Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	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.				
Sponsors:	Lisa Herbold				
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Attachments:	1. Summary and Fiscal Note, 2. Presentation, 3. Central Staff Memo, 4. Proposed Amendment (added; 12/9/21), 5. Signed Resolution 32033, 6. Affidavit of Publication				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
12/15/2021	2	City Clerk	attested by City Clerk	
12/15/2021	2	Mayor	returned	
12/15/2021	2	Mayor	Signed	
12/15/2021	2	City Clerk	submitted for Mayor's signature	
12/13/2021	1	City Council	adopted	Pass
12/9/2021	1	Public Safety and Human Services Committee	adopt as amended	Pass
12/6/2021	1	City Council	referred	
12/2/2021	1	Council President's Office	sent for review	
11/30/2021	1	City Clerk	sent for review	

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

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

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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

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

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by URMs, beginning with the Council's adoption of a structural standard for all URMs in the 1970s, which was later repealed due to the costs of implementing the upgrades; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 1. The Council recognizes that the primary goal of a URM retrofit program should be to protect

life safety by reducing the risk of injury from collapse of URMs in the event of an earthquake. Additional goals of the program should be to preserve 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.

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

A. A definition of URMs;

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

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

D. A timeline for compliance;

E. An enforcement strategy; and

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

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

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

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

C. Continue culturally and linguistically appropriate community outreach and engagement, with a focus on communities of color and low-income communities who may be disproportionately impacted by earthquake damage to URMs and the proposed URM retrofit requirement;

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

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

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

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

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

I. Prepare a communication strategy; and

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

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

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2021, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2021.

_____

President _____ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the _____ day of _____, 2021.

_____

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2021.

_____

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)

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