

Building Permit Extension Legislation



Photo by Tim Durkan



Seattle Department of
Construction & Inspections

Land Use Committee Briefing
April 2, 2025

SDCI VISION, PURPOSE, AND VALUES

- **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.

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

- Proposal would amend the 2021 Seattle Building Code (SBC) to extend permits for projects vested under 2015 and 2018 codes
- This would allow projects delayed due to economic conditions to proceed
- Similar legislation was passed in 2023 to extend Master Use Permit (MUP) lifespans by a year



PROPOSAL

- This legislation would amend the 2021 SBC to permit projects vested under the 2015 and 2018 codes that are experiencing financial hardship by:
 - Providing an additional 24-months to a permit application from the date of the extension request for projects still in review. ~1,100 permits would be able to take advantage of this extension. Without this legislation, they would be subject to cancellation.
 - Allowing a permit to renew for an additional 24-months from the date of the extension request for issued permits. ~1,300 issued permits that will expire prior to Nov 1, 2026 would be able to take advantage of this extension. ~330 permits have had no activity since the end of 2023. Without this legislation, these permits would expire
- This legislation would also create a sunset clause tied to the next Construction Code updates planned for November 2026.

BACKGROUND

- There are 15 projects, mostly downtown, that are delayed due to financing.
- These projects represent:
 - \$13.4M in estimated sales tax revenue
 - \$75M in estimated Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Program fees
 - Thousands of housing units
 - Jobs across a variety of trades

Without this legislation, the permit applications for these projects could be cancelled and the projects abandoned, losing critical housing and tax revenue. Providing the permit extension to these and other SBC permit holders experiencing financial hardship should stimulate development.

BUILDING CODE UPDATES

- The Seattle Building Code (SBC) is updated every three years to improve safety and efficiency.
- Changes include:
 - **2018:** Enhanced seismic safety and energy requirements, changes to size of efficiency dwelling units
 - **2021:** Changes to accessibility standards, allowing a broader use of mass timber, elevator out of service and decommissioning requirements, and greater flexibility in the energy code for existing buildings.

While these updates are important, buildings constructed and vested under the older codes remain safe.

2021 Seattle Building Code

2021 International Building Code®
as AMENDED by the City of Seattle



IMPACT & JUSTIFICATION

- Ensures feasibility of projects, aligning with the Mayor's Downtown Activation Plan.
- Prevents potential loss of critical housing (29,000+ units in progress/approved).
- Provides certainty to developers while maintaining safety standards.

QUESTIONS?

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