

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION 32111

A RESOLUTION declaring the City Council’s and the Mayor’s intent to recognize the seismic retrofit of unreinforced masonry buildings in compliance with the City’s URM Retrofit Technical Standard.

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (City) has over 1,100 unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs), which are buildings typically built before 1945 with brick or clay tile bearing walls where the parapets and walls are not secured to the floors and roofs; and

WHEREAS, URMs are vulnerable to damage or collapse during earthquakes, potentially endangering people within the buildings if walls fully or partially collapse and pedestrians if parapets break away and fall into the street; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) compiled a list of probable URM buildings; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 SDCI provided written notification to URM building owners of the seismic vulnerability of their buildings; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 the City Council (Council) and Mayor passed Resolution 32033, guiding the creation of a URM retrofit program with the primary goal of protecting life safety by reducing the risk of injury from collapse in the event of an earthquake and additional goals of preserving Seattle’s historically and culturally significant landmarks and structures that contribute to neighborhood character, improve the City’s resiliency to earthquake events, and minimize the impact of a URM retrofit program on vulnerable populations to the extent financially feasible; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 32033 recommends the phasing in of a future URM retrofit program that includes:

- 1 A. A definition of URMs;
- 2 B. The type of seismic retrofit standard required to bring URMs into compliance,
- 3 acknowledging that there may be different standards for different types of buildings;
- 4 C. A system to categorize building types and/or uses that prioritizes key buildings and
- 5 services;
- 6 D. A timeline for compliance;
- 7 E. An enforcement strategy; and
- 8 F. A variety of potential funding opportunities and financial incentives to reduce the
- 9 financial burden of required seismic retrofits for URMs; and

10 WHEREAS, in alignment with recommendations to establish a compliance standard in
11 Resolution 32033, in 2023 SDCI has developed a Technical Standard for the retrofit of
12 URMs, components of which were adopted through Director’s Rule 6-2023; and

13 WHEREAS, many building owners currently have capacity and interest in retrofitting their URM
14 buildings and are delaying safety retrofits waiting for assurance of SDCI retrofit
15 requirements; and

16 WHEREAS, SDCI does not want to hinder voluntary efforts of building owners to increase the
17 seismic safety of their buildings; NOW, THEREFORE,

18 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE**
19 **MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:**

20 Section 1. Unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings demonstrating compliance with
21 voluntary minimum seismic standards set forth in Director’s Rule 6-2023 are eligible for a
22 changed retrofit status designation in the City’s official list of URM buildings. In advance of a

1 mandatory retrofit program, an ordinance guiding voluntary URM retrofits is intended to be
2 created that will:

3 A. Adopt the Technical Standard established in Director’s Rule 6-2023 as a compliant
4 URM retrofit to provide assurance to building owners that, absent a public safety necessity,
5 buildings strengthened pursuant to the Technical Standard will not be subject to future
6 mandatory seismic retrofitting legislation adopted by Council and the Mayor.

7 B. Incentivize URM building owners to voluntarily conduct seismic retrofits by
8 establishing a pathway for recognition of retrofit status for all URMs compliant with minimum
9 seismic standards established in Director’s Rule 6-2023.

