



**Unreinforced Masonry Policy Committee Meeting  
Meeting Summary**

**City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development  
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4050, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104  
Tuesday, January 18, 2017, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

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**Attendance**

*Committee Members*

- Manish Chalana, University of Washington
- Mark Chubb, ManitouNW LLC
- Art Frankel, USGS
- Bob Freitag, University of Washington
- Bryan Zagers, Coughlin Porter Lundeen (for Terry Lundeen)
- Paul Mar, SCID Preservation and Development Authority
- Mark Pierepiekarz, MRP Engineering
- Tom Pittsford, University of Washington
- Michale Robinson, A.I.D. Development
- Ryan Smith, Martin Smith Inc.
- Eugenia Woo, Historic Seattle

*Staff & Presenters*

- Sarah Belz, DON
- A.J. Cari, OED
- Nancy Devine, SDCI
- Erin Doherty, DON
- Dan Foley, Office of Housing
- Barb Graff, OEM
- Shauna Larsen, SDCI
- Alan Lee, Council Staff
- Quinn Majeski, Mayor's Office
- Eric McConaghy, Council Staff
- T.J. McDonald, OEM
- Audrey Musewe, EnviroIssues
- Laurel Nelson, OEM
- Jon Siu, SDCI
- Angie Thomson, Facilitator, EnviroIssues
- Nathan Torgelson, SDCI

**Introduction and Agenda Overview**

Angie Thomson, EnviroIssues, greeted the audience and committee members and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Angie went on to make introductory comments and gave a brief recap of the past policy committee meeting. Today's meeting would be a wrap up of discussion from the last meeting and a review of the draft policy committee recommendations to identify any necessary updates.

**Overview of Comments**

Nancy Devine, SDCI, gave a short overview of comments received from the public via emails and phone calls. Comments included:

- Concern that the cost to retrofit residential buildings would be passed on to the tenants and affect the low-income housing.

- Question as to whether subsidies would be available for qualifying buildings.
- Support for a city ombudsman role to help implement the policy.
- Desire for predictable standards for building retrofit requirements.
- Questions about financial support that might be available retroactively.
- Thoughts on how fast the committee can finalize the recommendation and how quickly retrofits can be completed.
- Concern that co-ops can only get loans through co-op banks, which is an additional challenge for these owners.
- Desire for concrete building to be included in the proposal.

### **URM Benefit Cost Analysis Discussion**

Angie returned the committee to the Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) discussion. The committee has had several presentations addressing this topic over time, and the group was asked how they'd like to resolve the BCA discussion. One committee member noted that the organization of the City's webpage appears to indicate support for the 2014 BCA, which showed very low benefit to cost ratios for URM retrofits. There are many buildings where in fact the benefit ratio exceeds two, and the 2014 BCA report understates the benefits of retrofits. Another committee member said that the 2014 BCA study only considered three scenarios and underestimated losses, including community disruption and lack of certainty. The committee suggested developing an explicit statement to acknowledge the uncertainties that come with a retrofit policy, as well as the benefits to the city, community, and property owners. Angie suggested the group develop a statement that identifies the issues and the concerns regarding BCA information that has been presented to the committee from several sources. Bob Freitag, Mark Chubb and Mark Pierepiekarz agreed to work with SDCI to develop a statement for the group to review, and will consider existing language developed for the committee and previous BCA discussions as a starting place.

### **Policy Committee Recommendations**

The committee reviewed several elements of their earlier recommendations to discuss any potential concerns or changes now that more information has been presented to the group.

**Mandatory policy:** The group confirmed that the retrofits should be mandatory, but there should be process for appeal. One committee member noted that there should be some flexibility if building owners wanted to adjust the timeline to do a full building retrofit all at one time (opposed to unit by unit).

**Building category:** The group confirmed that the retrofit policy will apply to buildings of three units or greater.

**Risk categories:** The group confirmed critical risk buildings would include schools and hospitals, high risk buildings would include buildings above three (3) stories on poor soil or with 100 or more occupants and medium risk buildings would include all other unreinforced masonry buildings greater than two units. For clarity, the group decided to use the term 'vulnerability' instead of 'risk', because risk is used in many other contexts.

**Timeline:** The group confirmed that the timeline for compliance will be 7 years for buildings categorized as critically vulnerable, 10 years for highly vulnerable, and 13 years for medium vulnerability.

The committee considered whether there is existing capacity in the professional community to complete 1,150 assessments in the first three years after the policy is enacted. One member suggested that the engineering community could develop tools to streamline the assessment process. Other committee members noted that incentives would be important to encourage people to move through the assessment and permitting process in the first years instead of waiting until the deadline.

### **Audience Comments**

Angie opened the floor for comments from the audience. Several audience members commented on the need to provide financial support and incentives to property owners to complete mandatory retrofits. Another audience member noted that the city's affordable housing buildings often don't fall within the real estate cycle, which should be considered. The last commenter mentioned that commercial buildings serve as incubators for small businesses, so retrofits will result in unavoidable economic loss when those businesses must close for the work to be completed.

### **Funding**

Angie asked the group to revisit the funding discussion. Some of the suggestions offered by the group included:

- Financial support for completing engineering reports and assessments
- Low interest loans offered from banks, along with tools to help owners understand financing options (Project Impact as an example)
- City-sponsored meeting with representatives of the financial community to talk about private dollars and public benefit (San Francisco as an example)
- Form a local improvement district to provide funds for low-interest loans to property owners
- A combination of revenue bonds and grants from the government, such as a tax-exempt security bond or a revolving loan fund coupled with an LID

City staff suggested that the group focus on the overall concept of the funding mechanisms, as opposed to working out the details of a revolving fund. A suggestion was made to hear lessons learned from the Waterfront LID process.

### **Comments**

Angie opened the floor for comments from the audience. One commenter noted that after a retrofit was completed, a building would not actually increase in value. He noted that since there are no benefits accruing to private property owners, the door should be open for more public funding

### **Closing**

Angie closed the meeting by thanking everyone and stating that enforcement and tools would be discussed at the next (and final) meeting.