

Mandatory Seismic Upgrading Bylaws

Planning and Land Use Committee – July 23, 2015



2015-2018 City Strategic Plan Objective

- Council identified a specific 2015 action under Objective 12: Plan for Emergencies Including Climate Change, Short and Long Term, as follows:
- *“Explore potential for City to require upgrades to heritage buildings for seismic protection even where use is not changed, combined with subsidy program.”*

Examples from the United States

- **City of Los Angeles**
 - In force since 1981, coupled with funding from the State of California
- **City of San Francisco**
 - In force since 1992
 - Additional mandatory upgrade bylaw enacted in 2013, coupled with interest-free loans program paid by the City
- **City of Seattle**
 - Repealed in 1973

Municipal Authority in British Columbia

- *Community Charter*
 - Grants municipal governments authority to regulate building “local building requirements”
- *Building Act – Bill 3*
 - Will eliminate the “concurrent authority” powers under the *Community Charter*
 - Includes a 2-year transitional period

Impacts of Mandatory Upgrades

- Ensure heritage and unreinforced structures are up to code and perform better in case of earthquake
- Potential to create major disincentive for ownership of heritage/unreinforced buildings
- Municipal approach could isolate Victoria and may drive investment elsewhere

Potential Path of Action

- Explore policy changes at the Provincial level that would support mandatory seismic upgrading.
- Financial assistance strategies, (e.g. tax exemptions, interest-free loans) would be required to significantly ameliorate the costs placed on affected property owners.

Recommendation

Engage with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the Provincial Government to examine the following:

1. Provincial policy changes that would support seismic upgrading of existing buildings within earthquake-prone regions.
2. Examination of policy tools to ensure regulations do not create an excessive financial disincentive for property-owners to upgrade heritage and unreinforced structures.