



# SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

## Land Use Committee

### Agenda

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, City Hall  
600 4th Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

Tammy J. Morales, Chair  
Dan Strauss, Vice-Chair  
Cathy Moore, Member  
Maritza Rivera, Member  
Tanya Woo, Member

Chair Info: 206-684-8802; [Tammy.Morales@seattle.gov](mailto:Tammy.Morales@seattle.gov)

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May 15, 2024 - 2:00 PM

#### Meeting Location:

Council Chamber, City Hall, 600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

#### Committee Website:

<https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/land-use>

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This meeting also constitutes a meeting of the City Council, provided that the meeting shall be conducted as a committee meeting under the Council Rules and Procedures, and Council action shall be limited to committee business.

Members of the public may register for remote or in-person Public Comment to address the Council. Details on how to provide Public Comment are listed below:

Remote Public Comment - Register online to speak during the Public Comment period at the meeting at

<https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/public-comment>

Online registration to speak will begin one hour before the meeting start time, and registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting. Speakers must be registered in order to be recognized by the Chair.

In-Person Public Comment - Register to speak on the Public Comment sign-up sheet located inside Council Chambers at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting. Speakers must be registered in order to be recognized by the Chair.

Pursuant to Council Rule VI.C.10, members of the public providing public comment in Chambers will be broadcast via Seattle Channel.

Submit written comments to Councilmembers at [Council@seattle.gov](mailto:Council@seattle.gov).

*Please Note: Times listed are estimated*

**A. Call To Order****B. Approval of the Agenda****C. Public Comment****D. Items of Business****1. Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofit Policy Update**

*Supporting  
Documents:*

[Resolution 32111](#)

[Resolution 32033](#)

[Presentation \(5/15/24\)](#)

**Briefing and Discussion** (45 minutes)

**Presenter:** Amanda Hertzfeld, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)

**E. Adjournment**



Legislation Text

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**File #:** Inf 2469, **Version:** 1

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Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofit Policy Update

An update on the Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofit policy creation guided by Resolution 32033 and Resolution 32111.

**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.

1           Adopted by the City Council the 10th day of October, 2023,  
2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 10th day of  
3 October, 2023.

4   
\_\_\_\_\_

5 President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

6           The Mayor concurred the 13th day of October, 2023.

7   
\_\_\_\_\_

8 Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

9           Filed by me this 13th day of October, 2023.

10   
\_\_\_\_\_

11 Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

12 (Seal)



**CITY OF SEATTLE**

**RESOLUTION 32033**

A RESOLUTION declaring the City Council’s and the Mayor’s intent to consider strategies to ensure that all unreinforced masonry buildings in Seattle are seismically retrofitted.

WHEREAS, Seattle has over 1,100 unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs), which are buildings typically built prior to 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, the February 2001 6.8 magnitude Nisqually earthquake injured about 400 people and caused around \$2 billion in property damage, including over \$8 million in repair costs to URMs in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, of the buildings The City of Seattle (“City”) determined to be unsafe following the Nisqually earthquake, two-thirds were URMs; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Seattle’s Office of Emergency Management reported to the City Council (“Council”) that within the next 50 years, Seattle has an 86 percent chance of experiencing another 6.8 magnitude earthquake and a 33 percent chance of an 8.0 magnitude earthquake; and

WHEREAS, the City’s February 2020 list of confirmed URMs reveals that many of these buildings are located in Seattle’s historic neighborhoods, with the highest concentrations in Capitol Hill, Pioneer Square, and the Chinatown/International District; and

1 WHEREAS, of the confirmed URMs in Seattle, over 70 are identified by the City as critical risk,  
2 which are schools and emergency service facilities, and around 180 are high risk, which  
3 are buildings over three stories in poor soil conditions and buildings containing public  
4 assembly spaces with occupancies of more than 100 people; and

5 WHEREAS, the City has a long history of attempting to address the safety risks posed by URMs,  
6 beginning with the Council’s adoption of a structural standard for all URMs in the 1970s,  
7 which was later repealed due to the costs of implementing the upgrades; and

8 WHEREAS, the City convened URM Policy and Technical Committees in 2008 to develop a  
9 cost-effective seismic retrofit standard and a mandatory retrofit program based on the  
10 proposed standard; and

