



URM Buildings: Procedure to Appeal URM Building Designation

The following process is available to owners who wish to appeal SDCI's determination that their building is a Unreinforced Masonry (URM) building in the [Database](#) of potential Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Buildings. The 2021 Seattle Existing Building Code defines a URM building as *"a building where one or more URM walls provide the primary support for vertical loads from floors or roofs and the URM walls rely on the tensile strength of masonry units, mortar and grout in resisting design loads."*

1. Owner hires WA State licensed Structural Engineer.
2. Engineer evaluates the building to determine if it is a URM building. Potential resources include:
 - a. SDCI-approved plans (e.g., via [microfilm research](#))
 - b. Privately held plans or construction documents (e.g. university archives, library, etc.)
 - c. Visual survey
 - d. Other methods (open up walls, minor demo, etc.)
3. Engineer writes a report:
 - a. Evaluation must be accompanied by information that supports the engineer's conclusions. See Item 2 above.
 - b. The report must contain conclusive evidence to overturn SDCI's URM determination
 - c. Report must bear the seal and signature of a licensed Structural Engineer
4. Submit report to SDCI:
 - a. Each URM challenge is documented through a Land Use Analysis Request record that will remain associated with the property. This record will contain uploaded relevant documents, SDCI review comments (if any), and it will serve as the record of SDCI's final decision.
 - b. You can apply for this Land Use Analysis Request via the [Seattle Services Portal](#) , with this [Help Article](#) to assist.
 - c. Upload the report and supporting documentation to the Portal **and** send a notifying email to SCI_URM@seattle.gov.
 - d. SDCI Review Fee (equal to 1 hour of the base rate per the [SDCI Fee Subtitle](#)) must be paid at the time of submittal. The fee will be waived and refunded if the appeal is approved.
5. SDCI will review the report and will make one of the following determinations based on submitted materials only:
 - a. Confirm that the building is not a URM building
 - b. Request further information for clarification
 - c. Deny removal from the database
6. SDCI notifies owner of decision in writing whether the building will be removed from the URM database.
 - a. If an appeal request is granted the SDCI fee may be refunded. Refund instructions will be included in the URM Appeal Decision Letter.
7. Challenges that have been denied may be re-filed if new supporting information is provided. This additional review will be charged the SDCI base hourly rate.
8. Owners may request decisions be administratively reviewed, first by the Principal Engineer, then by the Construction Codes Advisory Board, in accordance with the Seattle Building Code.