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**STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**  
*A Non-Profit California Corporation*

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# PRESS RELEASE

## **The Structural Engineers Association of Southern California Supports Adoption of Seismic Retrofit Ordinance by the City of Los Angeles**

On October 9, 2015, the city of Los Angeles adopted an ordinance intended to improve the seismic resilience of the city. This ordinance is aimed at mitigating known seismic deficiencies related to non-ductile concrete buildings and wood-framed multi-unit and/or multi-story soft-story buildings that exhibit poor seismic performance during earthquakes.

The cost and inconvenience of implementing a seismic retrofit to a vulnerable building can be daunting, especially when weighed against the seemingly rare occurrence of a major earthquake. However, those of us living in Southern California understand that the question is not if the next damaging earthquake will occur, but when. We have learned from our experiences in both Northern and Southern California that the financial fallout of a major earthquake can outlast the rebuilding effort. Any government retrofit mandate must give careful consideration to costs associated with construction and interruption; but we believe these cost considerations should not be allowed to outweigh the importance of public life-safety, personal and community resilience, and continued regional economic viability after the next major earthquake.

Major changes to the California building codes were implemented after the 1971 San Fernando, 1989 Loma Prieta, and 1994 Northridge earthquakes. These changes increased the cost of new building construction while enhancing building performance and life-safety standards. After each of these significant earthquakes, California residents came to understand the reality of increased general construction cost as a necessity for safer buildings, and our economy adjusted each time.

While building codes focus primarily on new construction, the earthquake vulnerability of existing buildings designed and constructed to earlier codes remains to be addressed. The adoption of this seismic retrofit ordinance does exactly that. As cities realize being unprepared is no longer an acceptable strategy, seismic retrofit ordinances encourage the expenditure of financial capital under controlled circumstances before an earthquake happens. This enhances the community's resilience, improves the likelihood that properties will continue generating income after an earthquake, and establishes a culture of preparedness by setting forth expectations for building performance that protect the lives and livelihoods of owners, tenants, and occupants.

The Structural Engineers Association of Southern California pledges to continue working with regional city leaders and agencies to establish earthquake risk reduction strategies as those cities, like Los Angeles, strive to improve their seismic safety and overall resilience through safer and better performing buildings.