



City of Huntington Beach Planning Department
STUDY SESSION REPORT

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Scott Hess, AICP, Director of Planning
BY: Hayden Beckman, Planning Aide *HB*
DATE: July 14, 2009

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 08-010 (ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS ELEMENT)

LOCATION: Citywide

PROJECT REQUEST AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Huntington Beach requests General Plan Amendment No. 2008-010 to incorporate language within the Environmental Hazards Element of the General Plan to identify the City's adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and establish an as necessary basis for review, maintenance, and update.

The Environmental Hazards Element of the City's General Plan functions as a basis for geologic and seismic safety review, identifying and evaluating associated risks to residents and property within Huntington Beach such as surface geology, liquefaction, tsunami, and flooding. The subject Element outlines issues coupled with such risks and presents the goals, objectives, policies and implementation programs for each hazard.

The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires local governments to adopt comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) in order to receive additional federal funding following a disaster. The Huntington Beach/Fountain Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) was approved in October 2004 by City Council Resolution 2004-85 and had been developed in a collaborative effort between the cities of Huntington Beach and Fountain Valley, including Fire Departments, various local school districts, public volunteers, private sector representatives and state and federal agencies.

State law currently requires local general plans to discuss safety hazards and federal law requires local governments to adopt HMPs in order to receive federal financial assistance following natural disasters. Assembly Bill 2140, passed by the State legislature in 2006, limits the amount of post-disaster reimbursement a city may receive from the state to 75% unless local governments incorporate an HMP as a part of an adopted general plan's safety element. The incorporation of the proposed reference language would comply with the requirements of Assembly Bill 2140 and would qualify the City of Huntington Beach to receive up to 100% of post-disaster reimbursement costs for qualified projects. Additionally, adopting the current HMP by reference would allow future changes to the HMP to occur without processing a General Plan Amendment.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINES

DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION:

General Plan Amendment – Not Applicable

MANDATORY PROCESSING DATE(S):

Not Applicable

CEQA ANALYSIS/REVIEW

The request is Categorical Exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) which states that a project is exempt from CEQA where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.

COMMENTS FROM CITY DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

The proposed amendments to the Environmental Hazards Element were circulated to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for review. Staff has not received any comments.

PUBLIC MEETINGS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

No public meetings to date have been held regarding the request.

PLANNING ISSUES

The primary issue for the Planning Commission to consider when analyzing this request relates to the findings necessary to approve the request as they pertain to the incorporation of reference language within the current Environmental Hazards Element identifying the local Hazards Mitigation Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Amendments of the Environmental Hazards Element

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STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Government Code Section 65302 (g) states the following:

“The General Plan shall include a safety element for the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope stability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wild land and urban fires.”

This Element addresses flooding as it pertains to geologic, seismic and soils hazards. This Environmental Hazards Element and the referenced materials together satisfy the geologic and seismic portion of the Section 65302 (g) requirement.

TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS

This Element of the General Plan is the first step in a comprehensive update to be completed for the geologic and seismic safety issues. This Element, when used in conjunction with Appendix A, the 1974 City of Huntington Beach Seismic Safety Element (the operative document on file with the California Department of Conservation Division of Mines and Geology), and the referenced materials, serves as an adequate basis for a geologic and seismic safety review. A regional perspective is provided to establish the geologic/seismic context for the City. Figures EH-1 through EH-11 are used to summarize the types and level of geologic/seismic hazards present in the City.

