



City of Burbank
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
BUILDING DIVISION

RISK REDUCTION IN SOFT-STORY RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a soft-story or weak front building?

A soft story building is one with soft, weak or open-front walls on one or more side of the first story. These buildings typically have tuck-under parking and storage with one story of apartment units above or they have a wall that has mostly door or window openings with very a low percentage of structural wall framing in between.

2. What buildings will be affected by the proposed ordinance?

The buildings affected by the ordinance are multi-family residential buildings permitted prior to 1978 and have either:

1. Tuck-under parking on the first story with one or more stories above containing at three or more units, or
2. A weak front first story with two or more stories above.

3. Why are the buildings separated by the year 1978?

California Assembly Bill 304, passed in 2005, encourages Cities to implement a mandatory seismic retrofit of soft story buildings constructed or permitted prior to 1978 when the Building Code changed because of the San Fernando earthquake in 1991.

4. How was the list of affected properties compiled and organized?

The list was compiled from permits records and a visual inspection from the street. The properties permitted prior to 1978 were place into three groups based on number of units. Group I is comprised of buildings with 10 or more units, Group II is 5 to 9 units and Group III is 3 to 4 units. The properties permitted after 1978 are not subject to this proposed ordinance.

5. When would the ordinance go into effect?

The ordinance is expected to go before the City Council in the summer or fall of 2008. Once adopted by the Council, the ordinance takes affect in 30 days.

6. When will I be notified?

The Notices will be sent out no sooner than one year from date of ordinance adoption in three groups beginning with Group I in 2009, Group II in 2010 and Group III in 2012.

7. How long will I have to complete the work?

Once the notice is received, the property owner will have three years to complete the work or provide an engineering assessment of the building that satisfies the technical standards of the

ordinance.

8. Can I be excluded from the list of affected properties.

A property owner may apply to have the property excluded from the inventory list. Examples of acceptable reasons for exclusion are:

- Misidentified address
- Building does not meet definition of soft story or weak front building as verified by a Engineer licensed in the State of California
- Soft-story building that has two units or less in one physical building
- The building has been retrofitted or substantially reconstructed in accordance with the 1997 or later California Building Code

9. Can I apply for an extension?

After notices have been issued, a request for a financial hardship extension may be submitted in writing to the Board of Building and Fire Code Appeals with a \$100 administrative fee. In order to grant the two-year extension the Board must find that:

- The building does not present an imminent threat to the life safety of occupants or the public, and
- There are unique and exceptional circumstances that prevent compliance by the date required by the ordinance.

10. Do I have to retrofit the entire building?

The extent of the construction depends on the overall structure and the engineer report, but the ordinance requires that only the soft-story condition be corrected.

11. How long will the construction take?

The construction time will vary depending on the size of the building and the scope of the required corrections. The construction could take as little as three to four weeks for a small project and two to three months for a larger building.

12. Will my tenants have to move out?

Generally the construction is performed during the day when most tenants are not at home and they typically do not have to temporarily move out.

13. How will this affect the parking spaces?

The parking space must have a minimum height of 6'-6" and width of 7'-6". Any construction that would reduce these minimum dimensions would have to be handled on a case by case basis.

14. Can I do the construction in phases?

The construction must be completed within the three-year time period. Time schedules can be determined by the owner and the contractor.

15. What are the City fees?

The proposal is to waive the Building Permit and Plan Check Review fees. There will be a \$100

fee to cover administration costs for an extension appeal.

16. Do I need an engineer?

An engineer licensed in the State of California is required to submit the assessment report or the designed plans with accompanying calculations.

17. Where can I find a contractor?

The City cannot recommend any one contractor or engineer. *The Blue Book of Building Construction* is a regional phone directory that is independent from the City and is published by Contractors Register Inc. The web site is www.thebluebook.com. *The Blue Book* has a section on Seismic Construction. The Contractors State License Board of California maintains a database of all contractors in the state ww2.cslb.ca.gov/CSLB_LIBRARY/License+Request.asp.

18. Where can I find a Licensed Engineer?

The Structural Engineers Association of California has a listing of licensed engineers. The web site is <http://www.seaoc.org>.

19. Will I have to bring the entire building up to code?

The ordinance will not trigger other code requirements such as accessibility or fire protection upgrades.

20. What are the construction costs?

The construction costs will vary according to the project. Building Division is currently researching this with engineers and contractors.

21. Will the permits expire?

The permits will not expire until the end of the three-year time limit.

22. What will happen if the work is not completed within the time limit?

If the work is not performed according to the time limits of the ordinance, the case may be referred to the City Attorney for further enforcement. A Notice stating that the building has not complied will be recorded on the property with the County Assessor.

23. What is the minimum requirement for compliance?

At the minimum, an engineering report including calculations will have to be submitted by a licensed engineer stating the building meets the technical requirements of the ordinance. Most of the buildings permitted prior to 1978 will require a retrofit of the soft-story section on the first story of the building.

24. Will I be notified of future meetings?

The public hearing notices are published in the Burbank Leader and also posted on the Building Division's web site at www.burbankca.org/building/bsoftstory.htm.

25. After I have been notified, will I be reminded of how much time I have?

Annual reminders will be mailed to all affected property regarding the time limits.

26. How will condominiums be handled?

Because the building must be retrofitted as a whole, the Notification will be sent to the homeowner's association.