Moving Action on URM Policy

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Our Purpose

As stewards and regulators of land and buildings, we preserve and enhance equity, livability, safety, and health of our communities.

Our Values

• Respect
• Quality of work
• Equity
• Integrity
• Service
WHAT IS A URM?

- “Red brick” building built before the mid 1900’s
- Brick structure carries the loads
- No reinforcing steel in walls
- Generally minimal ties between walls and floors or roof

DANGERS OF URM

- Falling bricks
- Collapsing walls
- Injuries and loss of life
- No building access
- No access for whole blocks
- Traffic re-routes
- Disrupted services
- Disrupted businesses

Christchurch 2011
The City responded to life safety issues by adopting regulations that had unintended consequences.

- Response to 1965 Puget Sound Earthquake
- Early 1970’s the City imposed retrofit standards for Pioneer Square
- Subsequently rescinded due to the cost of retrofits and building abandonment
URMs IN SEATTLE

- About 1150 buildings
- Throughout the city
- Clustered in older neighborhoods
SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF INVENTORY

- Government-funded affordable housing
- Naturally occurring affordable housing
- Locally-owned, small businesses
- Historically under-represented communities

Challenges

- Displacement
- Communication in world languages
- Mitigation and financial tools
- Make city process accessible to all
CURRENT CITY POLICY

Seismic upgrades triggered when doing work requiring permit

- URM Parapets required to be braced with any permit
- Seismic report and retrofit required when doing “substantial alteration”
  - Typical triggers for substantial alteration
    - Increase in occupant load
    - Extend economic life of building
    - Reoccupy substantially vacant building
TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Two Seattle neighborhood up-zones include TDR/TDP

- Some URMs sending sites for TDR/TDP
- A group of stakeholders is interested in city-wide TDR

Floor area added above current zoning limits through TDP from sending site.
PROACTIVE POLICY

Desired Outcome: Life-safety and community benefits realized prior to emergency increasing likelihood of saving lives and supporting economic recovery

- Reduce risk of damage using modern, proven, engineering solutions
- Lessen post-earthquake repair
- Retrofit costs less than damage repair
- Reduce vacant and damaged buildings post-EQ
- Help owners perform retrofit
POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Proposed Technical Seismic Retrofit Standard created
- URM Retrofit Policy Committee
- Outreach to community groups and benefit-cost analysis
- SDCI validated inventory
- Policy Committee wrote final report
- National Development Council contracted to study financial options (report due soon)
- 2019 mayoral priority: Recommend next steps for URM Policy
  - Includes financial package
PROPOSED URM RETROFIT STANDARD

- “Bolts Plus” proposed standard minimum repairs for URM to improve performance in an earthquake
  - Based on what’s been seen to fail in past events
  - Might help building survive, not intended to preserve the building
  - Intended to improve building performance, save lives and reduce injuries

- Higher levels of retrofit recommended and encouraged
SEATTLE PROPOSED URM POLICY

- Require retrofit all URMs
- Bolts Plus minimum standard
- 7-13 years depending on “risk category”
- Incentives like transfer of development rights, SDCI ombudsman
- Penalties for noncompliance
- Financing options
- One- and two-family dwellings exempt
INFORMATION ON URM POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection URM web page
http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/urm

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