Most of the geologic and seismic hazards that have the potential to impact the City are due to the active Newport-Inglewood fault, the shallow water table, and the relatively loose nature of recent sedimentary deposits. Individually, or in combination, these factors may generate surface fault rupture, severe ground shaking, subsidence, methane, and other relatively minor hazards. Each of these hazards has been identified and described in the following sections: Surface Geology, Liquefaction, Tsunami and Seiche, Subsidence, Methane, Flooding, and Other Minor Geologic and Soil Engineering Hazards. **A local Hazards Mitigation Plan has been prepared in conjunction with adjacent jurisdictions and local school districts to mitigate risks from natural disasters and is referenced in this element.**

A. SURFACE GEOLOGY

The City of Huntington Beach lies on a coastal plain above recently deposited sediment. The sediment is deposited on top of older bedrock formations buried thousands of feet below the surface. These recent sedimentary deposits originally accumulated in beach, river, bay, and estuary environments at or near sea level. However, due to ongoing seismic uplift and folding, these deposits now form mesas at higher elevations. Subsequent erosion from wave action has produced coastal bluffs exposing these deposits.

Policy

EH 6.2.1

Establish standards of construction within identified peat zones. (I-EH 4)

Objective

EH 6.3

Increase public awareness about the location and hazards of peat conditions. (I-EH 8)

Policy

EH 6.3.1

Provide information to the public regarding peat condition areas and proper construction methods and standards. (I-EH 8)

All Hazards

Goal

EH 7

Ensure the safety of the public, to the greatest extent feasible, from the impacts of a natural disaster.

Policy

EH 7.1.1

Maintain and update as necessary the current local Hazards Mitigation Plan (HMP) as part of the Environmental Hazards Element. The HMP includes resources and information to help reduce risks and prevent losses from future natural disasters. (I-EH 1)

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

I-EH 1

Studies/Mapping/Master Plans

a. Conduct, prepare and/or update the following as funding permits:

- comprehensive mapping of seismic/geologic hazard areas in the City, including fault locations, unstable soils and slope locations, areas of high liquefaction potential, areas of high seiche potential and locations of shallow water table depth;
- maps of potential bluff erosion areas;
- maps of existing methane seepage areas;
- methane level monitoring on an on-going basis;

- comprehensive mapping of flooding potential hazard areas in the City;
- comprehensive mapping of groundwater potential hazard areas in the City;
- comprehensive mapping of peat potential hazard areas in the City;
- challenges to flood zone boundaries that appear to be unreasonable or incorrect;
- a Local Drainage Master Plan assessing improvements necessary to achieve 100-year capacity for the local flood control system;
- request that the Orange County Surveyor update its Subsidence Book report through 1993 for the Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach Pump station, and Huntington Beach. The City shall perform an evaluation of the data to assess possible subsidence at the oil field and drilling areas underlying the City. Based on the results of this evaluation a mitigation program for reducing the potential hazards shall be prepared for use by the City;⁴³
- a Grading and Geotechnical Investigation Guidelines manual which will outline the minimum proper soils engineering and engineering geologic study for all sites where grading will occur. Topics shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, soils engineering and foundations, erosion control, peat and organic soils, slope stability, erosion, liquefaction and dynamic settlement, shallow groundwater, and fault location/activity. This manual shall be available at the permit stage prior to initial feasibility and design studies in order to enhance the development review and environmental review processes;⁴⁴
- a Methane Hazards Guidance manual which will outline methane overlay districts, standards of construction, definition of additional hazards areas, and hazard mitigation. This manual

⁴³ Mitigation Measure GS-20 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

⁴⁴ Mitigation Measure GS-1, GS-8, and GS-19 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

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shall be available at the permit stage prior to initial feasibility and design studies in order to enhance the development review and environmental review processes;⁴⁵

- an assessment of potential damage to essential utility and transportation infrastructure and public service facilities due to geologic/seismic hazards. The findings of the assessment should be utilized in the review of proposed development projects, and used for maintaining and updating emergency preparedness plans;⁴⁶
- standards for tsunami/seiche studies to be completed for harbor areas, breakwaters, and coastal areas of concern. The City shall update its evaluation of the tsunami hazard, make its standards more specific, and disseminate available information on tsunami warnings and on procedural steps to prepare the populous for such an event. Mitigation measures shall be suggested for new construction;⁴⁷
- determine the safety status of all dams which may fail and cause inundation within the City. This shall be done in cooperation with the County of Orange and the State Division of Safety of Dams in order to establish the safety status and to determine what follow up analyses, if any, are needed. Based on these results, the City shall develop risk guidelines and to allow evaluation of current regulatory measures for protection of future development;⁴⁸
- operational strategies for the City's portion of the local flood control system intended to maximize system efficiency and minimize system overload during periods of heavy rainfall; and
- a hazardous waste sites map within the City.