11 WHEREAS, in 2011 the URM Technical Committee recommended adopting a modification of a  
12 standard based on a retrofit standard commonly used in California, but the URM Policy  
13 Committee did not provide a recommendation; and

14 WHEREAS, at the request of the Council, the City convened a new URM Policy Committee in  
15 2012 to recommend elements of a mandatory city-wide URM retrofit policy; and

16 WHEREAS, the URM Policy Committee released its final recommendations in 2017, which  
17 recommended a timeline of seven, ten, or 13 years for completing URM retrofits, based  
18 on vulnerability and use of the structure, and outlined a process for completing  
19 mandatory URM retrofits; and

20 WHEREAS, the City does not currently require a major seismic retrofit of URMs that are not  
21 undergoing a substantial alteration; and

1 WHEREAS, the City funded a report by the National Development Council, released in May  
2 2019, on potential financing and funding mechanisms for seismic upgrades, which  
3 estimated total costs for retrofitting privately owned URMs to be \$1.28 billion; and

4 WHEREAS, in 2020, the Washington State Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law  
5 House Bill 2405, which established a voluntary commercial property assessed clean  
6 energy and resiliency (“C-PACER”) program that may be used to finance energy  
7 efficiency and seismic retrofits for commercial and multifamily buildings; and

8 WHEREAS, on November 16, 2021, the King County Council adopted the framework for a C-  
9 PACER program, authorized by Revised Code of Washington Chapter 36.165, and the  
10 program is anticipated to begin accepting applications in early 2022; and

11 WHEREAS, the City recognizes that the greatest barrier for building owners is the cost of the  
12 seismic retrofits and that many building owners will need support accessing financial  
13 assistance for the program to be successful; and

14 WHEREAS, near-term investments in seismic retrofits will contribute to Seattle’s recovery from  
15 the economic impacts of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) crises and make  
16 Seattle more economically resilient in the long term; NOW, THEREFORE,

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

19 Section 1. The Council recognizes that the primary goal of a URM retrofit program  
20 should be to protect life safety by reducing the risk of injury from collapse of URMs in the event  
21 of an earthquake. Additional goals of the program should be to preserve Seattle’s historically and  
22 culturally significant landmarks and structures that contribute to neighborhood character,

1 improve the City’s resiliency to earthquake events, and minimize the impact of a URM retrofit  
2 program on vulnerable populations to the extent financially feasible.

3 Section 2. The Council is ready to consider the Mayor’s recommendation for a program  
4 that phases in a mandate for seismic retrofits of URMs in Seattle. The program should include:

5 A. A definition of URMs;

6 B. The type of seismic retrofit standard required to bring URMs into compliance,  
7 acknowledging that there might be different standards for different types of buildings;

8 C. A system to categorize building types and/or uses that prioritizes key buildings and  
9 services;

10 D. A timeline for compliance;

11 E. An enforcement strategy; and

12 F. A variety of potential funding opportunities and financial incentives to reduce the  
13 financial burden of required seismic retrofits for URMs.

14 Section 3. The Mayor shall direct the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections  
15 (“SDCP”) and the Office of Emergency Management (“OEM”) to pursue the following actions  
16 that will result in implementing a mandatory URM seismic retrofit program:

17 A. Provide ongoing funding for any additional staff necessary to establish and maintain  
18 the program and for technical experts who can assess and approve proposed upgrade plans;

19 B. Work with other City departments to identify funding for and complete a seismic  
20 assessment of City-owned URMs and develop cost estimates for seismic retrofits;

21 C. Continue culturally and linguistically appropriate community outreach and  
22 engagement, with a focus on communities of color and low-income communities who may be

1 disproportionately impacted by earthquake damage to URMs and the proposed URM retrofit  
2 requirement;

3 D. Work with the Department of Neighborhoods to design and implement a process to  
4 coordinate and streamline URM retrofits and permitting in historic districts and for landmark  
5 structures;

6 E. Work with the Office of Housing and the Human Services Department to coordinate  
7 the timing of retrofits in URMs containing affordable housing or emergency shelter;

8 F. Work with other City departments to develop strategies to mitigate displacement and  
9 higher commercial and residential rents as a result of URM retrofits;

10 G. Collaborate with Seattle Public Schools and private schools to develop an agreement  
11 on deadlines to complete retrofits for their URMs;

