

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **San Francisco seismic retrofit deadline extended by one year to support small businesses during COVID-19**

*San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approves legislation by Supervisor Rafael Mandelman to give property owners until September 15, 2021 to complete retrofit construction to minimize disruption to small businesses and residential tenants*

SAN FRANCISCO — To provide relief to small businesses struggling after mandatory COVID-19 closures and facing further closure due to city-mandated seismic work, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved legislation on Tuesday authored by District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman that will extend the deadline for completion of seismic retrofitting of Tier IV wood-frame buildings by one year from September 15, 2020 to September 15, 2021.

“Seismic retrofit work is essential and urgent, but the reality is that small businesses, residential tenants and properties owners alike have asked for, and need, more time,” said Mandelman. “As businesses have begun to reopen following periods of mandatory COVID-19 closure, many are being asked to shut down yet again to allow seismic retrofit work, just as they have rehired staff and are trying to re-establish desperately needed sales. Many of these businesses cannot come back from a second closure. This legislation will allow additional time for property owners to complete retrofit construction on a timeline that reduces disruption to our already beleaguered and struggling small businesses and minimizes impacts on residential tenants who are sheltering in place or working from home.”

The city’s Mandatory Soft Story Retrofit Program was established in 2013 to ensure the safety and resilience of San Francisco's housing stock. The program requires the retrofit of older, wood-framed, multi-family buildings with a soft-story condition. Tier IV buildings, the final Tier to be completed, often have ground floor commercial space with residential units above. The prior deadline for completion of work on these buildings was September 15, 2020. The 1,014 Tier 4 properties identified in 2013 are estimated to hold 2,028 businesses. According to the Department of Building Inspection, 425 or 41% still need to complete their retrofit work.

Even prior to COVID-19, many small businesses closed permanently due to mandatory seismic retrofit work that required businesses close for three to six months. A 2020 study based on research conducted by the San Francisco Office of Small Business looked at 180 Tier 4 commercial spaces that had been retrofitted prior to the end of 2019 and found that 46% of the commercial spaces in these properties saw turnover through the course of the retrofit work.

“I thank Supervisor Mandelman and the Department of Building Inspection for supporting the Small Business Commission recommendation on the need to extend the deadline of completing the Soft Story Retrofit for properties with commercial storefronts,” said Regina Dick-Endrizzi,

Executive Director of the San Francisco Office of Small Business. “The time extension allows for the property owners to work with their business tenants on when best to complete the work during the COVID-19 pandemic, while we continue the work to preserve the City’s treasured commercial storefronts to withstand the next inevitable earthquake.”

“Thank you to Supervisor Mandelman and the Office of Small Business for working with us on this legislation to allow building owners an extra year to complete mandatory seismic safety work,” said Patrick O’Riordan, DBI Interim Director. “We understand the challenges property owners are facing during this public health crisis and hope this additional time gives them some flexibility so they can minimize construction impacts on tenants and commercial businesses.”

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