



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPT.  
BUILDING SAFETY DIVISION



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[www.culvercity.org](http://www.culvercity.org)

## FAQS

### For the Mandatory Retrofit Program Wood Frame Buildings with Soft, Weak or Open-Front Wall Lines (SWOF)

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1. What is the purpose of the program?
  - a. Soft story buildings have a history of poor performance in past earthquakes. The purpose of the program is to promote public welfare and safety by requiring soft story building retrofit.
2. What is a soft-story building?
  - a. A soft story building is a multi-story wood frame building where the ground floor has minimal solid exterior walls, and the floor above has much more solid exterior walls. These buildings are generally built before 1980 and a typical cause of a soft story building is where the ground floor parking is located under livable area. (Single Family is exempt)
3. What is a retrofit?
  - a. A retrofit is an improvement to the part of the building structural system that resists seismic loads.
4. How do I know if my building is included in the program?
  - a. All soft, weak, and open front buildings are part of the program. The City conducted a survey to identify buildings that had soft story characteristics.
  - b. Notices will be mailed to all property owners of buildings identified by the City as potentially seismically vulnerable.
  - c. A list will be published on the City website.
5. What if I don't agree with the City List?
  - a. All buildings on the City List require a screening report. The owner will consult with a California licensed Civil Engineer or Structural Engineer to perform a more detail investigation of the building. The licensed professional will then complete and submit to Culver City Building Safety a screening report for review. The Screening report will determine if the building is or is not a soft story.

6. If the [Screening Report](#) determines that a Retrofit is not required, am I done?
  - a. When the screening report determines a building is not considered a soft story there is no further action necessary by the building owner. The building will be removed from the List.
7. What is the scope of the program?
  - a. The program scope includes all existing buildings containing wood-frame construction:
    - i. A permit for construction of a new building was applied for before October 23, 1978; and
    - ii. The ground floor or basement portion of the building contains parking or other similar open floor space that causes soft, weak, open-front wall lines, or most of the ground floor or basement portion of the building contains an open floor space, and there exists one or more stories above.
8. What are the exceptions to the program scoping?
  - a. The exception to the scoping is detached single-family dwelling units and detached single-family dwelling units with an Accessory Dwelling Unit.
9. What are the compliance milestone deadlines for my building?
  - a. The timeline to complete construction of the soft story retrofit is 5 years from the notice to the owner. To obtain the 5-year objective milestones are set for each important step in the process. First, submit the screening report within 1 year of receiving the notice. Submit the retrofit plans within 2 years of receiving the notice. Obtain the permit within the following year of the retrofit submittal. Commence construction within the following year of obtaining the permit. Complete the construction within the following year of commencing construction.
10. When will the owner receive the notice?
  - a. The notice will be sent to owners in accordance with their priority designation with priority designation I sent first. Buildings containing more than 12 units or 3 stories with more than 6 units are in priority destination I. Buildings falling outside of priority I scope and are between 5 and 12 units are priority II. All other buildings are priority III, including but not limited to duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses.
11. What do I do if I have tenants?
  - a. The property owner must ensure that tenants can safely remain in the building during the project or through the temporary relocation of tenants as part of a tenant impact mitigation plan ([TIMP](#)).
12. I received a notice what do I need to do next?
  - a. The property owner must hire a Civil or Structural Engineer licensed in the state of California to complete and submit the [Screening Report](#). Buildings the license design professional determines are soft story must comply with the program. An engineer will

then need to develop plans for the building's retrofit in compliance with the program and CCMC 15.02.500.

13. How to I find and California Licensed engineer?

- a. By visiting the [State of California's Board for Professional Engineers](#), Land Surveyors, and Geologists and/or Structural Engineers Association of Southern California ([SEAOSC](#)) websites for information regarding licensed engineers.

14. What should I submit to the City for plan review to obtain a permit?

- a. A complete retrofit plan set and [building permit application](#) are necessary for submittal at the Building Safety Counter. A typical complete retrofit plan set contains a cover sheet/site plan, floor plans, elevations, framing plans and sections, a foundation plan, detail and notes, structural calculations, and a tenant impact mitigation plan.

15. How to I find and California Licensed contractor?

- a. Please visit the [California Architects Board](#) for information regarding licensed architects. It is a good idea to receive multiple bids on a project. Talk to neighbors and friends about their experience with contractors that have performed work in Culver City.

16. What do I do after a permit is issued?

- a. After the permit is issued construction can commence.

17. What are inspections?

- a. An inspection is when a city inspector will view the construction verifying it matches the plans. Inspections occur should be called prior to any portion of the project being covered up. For example, before pouring concrete a foundation inspection should be scheduled. Request city inspections by emailing [building.safety@culvercity.org](mailto:building.safety@culvercity.org). Include the permit number, address, inspection type, desired date, contact name and number for the individual in the field.

18. The project is complete now what?

- a. The permit that is issued by the City for retrofit work must receive a final inspection from a City Building Inspector. If the Inspector approves the work, he or she will provide final sign-off on the project. Building Safety will issue a certificate to soft story retrofit projects with final inspection status.