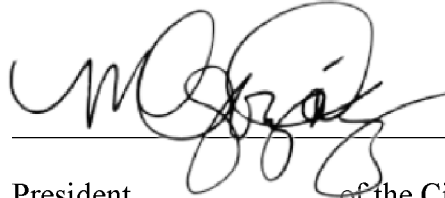
12 H. Work with a public development authority or nongovernmental URM contractor to  
13 develop resources to provide coaching for owners of URMs and serve as a general resource for  
14 residents and building owners about the program;

15 I. Prepare a communication strategy; and

16 J. Submit legislation establishing the mandatory URM retrofit program for Council  
17 consideration.

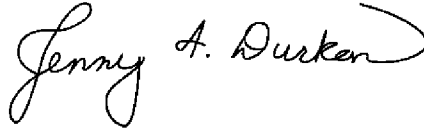
18 Section 4. The Council requests that SDCI, OEM, and other City departments as needed  
19 report quarterly to the Council on progress made toward completing the actions described in  
20 Section 3 of this resolution, and the timeline to complete anticipated actions, with the first report  
21 due on August 1, 2022.

1           Adopted by the City Council the 13th day of December, 2021,  
2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 13th day of  
3 December, 2021.

4 

5           President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

6           The Mayor concurred the 15th day of December, 2021.

7 

8           Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

9           Filed by me this 15th day of December, 2021.

10 

11           Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

12 (Seal)

A panoramic view of the Seattle skyline featuring the Space Needle, various skyscrapers, and Mount Rainier in the background under a clear blue sky.

# Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Program Briefing

Photo by John Skelton



Seattle Department of  
Construction and Inspections

Land Use Committee

May 15, 2024

# SDCI Vision, Purpose, and Values

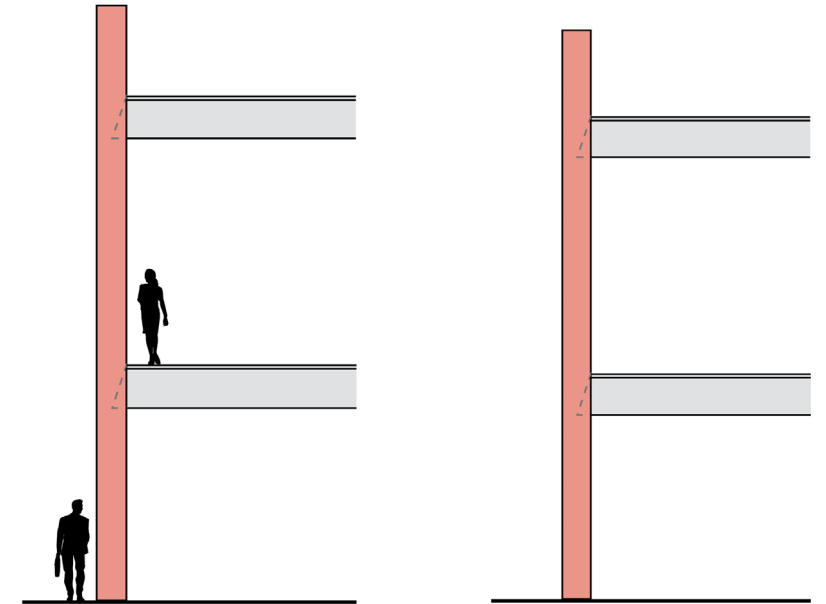
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- **Our vision is** to set the standard for awesome local government service.
- **Our purpose is** helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle.
- **Our values** are equity, respect, quality, integrity, and service.



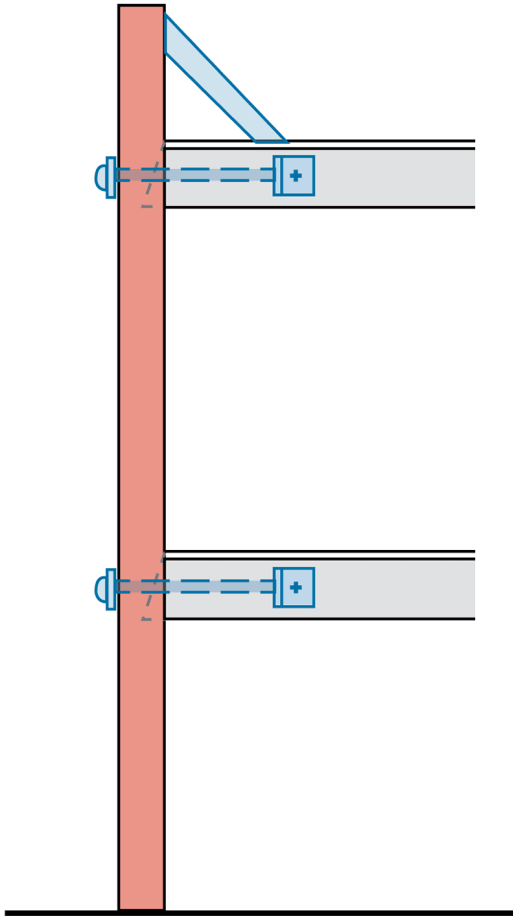
# What is a URM? (Unreinforced Masonry Building)

- Constructed of brick, typically before 1945.
- Bricks are unreinforced, they lack structural support.
- Often Identified by arched windows and header courses.



# By retrofitting, we can reduce the risk of collapse

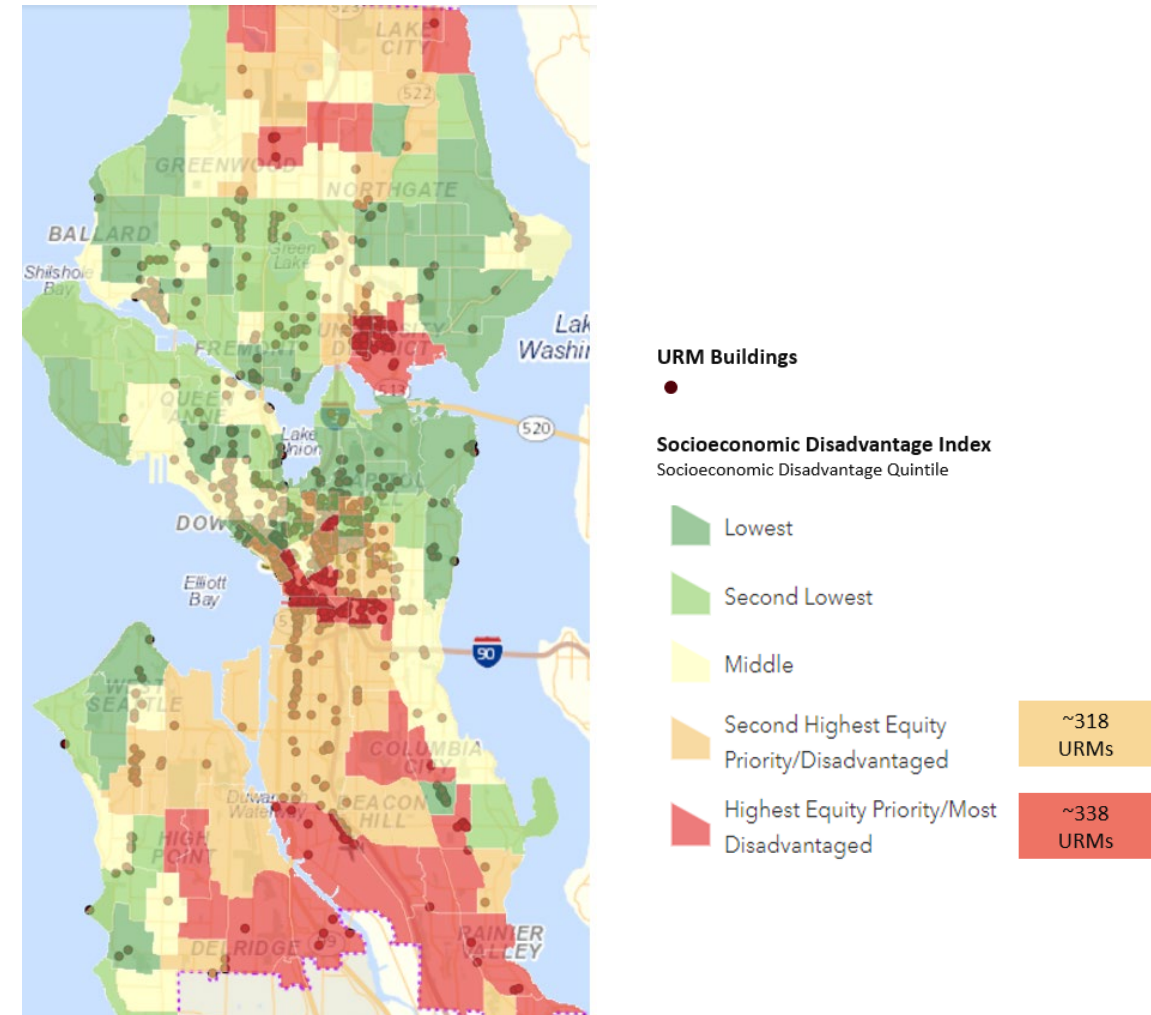
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# Seattle's URMS

