



NAREK EKMEKJYAN, vice president of Optimum Seismic, looks at his company's retrofit work on a Venice apartment building Nov. 7.

In a year of quakes, some cities forgo retrofits of flimsy buildings

Southern California is seeing its most seismically active year in decades, but some cities near the epicenter of recent temblors have yet to require retrofits of many apartment buildings deemed most at risk of collapse, a Times investigation has found.

Several suburbs closest to the widely felt earthquakes that struck Los Angeles County this summer and fall — including Alhambra, Monterey Park and South Pasadena — have no active plans to require retrofits for seismically flimsy so-called soft-story apartment buildings, according to interviews with local officials and a review of existing seismic policies.

In Malibu, which was hit by modest earthquakes in February and September, city officials recently completed an inventory of 37 potential soft-story buildings.

But elected officials there haven't publicly indicated whether they will mandate that those structures be retrofitted.

California communities have patchy record of mandating work that could help protect soft-story apartments

By Rong-Gong Lin II



BUILDINGS WITH a weak first story crushed cars in the 1994 Northridge quake. Such structures are ubiquitous in California.

Soft-story apartments are ubiquitous across California. The term applies to apartment buildings built decades ago where the bottom floor has room for a carport, garage or retail shop. In these buildings, the ground floor can be held up by flimsy, skinny poles that can collapse when shaken side-to-side in an earthquake.

"These are particularly dangerous, hazardous conditions for buildings," said Garrett Mills, president of the Structural Engineers Assn. of Southern California.

But for residents in soft-story apartment buildings, lines on a municipal map could be all that determines whether their home is seismically strengthened.

There's a clear pattern of many soft-story apartments being retrofitted after cities pass local ordinances requiring that work. In San Francisco, 94% of 4,941 apartment buildings affected by a soft-story retrofit law passed in

Deaths increase for pets at L.A.'s shelters

Euthanasia count for dogs is 72% higher than last year, a Times analysis finds. For cats, the tally is up 17%.

By DAKOTA SMITH AND LORENA INIGUEZ ELEBEE

Jake, a tawny 2-year-old mutt in L.A.'s West Valley shelter, wasn't doing well.

After six months at the shelter, he was running back and forth and jumping in his kennel.

So shelter workers put him on the euthanasia list in September.

"With the current staff we are unable to fulfill his enrichment needs and it is inhumane to continue housing in a shelter environment," the workers' notes said.

The number of dogs euthanized in animal shelters run by the city of L.A. has skyrocketed this year.

From January to September, 1,224 dogs were euthanized at the city's six shelters — a 72% increase compared with the same period a year ago, according to a Times analysis.

The number of dogs entering the shelters has increased each year since 2022. But the number put to death this year has far outpaced

Newsom redefines narrative on Trump

Governor appears to be striking a delicate balance between the political pugilist and measured pragmatist.

By TARYN LUNA

Nearly two weeks after Gov. Gavin Newsom launched a special session to fund legal battles against the president-elect, the Democratic leader appeared to be trying to tone down and reframe the California-vs.-Trump narrative he set in motion.

"It's not a resistance brand," Newsom said in an interview with The Times. "It's about pragmatism. It's about preparedness. We would be fools not to get on top of this before January."

The subtle shift signals the governor may be revising his role as a liberal champion in the nation's culture wars in the wake of Donald Trump's defeat of Vice President Kamala Harris.

But as he set out on a "California jobs first" tour to talk about the economy in the Central Valley, Newsom couldn't resist the gravitational pull back into the fight over progressive values with

From political outsider to Cabinet pick

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s sensational and troubled past dogged his presidential campaign, but didn't seem to cost him with Trump

By JAMES RAINEY

He had written more than 20 books, drew healthy audiences speaking across America and attracted coverage from the country's top newspapers and magazines. Still, by the height of the pandemic, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said he felt muzzled.

Facebook and Instagram had banned posts by Children's Health Defense, the Kennedy-founded organization that questions the value of vaccines. The social media sites noted that Kennedy's group trafficked in medical misinformation, and a science research team labeled him a "superspreader" of bogus claims about COVID-19 vaccines.

But as 2024 loomed, the scion of America's most fa-



KENNEDY became President-elect Donald Trump's Department of Health and Human Services nominee.

mous Democratic family saw a way back into the public eye.

"I started thinking, 'Well, the one place that they couldn't censor me was if I was running for president,'" Kennedy told the New Yorker. As he prepared to announce his candidacy in 2023, he proclaimed, "The censors are permitting me to talk to Americans again!"

Indeed, a 16-month run for the White House and subsequent two months as a supporter of Republican nominee Donald Trump succeeded in keeping RFK Jr. close to the center of the public's consciousness. It's a prominent perch he's likely to maintain if he succeeds in

Syria insurgents press offensive

Fighters seize most of Aleppo, establishing key positions and advancing beyond the key city. **WORLD, A3**

Trump wild card in governor race

For 2026 gubernatorial candidates, taking on the president-elect requires political calculus. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

USC falls prey to Notre Dame

Jayden Maiava can't rally Trojans, throwing two late interceptions returned for scores in a 49-35 loss. **SPORTS, D1**

Weather

Turning sunny. L.A. Basin: 76/51. **B8**

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