



Unreinforced Masonry Policy Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary

City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4050, 700 5th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

Thursday, June 28, 2012 – 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Attendance

Committee Members

- Lynda Carey, Bellwether Housing
- Art Frankel, USGS
- Edlira Kuka, Solid Ground
- Paul Mar, SCID Preservation and Development Authority
- Sean Martin, Rental Housing Association
- Rachel Minnery, Environmental Works
- Steve Moddemeyer, Collins Woerman
- Mark Pierepiekarz, MRP Engineering
- Ryan Smith, Martin Smith Inc
- Craig Weaver, USGS
- Eugenia Woo, Historic Seattle

Public

- Charles Davis
- Alan Findlay
- Tonia Sorrell-Neal
- Bill Steele

Staff

- Landon Bosisio, EnviroIssues
- Rebecca Herzfeld, City Council Staff
- Sandy Howard, DPD
- Erika Lund, Office of Emergency Management
- Jon Siu, DPD
- Angie Thomson, Facilitator, EnviroIssues

Welcome and Introductions

Angie Thomson, EnviroIssues, led a round of introductions and recapped the previous meeting. Committee members discussed the timeline for different URM buildings and developed a timeline table for each risk category.

Angie also gave an update on the URM finance subcommittee. The subcommittee will present their recommendations at the July URM committee meeting.

Review of Existing Risk Categories

Angie reviewed the URM building risk factors previously identified during committee discussions: occupancy, size, soil condition, use of building, condition of building, community location, and historic value. Angie asked the group if there are other considerations or risk factors that should be applied to the compliance timeline. Mark Pierepiekarz, MRP Engineering, noted that if the policy's stated goal is life safety, then occupancy is probably the most important risk factor to consider. Art Frankel, USGS, asked if

a building's community location and historic value could change a building's risk category. Angie responded that the committee will try to answer that question.

Rachel Minnery, Environmental Works, stated that "historic" could be defined by a building's year of construction, but that is different than a building which has a historic use to the community. Mark added that historic does not necessarily mean a designated historic landmark. Angie noted that the committee has previously discussed this topic and agreed that just because a building is not designated as historic, does not mean the building is not or will not become historic. Mark agreed, but pointed out that much of this is subjective and difficult to judge. Sandy Howard, DPD, noted that the Pike/Pine area in Capitol Hill defines many of its buildings as "character" buildings.

Ryan Smith, Martin Smith Inc, said he thinks the risk consideration should only apply to buildings that are designated as historic landmarks. Classifying buildings that are potentially historic into a higher risk category ultimately penalizes the building and its owner. Conversely, the policy should try to preserve buildings that have a historic use. Lynda Carey, Bellwether Housing, wondered if there could be a financial incentive, perhaps from the Department of Neighborhoods, for buildings that are on track for a historic building designation.

Rachel asked why there was an interest in qualifying these buildings into categories. Jon Siu, DPD, noted that the differing timelines will make the policy easier for the City to administer. It will also give owners interim deadlines to keep moving towards compliance. Ryan suggested that there should be a greater time difference between risk categories – 10-15 years overall.

Sandy reviewed the risk categories and implementation timelines of other jurisdictions in California. All use risk categories to determine an implementation framework. The jurisdictions vary, however, in the number of categories and criteria used to determine each category. Jon noted that one of the City's key goals for the URM policy is to figure out which buildings need to be retrofitted as soon as possible to preserve life safety. Eugenia Woo, Historic Seattle, asked how historic buildings were taken into account by the California jurisdictions. Sandy responded that jurisdictions each had a unique approach to historic buildings.

Discussion of Compliance and Risk Categories

Angie asked the committee to discuss the assignment of risk categories to specific kinds of URM buildings and the compliance timeline associated with those categories. Paul Mar, SCID Preservation and Development Authority, stated that the committee needs to look at a combination of risk factors, not just one, when determining specific risk categories. Edlira Kuka, Solid Ground, put forward the factors of size and occupancy, as well as community location, as a starting point.

Lynda asked whether the shape of buildings should be considered, noting that she owns an H-shaped building that has more risk than other buildings because of its geometric shape. Ryan responded that shape should be considered in the description of the building's condition, but the City may also have specific occupancy levels to consider. The group decided that the high-risk category should include buildings with an assembly of greater than 300 people, schools, and any URM building greater than 3

stories on earthquake-prone soil. Assembly is defined by the City as a place where people gather, not a building's occupant load.

Ryan asked if taller buildings are at more risk than other buildings. Jon answered that taller URM buildings are generally more susceptible to collapse than shorter URM buildings. Ryan suggested the highest risk category should only include emergency and critical buildings – everything else would then fall into the medium- and low-risk categories.

Rachel asked to revisit the retrofit timeline. She suggested the high-risk category timeline be ten years or less, if feasible. Mark agreed and asked how many buildings would fall into the high-risk category as it is currently defined. Jon answered that it would likely be 50 buildings or so, including schools, first responders and churches that could be used as shelters in the case of an emergency. Steve Moddemeyer, Collins Woerman, asked if the critical facilities could be classified as their own category with an expedited timeline for retrofits. The group agreed and created a new category for critical facilities along with high- and medium-risk categories.