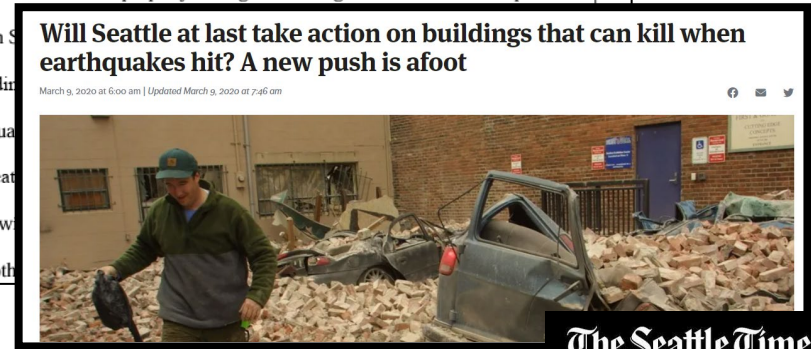
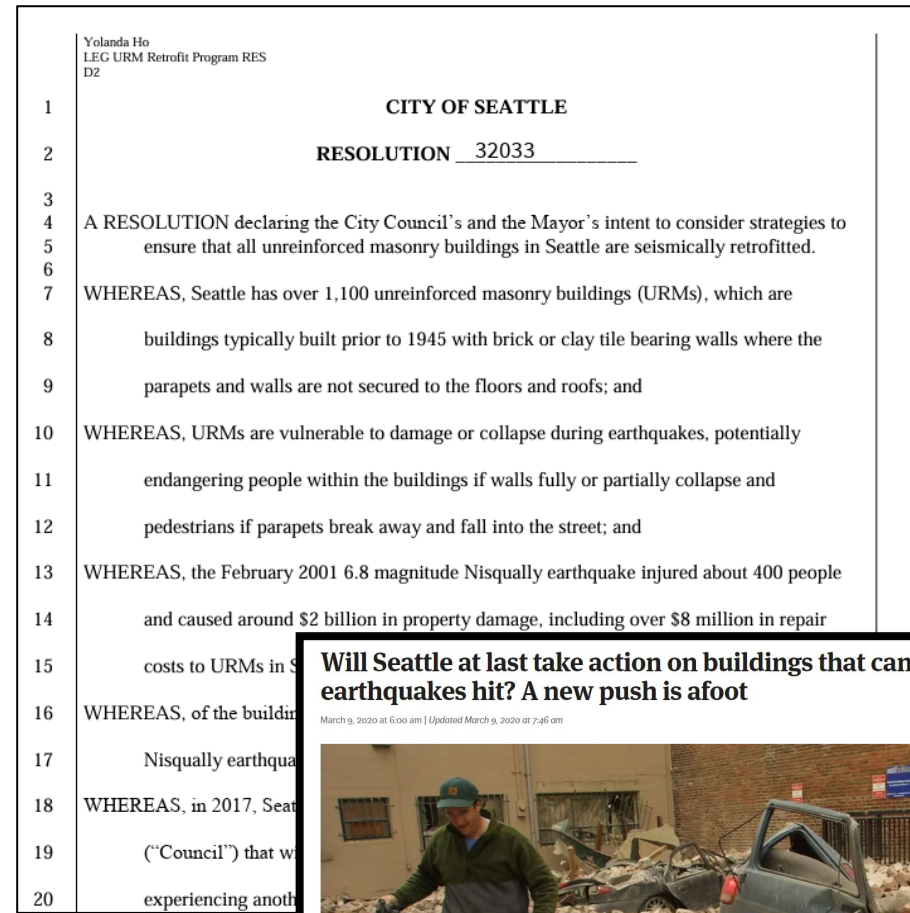
Vulnerability Classification	Number of URMs
<b>Critical vulnerability:</b> emergency service facilities and schools	75
<b>High vulnerability :</b> buildings over three stories in poor soil areas (i.e., liquefaction and slide areas); and buildings containing public assembly spaces with occupancies of more than 100 people	184
<b>Medium vulnerability:</b> all other buildings	883
<b>Total Confirmed URMs</b>	<b>1,142</b>

