



City of Huntington Beach Planning Department  
**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Scott Hess, AICP, Director of Planning  
**BY:** Hayden Beckman, Planning Aide *HB*  
**DATE:** July 28, 2009

**SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2008-010 (ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS ELEMENT UPDATE)**

**APPLICANT:** City of Huntington Beach

**PROPERTY**

**OWNER:** Not Applicable

**LOCATION:** Citywide

---

**STATEMENT OF ISSUE:**

- ◆ General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 08-010 request:
  - To amend the Environmental Hazards Element of the General Plan to incorporate language identifying the City's adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and requiring its review, maintenance, and update as necessary.
- ◆ Staff's Recommendation:

Approve General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 based upon the following:

  - The request complies with the requirements of Assembly Bill 2140, qualifying the City to receive up to 100% reimbursement of costs following a natural disaster.
  - Adopting the HMP into the General Plan by reference will enable the City to update the HMP without processing a General Plan Amendment.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Motion to:

“Approve General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 by approving the draft City Council Resolution (Attachment No. 1) and forward to the City Council for adoption.”

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):**

The Planning Commission may take alternative actions such as:

“Continue General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 and direct staff accordingly.”

**PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 represents a request by the City to amend the Environmental Hazards Element of the General Plan to incorporate language identifying the City’s adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) and requiring its review, maintenance, and update as necessary.

The proposed amendment specifically includes:

1. Modifying the Technical Synopsis section to include language identifying the adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan (Attachment 1.4);
2. Establishing an All Hazards section within the Goals, Policies, and Objectives section as well as Goal EH7 and Policy EH 7.1.1 (Attachment 1.5);
3. Insert an additional implementation program (Attachment 1.6); and
4. Amend the Environmental Hazards Implementation Program Matrix by identifying possible State and Federal funds available for Implementation Program EH-1 (Attachment 1.7).

The City of Huntington Beach is currently eligible for up to 75% reimbursement of costs following a natural disaster. Upon adoption of General Plan Amendment No. 08-010, the City will become eligible for an additional 25% reimbursement pursuant to State law.

**ISSUES:**

**Subject Property and Surrounding Land Use, Zoning, and General Plan Designations:**

General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 applies Citywide.

**General Plan Conformance:**

The proposed General Plan Amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the City’s General Plan as follows:

A. Environmental Hazards Element

Objective EH 1.3: Enhance emergency preparedness through community education, effective emergency response and efficient post-disaster recovery.

Policy EH 1.3.1: Ensure that all citizens have access to information regarding local environmental hazards, emergency preparedness, and emergency response.

B. Public Facilities and Public Services Element

Objective PF 2.2: Organize the Fire Department emergency systems so the maximum safety may be provided to the City.

The proposed modifications to the existing Environmental Hazards Element would enhance the City's post-disaster recovery by increasing our eligibility for reimbursement. It would comply with the requirements of AB 2140, as well as reflect similar General Plan amendments adopted by other California jurisdictions by identifying the adopted HMP. The City's HMP was created in conjunction with adjacent jurisdictions and local school districts to reduce risks and prevent losses from future natural disasters. Additionally, the request would incorporate reference language only, providing the City an opportunity to strengthen hazard mitigation planning and allow future changes to the adopted HMP to occur as necessary without processing a General Plan Amendment.

Zoning Compliance: Not applicable.

Urban Design Guidelines Conformance: Not applicable.

Environmental Status:

The request is 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.

Coastal Status: Not applicable.

Redevelopment Status: Not applicable.

Design Review Board: Not applicable.

Subdivision Committee: Not applicable.

Other Departments Concerns and Requirements:

The City's Emergency Operations staff has reviewed the proposed amendments to the Environmental Hazards Element and has no comments. No other departments had comments, concerns, or requirements.

**Public Notification:**

Legal notice was published in the Huntington Beach Independent on July 16, 2009, and notices were sent to individuals/organizations requesting notification (Planning Department's Notification Matrix). As of July 21, 2009, staff has not received any correspondence regarding the request.

**Application Processing Dates:**

**DATE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION:**

May 21, 2009

**MANDATORY PROCESSING DATE(S):**

Not Applicable

**ANALYSIS:**

The primary issue 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.

The request is necessary to accomplish a refinement of the General Plan, and is consistent with other elements of the General Plan. It serves as a mechanism to provide greater public safety. The incorporation of the proposed language would comply with the requirements of AB 2140 and would qualify the City of Huntington Beach to receive up to 100% of post-disaster reimbursement costs for eligible projects. The existing HMP was approved in 2004 by the City Council and had been developed in a mutual effort between the cities of Huntington Beach and Fountain Valley, and local school districts.

The Environmental Hazards Element and the adopted HMP are complementary documents that facilitate an understanding of potential risks to Huntington Beach residents and property owners. The amendments improve existing emergency systems, emergency preparedness, and post-disaster recovery by increasing the amount of possible funding received by the City following a natural disaster emergency, as well as provide a stronger policy guideline for analyzing such risks. Upon adoption, the most current HMP will be referenced within the City's General Plan, thereby increasing public awareness of the HMP. The amendments also highlight the City's emergency preparedness, ensuring greater awareness of local environmental hazards.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft City Council Resolution for General Plan Amendment No. 08-010

SH:HF:RR:HB:lw

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF  
THE CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH APPROVING  
GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 08-010**

WHEREAS, General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 proposes to amend the Environmental Hazards Element by incorporating language referencing the adopted Local Hazards Mitigation Plan pursuant to Exhibit "A" attached hereto; and

Pursuant to California Government Code, the Planning Commission of the City of Huntington Beach, after notice duly given, held a public hearing to consider General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 and recommended approval of said entitlement to the City Council; and

Pursuant to California Government Code, the City Council of the City of Huntington Beach, after notice duly given, held a public hearing to consider General Plan Amendment No. 08-010; and

The City Council finds that said General Plan Amendment No. 08-010 is necessary for the changing needs and orderly development of the community, is necessary to accomplish refinement of the General Plan, and is consistent with other elements of the General Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Huntington Beach as follows:

SECTION 1: The City Council of the City of Huntington Beach hereby adopts said Amendment to the General Plan.

SECTION 2: That General Plan Amendment No. 08-010, which amends the General Plan Environmental Hazards Element by incorporating reference language identifying the adopted Local Hazards Mitigation Plan, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**, is hereby approved. The director of Planning is hereby directed to prepare and file an amended Environmental Hazards Element. A copy of said element, as amended, shall be available for inspection at the Planning Department.

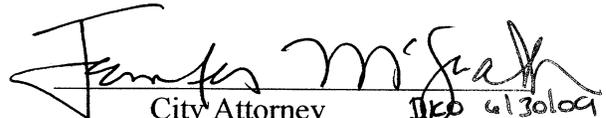
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Huntington Beach  
at a regular meeting thereof held on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney      DEB 6/30/09

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Administrator

INITIATED AND APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Planning Director

# EXHIBIT A

**STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS****DRAFT**

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)

- 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;

**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 (LHMP) as part of the Environmental Hazards Element. The LHMP 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;

- 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;<sup>46</sup>
  - 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;<sup>47</sup>
  - 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;<sup>48</sup>
  - 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.<sup>49</sup>
  - 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.

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

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

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

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

No.	Name	ADMINISTRATION														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
		CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH										CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH									
PROGRAM		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

MATRIX  
**EH**