

2018 Seattle City Council Statement of Legislative Intent

Ready for Notebook

Tab	Action	Option	Version
140	2	A	3

Budget Action Title: SDCI and OED report on outreach to affected communities regarding Seattle's URM building policy

Ongoing: No

Primary Sponsor: Budget Committee

Councilmembers:

Staff Analyst: Eric McConaghy

Date		Total	SB	KH	LG	BH	LH	RJ	DJ	MO	KS
	Yes										
	No										
	Abstain										
	Absent										

Statement of Legislative Intent:

This Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) requests that the Seattle Department of Construction Inspections (SDCI) in cooperation with the Office of Economic Development (OED) deliver a written report to both the Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee and the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development and Arts Committee, or their successor committees, regarding the City's outreach to communities likely to be affected by the adoption of new policies regarding unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings. One, or both, of these Council committees may request a briefing on this matter after receiving and reviewing the report.

A complete report satisfying this SLI will include, at least, specifications for how the City will reach out in multiple languages and describe assistance with non-structural mitigation along with outreach. Non-structural mitigation for earthquake hazards involves increasing the resilience of residents, organizations, and businesses to earthquake hazards in ways that do not involve structural changes to buildings such as anchoring shelves and cabinets, strapping water heaters, securing hazardous materials, and backing up critical information.

Background

Unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings are typically brick structures that were built without steel reinforcement or sufficient structural connections between the building's walls and other structural elements. They are located throughout Seattle, notably in some of the City's oldest neighborhoods and commercial and industrial centers. A seismic retrofit can significantly reduce a URM building's risk of collapse in the event of an earthquake. Collapsed buildings can endanger the lives of the building's occupants and nearby pedestrians, block public rights-of-way for emergency response, and delay overall recovery from the earthquake.

Experts agree that the likelihood of a damaging earthquake that would shake Seattle is significant. SDCI is considering a mandate for all URM buildings to undergo a seismic retrofit. Outreach related to that requirement, particularly in areas with concentrations of URM buildings, such as historic districts, will be necessary to successfully implement the mandate. There are more than 1,100 URM structures within the city limits that are at risk of earthquake damage. The City's URM Policy Committee reports that the cost to retrofit all the at-risk URM structures to the recommended standard could cost up to \$1 billion.

In October 2017, The City's URM Policy Committee briefed the Council on their recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the Executive is expected to work with Council in 2018 to develop new policy and implementing regulations to address the safety of URM buildings. Structural damage to URM buildings from an earthquake and the retrofitting of URM buildings both have potential for the displacement of low income people and/or communities of color. This SLI opens the dialogue between the Legislative and the Executive about how to assist those most vulnerable to the negative effects of a URM mandate while increasing the safety and resilience of Seattle.

Responsible Council Committee(s): Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development and Arts Committee;
Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee

Date Due to Council: March 31, 2018