Number of URMs by classification, September 2021



# 2021 –Joint Council/Mayoral Resolution 32033: Phasing in a mandate for retrofits

- Reduce risk of injury and death from URM collapse for occupants and pedestrians.
- Preserve historically and culturally significant structures.
- Identify a variety of potential funding opportunities and financial incentives to reduce the financial burden of required URM retrofits.
- Continue culturally and linguistically appropriate community outreach and engagement, with a focus on low-income, and communities of color.



# History of Seattle's URM work



# Resolution 32033

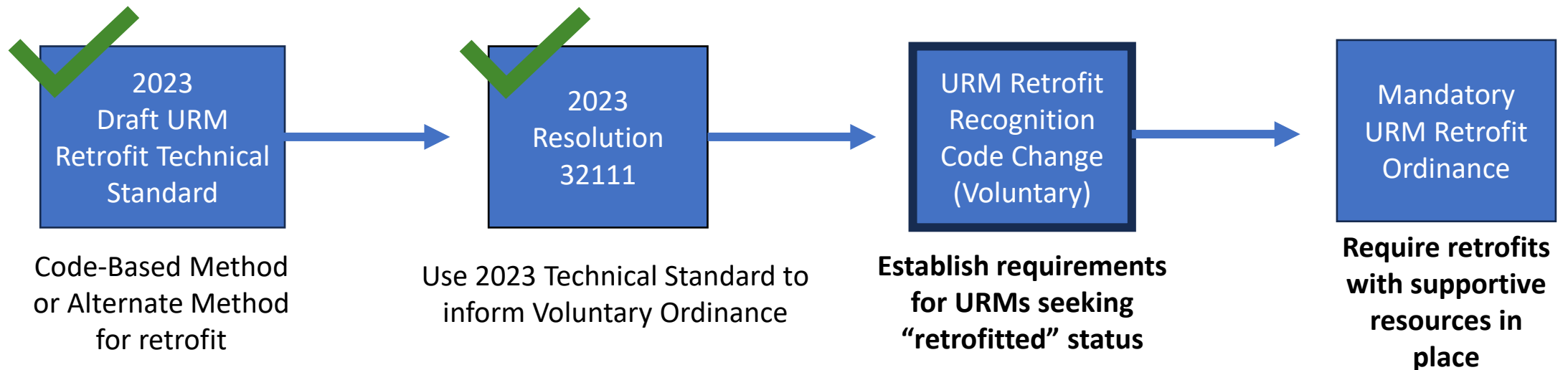
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URM Program is requested to include:

- Definition of URMs
- Identification of the type of seismic retrofit standard required to bring URMs into compliance, depending on type of building
- Categorization system for building types and/or uses that prioritizes key buildings and services
- Timeline for compliance
- Enforcement strategy
- Variety of potential funding opportunities and financial incentives for building owners to alleviate the financial burden of required seismic retrofits for URMs

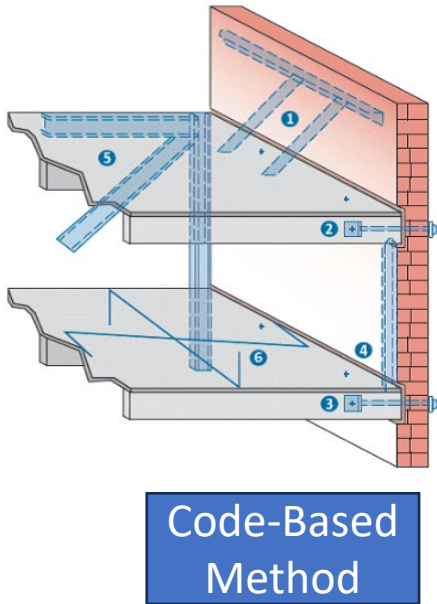
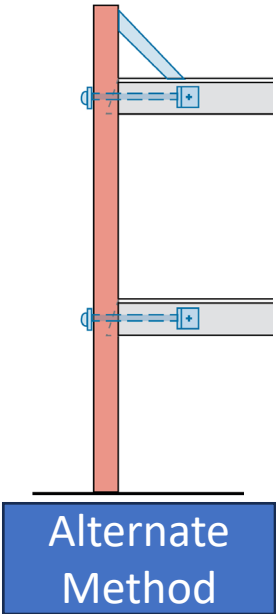
# Pathway to Required URM Retrofits