b. Continue to:

- evaluate methane sources, locations and concentrations on a site-specific basis and will include any previously unidentified methane areas in the Methane Overlay District;
- assume the lead role in mitigating methane hazards in public rights-of-way and on public property;
- supplement beach sand with sand from outside sources; and
- work with property owners to maintain safe conditions on their property.

c. Use the EHE and the data from items a) and b) above to prepare and submit a formal update of the seismic safety components of the Safety Element requirement.⁴⁹

d. The City's EOC will maintain, review and update, as necessary, the current local Hazards Mitigation Plan.

I-EH 2

Interagency Participation and Coordination

- a. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will coordinate with the Departments of Police, Fire, Public Works, Community Development, Community Services and other departments in preparing and maintaining earthquake and other emergency response plans.
- b. The City will provide the EOC with maps of seismic/geologic hazard areas in the City, including fault locations, areas of high liquefaction potential and areas of seiche hazard.
- c. The City will work with and coordinate its earthquake and other emergency response plans with each school district as the school districts prepare earthquake education programs and develop their own earthquake and other emergency response plans.
- d. The EOC will coordinate with the Building Division and the Department of Public Works to establish standards for the design and operation of public safety facilities which will ensure that they remain safe and functional during and after disasters.

⁴⁵ Mitigation Measure GS-11 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

⁴⁶ Mitigation Measure GS-24 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

⁴⁷ Mitigation Measure SD-5 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

⁴⁸ Mitigation Measure SD-6 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

⁴⁹ Mitigation Measure GS-21 as specified in EIR No. 94-1, Table EX-1

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No.	Name	ADMINISTRATION											CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH							SCHEDULE					
		Community Development Department	Community Services Department	Economic Development Department	Fire Department	Library Services Department	Police Department	Public Works	Planning Commission	City Council	School Districts	County of Orange	Other	General Funds	Assessment Districts	Development Fees	Redevelopment Tax Increment Revenue	Grants	Other Approved Fees		State Funds	Federal Funds			
PROGRAM		CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH											CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH												
		RESPONSIBLE AGENCY											FUNDING SOURCE												
EH-1	Studies/Mapping/Master Plans	•		•		•	•								•							•	•	•	Ongoing *
EH-2	Interagency Participation and Coordination	•	•	•		•	•	•		•		•													Ongoing *
EH-3	Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone	•													•										Ongoing *
EH-4	Development Review or Environmental Review Process	•		•		•	•								•										Ongoing *
EH-5	Ordinances	•							•	•					•										Ongoing *
EH-6	Unsafe Structures Retrofitting or Demolition	•		•											•										Ongoing *
EH-7	Groundwater Mitigations	•						•							•										Ongoing *
EH-8	Public Education	•	•							•		•			•										Ongoing *
EH-9	Staff Training	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•			•										Ongoing *
EH-10	Disaster Recovery Committee	•		•		•	•					•			•										Ongoing *
EH-11	Abandoned Oil Well Re-evaluation			•											•			•							Ongoing *
EH-12	Methane Gas Testing Standards and Requirements	•		•											•			•							Ongoing *
EH-13	Emergency Contingency Plans			•		•	•			•		•			•										Ongoing *
EH-14	Flood Insurance Programs	•						•		•					•										1 year upon Plan adoption*
EH-15	FEMA Development Standards	•						•		•					•										Ongoing *
EH-16	Santa Ana River Main Stem Funding	•						•				•			•										Ongoing *
EH-17	Local Tsunami Warnings Wire System		•												•										Ongoing *

* As funding permits

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM MATRIX

CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH GENERAL PLAN

ATTACHMENT NO. 1-4

MATRIX **EH**