



Mandatory Seismic Retrofit Program

FAQ's

What is the purpose of the West Hollywood Mandatory Seismic Retrofit Program?

The purpose of the program is to strengthen the City's existing potentially vulnerable buildings. There are certain building types that historically have not fared well during larger earthquakes. These buildings are required to be evaluated to determine if building strengthening is required. A major earthquake will not only be life threatening, but will also damage homes and businesses, leading to displacement and significant economic losses. The City of West Hollywood is taking this proactive approach to reduce the risk of devastation and loss from a major earthquake, and to help with recovery afterward.

What buildings are part of this program?

In 2017, the City Council passed ordinances to review and strengthen three types of existing buildings:

- Wood-Frame Buildings with Soft, Weak or Open Fronts (commonly called Soft Story Buildings)
- Non-Ductile Concrete Buildings
- Pre-Northridge Steel Frame Buildings

Are condominium type buildings subject to the Ordinance?

Soft story condominiums are included in the Seismic Retrofit Program. Only non-ductile concrete and pre-Northridge steel moment frame condominium buildings have been exempted from the ordinance.

When do the ordinances become effective?

The effective dates are:

- April 1, 2018 - Soft Story Buildings
- August 7, 2018 - Non-Ductile Concrete and Pre-Northridge Steel Moment Frame Buildings

Although the soft-story ordinance is now effective (as of April 1, 2018) and the non-ductile concrete/pre-Northridge steel moment frame ordinance will be effective August 7, 2018, the requirements and timelines in each ordinance for seismic retrofitting do not begin until the property owner has been officially noticed by the City via a certified letter. The City does not anticipate issuing any notices to property owners until a tenant/owner cost share program has been fully explored and a framework has been brought to the City Council for their review.

What are the benefits of performing a seismic retrofit?

The City is taking precautionary measures to lessen the potential for catastrophic failure of our existing buildings. Retrofitting existing buildings will protect the safety of the people who live and work in West Hollywood, and lessen the economic impact following a major earthquake.

How do I know if my building is included in the program?

The City has a survey of properties that are subject to the ordinance available on the City's website at: www.weho.org/seismic Being included in the survey is not confirmation that the building is structurally deficient, hazardous or unsafe. Further evaluation by a Civil /Structural Engineer licensed in the State of California is required in order to determine if seismic strengthening is required or if the building meets the minimum requirements in the Ordinances.



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Does being included in the survey of properties subject to the ordinance mean my building is hazardous or vulnerable?

Being included in the survey only indicates that a building visually appears to be of a specific construction type included within the ordinance. Further evaluation by a professional will be required to determine if retrofitting is required.

My address is included in the building survey, how long do I have to complete my retrofit?

The timeline and requirements in the ordinances do not begin until the property owner receives an official notice from the City, which will be sent by certified mail. Owners of soft story buildings have 5 years after receiving notice to assess and complete any necessary retrofitting. Owners of non-ductile concrete and pre-Northridge steel moment frame buildings have 20 years to assess and complete any necessary retrofitting.

Once I receive notification from the City that my building is included in the Seismic Retrofit Program, what are the next steps?

As a property owner, hire/contact a licensed civil or structural engineer, or architect who specializes in seismic strengthening of buildings to further evaluate your building. There are 4 steps to completing a retrofit for soft story buildings.

Step 1 – Submit a Screening Report

Step 2 - Submit Retrofit Plans

Step 3 – Obtain a building permit and begin construction

Step 4 – Complete Construction

A [RoadMap to Compliance](#) is available to assist you with the 4 step process for retrofitting Soft Story Buildings.

Information for Non-Ductile Concrete and Pre-Northridge Steel Moment Frame Buildings will be available in August 2018.

Who can complete a structural evaluation and analysis?

A California licensed Civil or Structural Engineer will be able to perform the structural analysis. These professionals may be found through several professional and government resources:

Registered Professional Licensed Engineers: <http://www.bpelsg.ca.gov/>

Structural Engineering Association of So Cal: <https://www.seaosc.org/Find-an-Engineer>

What can I do if I believe my building is not subject to the ordinance or has had a previous retrofit?

The first step of the retrofit process is to complete a Screening Report which is available by the City. The Screening Report is intended to provide additional information to determine if a building is in the scope of the ordinance and a retrofit is required **or** if the building is exempt from further evaluation. The report must be completed by a Professional Engineer or Architect licensed by the State of California and will need to be submitted to the Building and Safety Division for review and approval.



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How much does a Soft Story Retrofit cost?

A recent rough order of magnitude (ROM) cost study analysis conducted by the City's consultants indicated that a majority of soft-story retrofits are estimated to be within the range of \$40,000 and \$160,000. Average retrofit construction costs for Non-Ductile Concrete and Pre-Northridge Steel Moment Frame Buildings were estimated to vary between \$50 to \$100 per square foot of building area. These estimated costs are provided for informational purposes only and are not intended to be used to estimate a building owner's individual retrofit costs as each building varies in size and complexity.

Can rent stabilized property owners pass a portion of costs to tenants?

Currently no, however, property owners may file a request for a rent increase if the property owner believes costs of completing the retrofit will exceed the net operating income for their property. More information on the application and requirements of assessing net operating income (NOI) is available at www.weho.org/rsh or by calling 323-848-6450.

Over the next few months, the City is hosting meetings to hear from the community, while the Rent Stabilization Commission analyzes whether a direct cost pass-through would be appropriate for the City Council to consider as an alternative to possible rent increases. Seismic retrofitting is an important communitywide project and we want to hear from you on how costs should be shared. In late April more information on upcoming meetings and opportunities to make yourself heard will be mailed to all rent stabilized tenants and landlords. An online survey will be available in early May, and City staff will be visiting various city events in an effort to get the work out and to hear your thoughts. The City Council could consider a recommendation from the Rent Stabilization Commission as early as July, 2018. For more information visit www.weho.org/rsh or call 323-848-6450.