



Dear Property Owner,

Many historic buildings in downtown Tacoma and throughout Washington State were built with Unreinforced Masonry (URM). URMs are old, brick buildings typically built before 1977. These buildings — which represent a significant era of Tacoma's history and continue to serve as homes of our local businesses and community activity — can represent a significant risk in the event of a major earthquake.

In partnership with the Emergency Management Division (EMD) and Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP), the City of Tacoma has been selected to pilot a volunteer-led effort to map URMs.

Our team of volunteers is conducting field surveys to collect visual data to update the existing, but incomplete, URM database maintained by the state. EMD seeks to understand the extent of the safety risks in Washington to better prepare for potential future disasters. Additionally, a complete, accurate state-wide database of URMs will allow EMD and DAHP to work with legislators to explore potential funding opportunities for risk mitigation.

**These efforts are intended to increase safety and advocate for essential state resources** to mitigate risks. You may be aware of recent Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections efforts to introduce an ordinance requiring seismic retrofits to URMs in Seattle — with that in mind, we want to assure you that the City of Tacoma and State of Washington **do not** have plans to require retrofits to URMs.

Our volunteers have been trained to collect visual data in a non-intrusive and respectful manner. We are asking for your cooperation in this important effort. We recognize that you may have questions or concerns about the program — contact information for the entities involved in the pilot program are available below.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Quyen Thai  
Principal Plans Examiner | MCP, CBO, CFM  
Community Floodplain Manager | CFM

**For questions about the Tacoma Pilot Program and state-wide database efforts:**

Brian Terbush  
Emergency Management Division  
[Brian.Terbush@mil.wa.gov](mailto:Brian.Terbush@mil.wa.gov)  
(253) 512-7075