- Short-term goal: URM Retrofit Recognition Code Change (2024)
  - Defines minimum seismic safety requirements for a “retrofitted” URM building.
  - Establishes the Alternate Method for URM retrofit, minimizing cost and collapse hazard.
  - Encourage voluntary URM retrofits.
- Long-term goal remains establishing a Mandatory URM Retrofit Ordinance.



# Estimated Retrofit Costs (Pre-Covid)

- Alternate Method:  
~\$650,000
- Code-based Method Retrofit:  
~ 3-4x cost
- Total Estimated Cost \$1.3B (2019 dollars)



**Table 2: Average Costs (Per Square Foot) to Retrofit**

Percent of URM inventory:	Bolts+ 23%	Bolts++ Frame 36%	Full Seismic 41%
<b>Construction Costs</b>			
Hard Costs <sup>1</sup>	\$17.32	\$19.24	\$61.99
Sales Tax (10.1%)	\$1.75	\$1.94	\$6.26
Hard Costs Contingency (10%)	\$1.91	\$2.12	\$6.83
<b>Total Hard Costs</b>	<b>\$20.98</b>	<b>\$23.30</b>	<b>\$75.08</b>
Soft Costs (15%) <sup>2</sup>	\$3.15	\$3.50	\$11.26
Soft Costs Contingency (10%)	\$0.31	\$0.35	\$1.13
<b>Total Soft Costs</b>	<b>\$3.46</b>	<b>\$3.85</b>	<b>\$12.39</b>
<b>Total Construction Expenses</b>	<b>\$24.44</b>	<b>\$27.15</b>	<b>\$87.47</b>
<b>Relocation Expenses<sup>3</sup></b>			
	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00
<b>TOTAL (Including Relocation)</b>	<b>\$32.44</b>	<b>\$35.15</b>	<b>\$95.47</b>



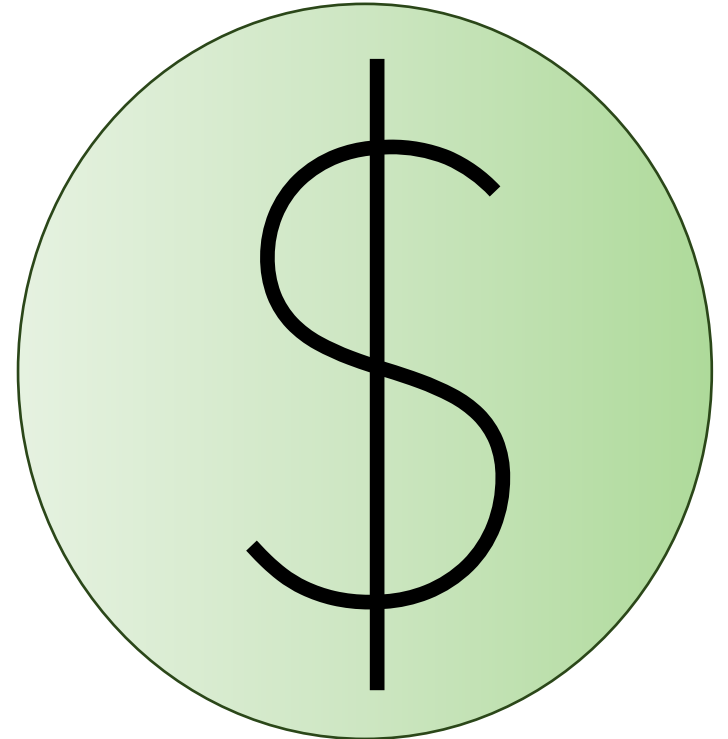
Estimated Costs Per Square Foot  
“Funding URM Retrofits”  
National Development Council, 2019



# Funding Solutions for Consideration

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- Low-interest loans such as C-PACER (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy & Resiliency Program)
- Tax credits for historic preservation, and greenhouse gas reduction
  - Proposed Fall 2024 Legislative Working Session in coordination with WA Emergency Management Division.
- Federal grants
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)



# FEMA BRIC Grant



## Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities

### Phase 1- 2024:

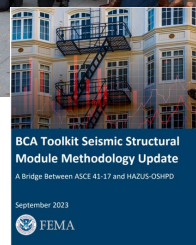
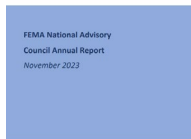
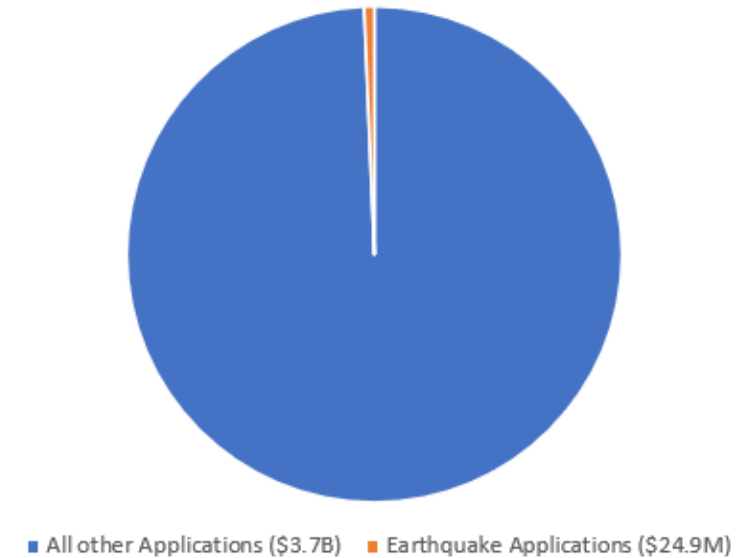
Application submitted to develop “Archetype” Cost-Effective studies for Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square. (Modeled after Berkeley, CA).



### Phase 2-2027\*:

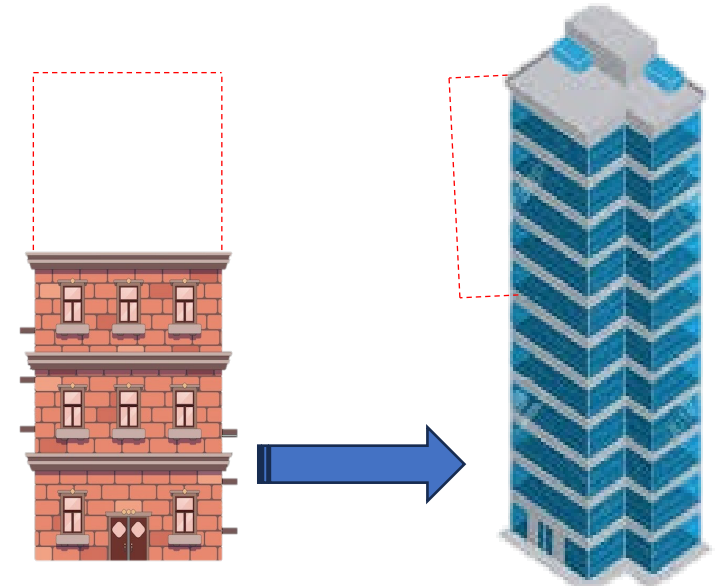
Application to reimburse for design and construction costs in Chinatown/International District.

FEMA BRIC Funding (FY20-22) and Earthquake Project Allocation  
(Data taken from FEMA website BRIC Sub-applicant Status Tables)



# Transfer of Development Rights

- February 27, 2024 Listening Session with OPCD
- Over 50 participants
- Feedback received will inform scope of feasibility study.
- Primary topics:
  - Retrofit cost vs. value of credits
  - Control of TDR market



# URM Next Steps

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## **1. URM Info Session for Chinatown/International District**

- Partnership with Office of Emergency Management
- Proposal to Chinatown-International District Visioning Advisory Group
  - Department of Neighborhoods Coordination

## **2. Adopt URM Retrofit Recognition Code Change- Seattle Existing Building Code (SEBC)**

## **3. SDCI- Hire URM Engineer**

## **4. Preparation for Fall Legislative Working Session**

## **5. Scope TDR Feasibility Study**

## **6. Await FEMA Grant Review**

# Questions?

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Nathan Torgelson

Director, SDCI

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