Charles Davis, Washington Federal, stated that in the case of an earthquake event, first responders will go first to big buildings such as schools. He suggested the committee reclassify buildings from the high-risk category as critical facilities, noting that the City will be hindering its own recovery process by not protecting those buildings. After discussion, the committee agreed on the following risk categories:

- *Critical-risk: schools and critical facilities (hospitals, fire stations, etc.) – 7 years to comply with a retrofit program*
- *High-risk: buildings greater than 3 stories on poor soil or with more than 300 occupants in assembly – 10 years to comply with a retrofit program*
- *Medium-risk: all other URM buildings – 13 years to comply with a retrofit program*

Sandy noted that the majority of the commercial URM buildings in the City are one story. Steve pointed out that many URM building owners will choose not to comply, dragging out the policy's timeline for several more years. Bill Steele, University of Washington, asked how the committee would categorize child care centers. Jon answered that the City considers child care centers to be in a higher risk category, but are not classified as schools due to their size. Erika Lund, Office of Emergency Management, added that there are other vulnerable populations, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities, that should be classified within the high-risk category. Mark stated that after visiting Haiti following the earthquake, he is convinced that ensuring the life safety of children should be the policy's top priority.

The group discussed the threshold size for daycare facilities, with some suggestion that over 50 children in a center makes a building high risk. If the center is any smaller, the policy would penalize buildings who have potential daycare tenants and make it difficult for daycares to relocate without triggering a stricter compliance timeline. Mark responded that daycares with 50 kids or more should be classified in the critical category because kids are often at the facility for 10 or more hours a day. Charles suggested that the City look into the number of daycares that are tenants of URM buildings. Angie suggested that

the committee report should capture the discussion regarding daycare facilities, but that the ultimate decision could be made by city staff.

Steve brought up the topic of compliance and enforcement. Enforcement for some buildings might take three years or more, which could alter the timeline for medium-risk buildings. Ryan proposed that enforcement be part of the compliance timeframe. Buildings would need to show their progress halfway through the compliance period. Steve expressed agreement with the idea. Ryan suggested the medium-risk category timeline be stretched to 15 years, with 9 years for compliance. This would allow owners enough time to design a retrofit, apply and receive a permit, and then implement the retrofit while dealing with tenant phases and moving occupants around to accommodate work.

Mark noted the committee’s first discussion regarding avoiding devastated neighborhoods. He asked to see how many buildings would be in each risk category so the group can visualize how things would look in the case of an earthquake event. Rachel said she is concerned about the potential for public impact from damaged URM buildings, such as on sidewalks. She asked for a visual representation of where many of the buildings stand. Jon stated that there are not many buildings that would not have an impact to the public right-of-way. Angie told the group that City staff will look the committee’s requests and readdress the issue at the committee’s July meeting.

Ryan asked if buildings will be placed into a risk category based on the building’s condition, even though all buildings will undergo an assessment. Angie answered that the City will likely be assigning buildings to a risk category before an assessment is conducted. Jon added that the assessment could provide evidence if the building is in the wrong category and the timeline for compliance could change as a result.

The committee agreed in principle to the following timeline:

Potential Timeline for URM Policy Compliance			
	Critical-Risk URMs	High-Risk URMs	Medium-Risk URMs
Notification	year 0	year 0	year 0
Assessment	+1 year	+2 years	+3 years
Apply for permit	+1 year	+2 years	+2 years
Approve permit	+1 year	+1 year	+1 year
Compliance	+4 years	+ 5 years	+ 7 years
Total time allowed (notification to compliance)	7 years	10 years	13 years

Stakeholder Engagement Update

Angie said the City has heard from committee members that many URM building owners do not know this policy process is underway. She asked the group for feedback and suggestions on how to reach out to URM building owners. Sandy noted that DPD did an article with the Daily Journal of Commerce on the policy as part of a press release. The City also has a listserv for anyone who would like additional

information. All URM committee meetings are open to the public and meeting materials are posted online. In addition, Councilman Richard Conlin would like to talk to building owners and occupants to gauge their feelings on the URM policy. The City plans to have a large outreach push in the near future, with representatives talking to residents in URM-heavy neighborhoods. DPD will also be sending out a letter to all URM building owners to explain the committee's work and notify them that they own a building that would be considered by the policy.

Lynda asked if the City could settle owners' anxiety by telling them that the compliance timeline will take more than two or three years. Steve warned that a letter now could spark people's fears without the inclusion of helpful information. He suggested the letter point out a date to when the final report will be released and when the policy could be passed.

Lynda gave credit to Sandy and Jon for their previous outreach work and presentations to the non-profit she belongs to. She recommended the City also provide outreach on the policy to BOMA and other building owner organizations. Rebecca Herzfeld, City Council staff, suggested going to a few of the city's preservations boards, such as the Pioneer Square Preservation Board.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Angie reviewed the committee's compliance timeline and noted that the committee will have continued opportunities to review the policy's risk categories and compliance timeline.

Action Items for DPD:

- Continue finance sub-committee discussions to further review funding options and recommendations for URM retrofits.
- Find out how many daycare and child care centers are tenants of URM buildings.
- Provide a list of URM buildings that would fit within each current risk category.
- Provide a visual representation of where URM buildings are located.

Angie thanked all participants for attending the meeting. The next URM policy committee meeting will take place on July 26th from 8:30am – 10:00am, in SMT 4050. The committee will discuss the URM finance subcommittee's recommendations for funding options as well as recap the group's previous areas of agreement.