety Division, 1947 Center Street, 3rd floor, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Visit our website at <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/softstory/> for copies of Berkeley Municipal Code 19.39, Framework Guidelines, a copy of the current inventory, a roster of engineers, and other information.