



# HUNTINGTON BEACH TOMORROW

***Making a difference today for Huntington Beach tomorrow***

P.O. Box 865, Huntington Beach, California 92648

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**HBT's Mission:**

To promote and maintain  
a high quality of life  
in Huntington Beach.

**HBT advocates for:**

*Citizen Participation*

*Clean & Healthy Environment*

*Efficient & Safe Traffic Flow*

*Open & Responsive Government*

*Preserve Open Space*

*Preserve Our Quality of Life*

*Recreational Opportunities for All*

*Responsible Planned Growth*

*Sound Infrastructure*

*Sustainable Tax Base*

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December 17, 2017

Hon. Mayor Posey and City Council Members

***“Supplemental Report” to Staff’s Second Three-Month Report on Organic Pilot Study at Central Park West***

Dear Mayor Posey and Council Members:

HB Tomorrow continues to support the City and its Staff in their efforts to formulate a plan to make our City non-toxic through an organically driven Integrated Pest Management policy. To date, the following local municipalities and school districts have gone non-toxic using this approach:

- City of San Juan Capistrano & their school district CUSD – April 2017
- City of Burbank (1st City in LA County) and their school district BUSD – July 2017
- City of Tustin and their school district TUSD – November 2017
- City of Carlsbad (1st City in San Diego County) and their school district – December 2017

Costa Mesa and Mission Viejo are also working with Non Toxic Irvine and their advisors transition to organically driven landscaping practices.

Staff have told us how very impressed they are with what they are seeing in Irvine. Staff have personally toured Irvine’s organic facilities, which have drastically cut watering up to 80%, reducing watering days from six to two. Their fields have noticeably improved in color and absorbency. The cost-curve of organic products continues to bend downward. See photos below.

We reviewed the staff’s “Second Three-Month Status Report on Organic Chemical Pilot Study at Central Park West” and were



surprised to find none of these factors reflected there. We wish to provide some supplemental information to address the questions the Council asked at prior meetings.

### **Comparing Costs for the Continued Use of Synthetic Chemicals:**

At the August 7 Council meeting, several Council Members were anxious to compare apples to apples to understand the true costs involved not only in transitioning to non-toxic practices but in continuing to use harmful chemicals in our public spaces. For example, the Council’s unanimously-passed motion asked Staff to analyze the costs for “posting temporary alerts (signage) during chemical application.”

The Staff Report states:

Governmental agencies and public water utilities: All federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as entities operating public water systems, are exempt. Since the City is exempt from posting, there would be zero cost associated with posting signs.

But this is nonresponsive to the Council’s directive. Indeed, the Staff Report later states, a UCI botanist “suggested [that the City] post signs during herbicide application and leave the signs in place until the herbicide has dried.” The Report also relates that Ocean View School District “follows guidelines contained in the Healthy Schools Act of 2000 which requires OVSD to post signs 24 hours before herbicides can be applied and continue posting these signs for 72 hours after herbicides have been applied.” HBT presumes the City will do no less to protect its children.

Thus, the Council’s questions on this issue remain unanswered. This makes it difficult to truly compare apples to apples.

### **Cost and Efficacy of Organic Methods:**

The Staff Report states:

Dr. [Cheryl] Wilen [IPM advisor at UCI] informed city staff that going “organic” or using “cultural and mechanical methods” only, is not an effective IPM program for controlling weeds and pests.

Dr. Wilen spoke in support of Irvine’s IPM, however, which is substantively identical to the IPM Council is exploring here. That IPM is not based on an organic/mechanical-*only* program, but rather on organic/mechanical-*first*. Since Dr. Wilen is supportive of that IPM, many of her other comments reflected in the Report are confusing and possibly misleading.



