

DPD Comments on URM Policy Committee Draft Recommendations

January 2013

DPD has reviewed the draft recommendations from the URM Policy Committee. These recommendations provide important background information for the City to consider in developing an effective seismic retrofit program for URM buildings. The detailed program elements will be developed after the Policy Committee recommendations are considered.

It is anticipated that all unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings will be required to comply with the ordinance even if notification of the owner does not occur. DPD has completed a windshield survey as a start in identifying URM buildings; however the accuracy or completeness of the list has not been verified.

Before a final ordinance and program is designed, DPD will work with the Law Department ensure that the program is legal within City of Seattle, Washington State and Federal law.

Some of the recommendations to be reviewed include:

- Pre-approved list of contractors and engineers may not comply with the City's Ethics Code
- Withholding construction permits on non-compliant owners may not be legal
- Waiving of permit fees would be a re-allocation of the City's general fund revenue. Permit fees in Washington State must cover costs of permit review (RCW 82.02.020) and are not allowed to be used for other purposes.
- Providing grant money for architectural and engineering design or waiving permit fees may be construed as a gift of public funds
- Suspension of ADA (barrier-free accessibility) requirements in the building code are state and federal regulations that DPD cannot change,

Where possible, if the current regulatory structure would not allow these recommendations, DPD will investigate options that would result in similar outcomes.

DPD will be holding a series of public outreach meetings with community groups to get feedback on the recommendations. Feedback from this outreach will be provided to the Policy Committee for consideration when they reconvene after the cost-benefit analysis is completed.