

Inspectors crack down on Bel-Air mansion for additional code violations



Commercial Real Estate

An unfinished, nearly 30,000-square-foot residence has been cited for building violations. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

By **MARTHA GROVES**
*contact
the
reporter*

'He was pretty much caught red-handed,' L.A.'s chief building inspector says of Bel-Air homeowner

Los Angeles building inspectors on Wednesday ordered the developer of a controversial hilltop mansion in Bel-Air to demolish and remove all unapproved construction — including concrete decks, retaining walls and other features that they say were completed in violation of a stop-work order.

“He was pretty much caught red-handed,” said Luke Zamperini, chief inspector for the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. “He's got to either get permits for what he has done or demolish the illegal construction.”

In September, building officials revoked the project's permits,

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effectively shutting down construction, after a resident who lives below contended that grading and other activity had destabilized the slope.

Since then, other neighbors of the project at 901 Strada Vecchia had reported several times to city officials that celebrity developer Mohamed Hadid was continuing construction on the 30,000-square-foot, multi-level house, in violation of the stop-work order.

Inspectors who visited the property on Monday noted a laundry list of violations, including the addition of wiring, cabinetry, a concrete slab in the driveway and steel-stud partitions in the garage to create office and storage space.

They also cited far more serious examples of unpermitted construction, including the addition of two levels of irregularly shaped concrete decks, an entire story below basement level and three large retaining walls. The inspectors also listed a dozen changes that had been made to the floor plan, including increases in the height of each floor of the main structure “beyond the scope of approved plans.”

The owner of the property is 901 Strada LLC. A company report lists as its executive James T. Zelloe, a Virginia attorney.

Benjamin Reznik, an attorney for 901 Strada, said construction completed after issuance of the stop-work order was done to protect the exposed house from rain, with the building and safety department’s approval. He also said that inspectors approved the building of the basement and that his client would submit revised plans. He said other issues related to “technical stuff” that his client had agreed to do once the stop-work order was lifted.

Hadid, who avidly promotes himself on social media and has appeared on reality TV shows, is known for a lavish lifestyle and for building over-the-top houses for the extremely well-to-do.

He has 15 days to remove the unapproved retaining walls and other unpermitted work or to seek permits. He also must pay an



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He didn't have enough political connections to get the complaints lost in the bureaucracy.

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inspection fee of \$336.

“He has a lot of work to do, and it’s not going to be easy,”
Zamperini said.

If Hadid does not comply, building officials might ask the city attorney to file criminal misdemeanor charges, Zamperini said.

“All the illegal work could never be permitted retroactively because it violates the zoning code,” said Victor De la Cruz, an attorney for Joseph Horacek, a neighbor who has challenged the project. “There does not appear to be a path forward for this home outside of complete demolition.”

martha.groves@latimes.com

Twitter: [@MarthaGroves](https://twitter.com/MarthaGroves)