Why Retrofit URMs

- **Safety**: Falling bricks from these URMs pose a safety hazard to building occupants, as well as passers-by on the adjacent streets.
- **Equity**: Many URMs house low-income and immigrant tenants and business owners, so these more vulnerable populations could be disproportionately impacted by the new policy.
- **Economics**: Damaged URMs slow the recovery of neighborhoods by blocking off access points affected by the loss of these buildings resulting in loss of workplaces and jobs.
- **Environment**: Preserving these buildings would conserve energy by not building new structures and not adding the construction waste to our landfills.
- **Community Character**: URMs contribute to community character and their damage or loss is a loss of community history. In many cases, losing URMs damages historic character in the surrounding community, or their potential to serve as an anchor for recovery.

Current City Policy

- We require seismic upgrades for projects that require a permit
- We require walls extending higher than the roof (parapets) to be braced
- We require a seismic assessment for a major renovation (substantial alteration)

Technical Committee

- Established the least costly, but effective, seismic retrofit standard to reduce the likelihood of URM collapses during an earthquake.
- Created a retrofit standard intended to protect the lives of building inhabitants and those nearby.
- The standard is not expected to prevent damage to the building in moderate-to-large earthquakes.

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**Unreinforced Masonry (URM)**

URMs are brick buildings constructed without steel reinforcements, ties, and connections in their bearing walls that are required by modern building codes. Most URMs were built before 1940.

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**What is a URM?**

- Header/Tie Course
- Beam Pocket

**How are URM bearing wall buildings constructed?**

- Header/Tie Course
- FLOOR
- WALL
DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS: Recommendations January 2013

- Threshold for retrofit requirement – one- and two-unit residential structures are exempt
- Timeline for retrofit – 7-13 years, based on the risk category
- Incentives tools – to retrofit beyond proposed technical standard and assistance with the retrofit program
- Enforcement – to ensure compliance with program steps
- Funding Options – to help with retrofit costs

Incentive Objectives  *Encourage retrofits beyond the policy’s minimum requirements*
- Encourage early participation in the program
- Build broad-based support with effective outreach and education
- Make the program easy for building owners to understand and for the City to implement

Enforcement Concepts
- Use the established SDCI notice of violation (NOV) process
- Have strong penalties that increase the severity of fines for building owners who skip the process steps
- Send notice to tenants when the building owner is not in compliance with the program
- Post signs on buildings and on-line to recognize retrofitted buildings

Minimize the Cost of Retrofits  *Provide funding support options for property owners*
- Provide a listing of FEMA/CDBG/other grants; architecture/engineering grants and resources; and education funding
- Create general obligation bonds or a levy
- Provide tax incentives by offering a 10 percent building tax credit or a 20 percent historic building tax credit
- Create a city-revolving loan fund
- Offer transfer of development rights (TDRs) incentives

Outreach and Education - Columbia City Outreach Pilot  November 2013
- To learn the most effective means of communication whether flyers, big or small community meetings, or one-on-one meetings
- Create an appropriate message to all audiences, including owners, tenants, and community
- Develop a tool kit including infographics

Program Development (anticipated schedule):
- Q4 – 2016: Reconvene URM Policy Committee to finalize policy recommendations
- Q1-Q2 - 2017: Final recommendations

SDCI - URM web pages
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/changestocode/unreinforcedmasonrybuildings/whatwhy/