



CITY OF ALAMEDA California

January 6, 2009

Dear Alameda Property Owner/Resident:

Alameda is proposing a new ordinance that requires the identification of soft story buildings containing five or more residential units, adopts code standards for voluntary retrofit and requires property owners to complete an engineering study within two years.

The Planning and Building Department of the City of Alameda will hold a workshop to discuss the proposed Soft Story Seismic Retrofit Ordinance from **7:00 – 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2009** at the Alameda Free Library, 1550 Oak Street. All interested parties are invited to attend and participate in the workshop.

A soft story building is a multi-story building whereby one or more floors have windows, wide doors, large unobstructed commercial or parking spaces, or other openings in places where a shear wall would normally be required for stability as a matter of earthquake engineering design. A typical soft story building is a several-story apartment building located over a parking garage or series of retail businesses.

Soft story buildings are vulnerable to collapse in a moderate to severe earthquake in a phenomenon known as soft story collapse. Soft story failure was responsible for nearly half of all homes that became uninhabitable in California's Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989, and is projected to cause severe damage and possible destruction of 160,000 homes in the event of a more significant earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area. As of 2008 few such buildings in the area had undergone the relatively inexpensive seismic retrofit to correct the condition.

If you have comments or questions regarding the ordinance or the workshop, please contact Greg McFann, Building Official at (510) 747-6820, Tuesday through Friday or via email at gmcfann@ci.alameda.ca.us, or by fax at (510) 747-6804.

Sincerely,

Planning & Building Department
City of Alameda

Planning and Building Department, Room 190

*City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 747-6800*

City of Alameda

Soft Story Retrofit Ordinance

SUMMARY

The Soft Story Retrofit Ordinance would require the City to:

- Identify buildings subject to the Ordinance
 - Soft Story = Wood frame buildings of five or more residential units, built prior to December 15, 1985, where the ground floor portion of the structure contains parking or other similar open floor space that causes soft, weak or open wall lines with one or more stories above
- Establish retrofit standards
 - Chapter A4 2006 International Existing Building Code + 2007 California Historical Building Code (where appropriate)
- Notify Property Owners of designation as a Potentially Hazardous Soft Story Building
- Allow Property Owners an opportunity to appeal designation
- Require notification of residents, posting of warning sign and filing notice with the County Assessor's Office
- Require structural assessment by a qualified architect or engineer within 2 years of designation.
 - Report requirement accelerated
 - Due to sale of property;
 - Permitted work valued at \$100,000 or more;
 - Change of Use;
 - Prior to re-occupancy if building is vacant for more than 6 months
- Tenants required to cooperate and allow inspections
15-year exemption from new potentially hazardous designation once retrofit is complete.

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