For example, over the past 22 months the City of Irvine has been able to successfully maintain all pest pressure from weeds to rodents without synthetic pesticides for more than 570 acres of community and neighborhood parks and athletic fields; over 800 acres of public right-of-way, including street medians and parkways, 70,000 plus trees; and nearly 1.5 million square feet of facilities. While Irvine’s IPM is organically driven per the policy, it uses "EPA Level pesticides in a targeted manner, and only if deemed necessary to protect public health and economic impact by a licensed pest control adviser and City staff, when pests cannot be managed by other methods."

Moreover, the Staff Report does not reflect the substantial water savings and improvement to turf health they have now personally surveyed in Irvine.<sup>1</sup> It also does not reflect that Irvine’s latest cost profiles show non-toxic alternatives actually *saving* money. In Staff’s recent site visit to an organics-first Irvine site, the field looked substantially greener, and its sponginess underfoot spoke to its improved absorbency. This field was transitioned from synthetic maintenance to an organic systems approach **at no additional cost** – in fact, it came in \$100.43 cheaper than the prior year. The soil reports show that in under two years they have been able to reduce their irrigation schedule at the site from six days to just two. These are truly impressive results the Council should be aware of.

Without analysis of this information, again, the cost matrix in the Staff Report does not compare apples to apples. And in fact, the benefits of moving to an organics-first IPM – over and above the needless risks in continuing to use synthetics – are simply overwhelming.

### **Dangers of Pesticides:**

Dr. Wilen “recommend[s] against the idea of using a synthetic chemical that is listed on Prop 65,” e.g., such as glyphosate-containing Roundup products. But the Staff Report goes on to relate the following additional concern of Dr. Wilen’s:

After the cultural and mechanical methods have been exhausted, organic chemicals are more hazardous to the human chemical applicator [because] they require more frequent use, thus increasing the duration and potential of harmful exposure to the person applying the organic chemical.

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<sup>1</sup> And obviously it cannot reflect the appreciation felt by its residents, as seen in this short clip: <https://youtu.be/rA8rAz91YN4>.



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This is a confusing statement because it is not clear: more hazardous than *what*? More than “cultural and mechanical methods”? That may be true. More than synthetic pesticides? That would be a more surprising – and, we think, false – claim.

As for the “hazard” in applying organic and acid-based products, these only present a risk to the applicator if they are not wearing the required personal protective equipment.

And the Report does not similarly evaluate the applicator’s risk when it comes to synthetics, as reported on PubMed.gov.<sup>2</sup> That risk, which may take years to develop, is much graver and more costly.

Aside from public health considerations, the Staff Report does not reflect the potential financial and legal liabilities related to allowing a known carcinogen to be applied in the city’s playgrounds and parks exposing the most at risk population – particularly when this is to be done for purely cosmetic reasons. We are asking that the City move away from toxic landscaping practices and liabilities and switch to proven, cost-effective and safe solutions.

In conclusion, the City’s Staff, as always, have been a pleasure to work with. Staff understands the risks presented by continuing to use certain synthetic products and is responsibly exploring alternatives to protect the health of our residents, children, and pets. Nor do we need to remind the Council of the needless risks presented by these synthetic chemicals. HBT believes that the costs of transitioning off of toxic chemicals will be negligible to begin, and a cost-saver within a couple years, as Irvine’s experience bears out.

While the Council is the custodian of every dollar in its budget, the options to take our City non-toxic represent amounts similar to budget increases in landscaping and other non-essentials the Council just recently approved. We urge the Council not to balk at these very modest expenses and to immediately implement these changes to mitigate the needless health risks to our community.

Very truly yours,

*/s/ Tim Kowal*

Tim Kowal  
Huntington Beach Tomorrow

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Alavanja et al, *Increased cancer burden among pesticide applicators and others due to pesticide exposure*, CA CANCER J CLIN., 2013 Mar-Apr. (“Although the review is not exhaustive in its scope or depth, the literature does strongly suggest that the public health problem is real.”), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23322675>.



Before and after photos of IUSD’s Vista Verde organic pilot site:

