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**EARTHQUAKE SAFE HOMES PROGRAM (ESHP)  
Design, Construction, and Reimbursement Guidelines**

**Contents**

Overview ..... 2

Application and Selection ..... 2

Work Eligible for ESHP Reimbursement ..... 2

    Eligible Building Types..... 2

    Eligible Retrofit Activities: Required Measures ..... 3

    Eligible Retrofit Activities: Optional Measures ..... 4

ESHP Retrofit Process Summary: Three Phases..... 7

Phase I: Design Development ..... 7

    1. Intent to Proceed ..... 8

    2. Bids and Selection of Engineers and Contractors ..... 8

    3. Design Preparation..... 10

Phase II: Project Submission and Review..... 11

    1. Project Submission and ESHP Review ..... 12

    2. Submission of the Permit Application..... 12

    3. FEMA Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) Review ..... 13

    4. Notice of FEMA Design Approval and Permit Issuance ..... 13

Phase III: Completion and Reimbursement ..... 14

## **OVERVIEW**

The Earthquake Safe Homes Program (ESHP) was created to provide financial assistance to owners for **seismic retrofits of 1-4-unit owner-occupied** residential properties through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)<sup>1</sup>. The Program provides **reimbursement of up to 75% of approved design and construction costs after completion**. Project caps are determined upon review of bids for design and construction. The [ESHP Retrofit Process Summary](#), available at the Program [website](#), provides a one page overview of the steps involved to participate in ESHP.

## **APPLICATION AND SELECTION**

The application period for ESHP closed on February 17, 2017 and no additional applications are being accepted. Owners were notified in March of 2017 whether their project was conditionally approved or waitlisted and those applications were forwarded to FEMA for the required preliminary review. The City received approval in late 2018 to begin selecting projects for Design Development, Phase I of the ESHP Process. Projects will be selected in groups over a period of 18-24 months, or so long as funding is available.

Once the design is completed in Phase I, the project is submitted to FEMA and the permit center for the required design approvals in Phase II, followed by construction completion and reimbursement in Phase III. The ESHP Process is described in more detail below.

**Applicants who wish to begin design activities prior to selection for Design Development are encouraged to do so**, with the understanding that reimbursement is only possible if they are later selected and follow the required bid and design process described below. Design activities already completed may still be reimbursable if conducted after September 22, 2015 **and neither permit issuance nor construction has occurred**.

## **WORK ELIGIBLE FOR ESHP REIMBURSEMENT**

Only certain work on certain buildings is eligible for ESHP reimbursement.

### ***Eligible Building Types***

A building with all the following attributes is eligible, so long as a prior retrofit has not already been performed to current standards:

- Residential use up to 4 units, with primarily permanent occupancy only (R-2 or R-3).

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<sup>1</sup>Information about the funding source can be found here: <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/recovery/disaster-mitigation-technical-support/404-hazard-mitigation-grant-program>

- A continuous perimeter concrete foundation. “Slab on grade” foundations and spaced “post and pad” foundations are not eligible. If the existing concrete foundation is of an eligible type but will not support a retrofit, requests for funding to improve the foundation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Either wood framed cripple walls or concrete stem walls creating an accessible crawl space. Raised wood framed ground floors with the floor level less than about 18 inches above the crawl space grade are generally not eligible.

### ***Eligible Retrofit Activities: Required Measures***

Within an eligible building, only work that fully complies with one of the following sets of retrofit design criteria is eligible for reimbursement. The two sets of criteria are similar in concept and differ mostly in format. *If your retrofit design does not fall entirely under one of these criteria, contact the ESHP office with a description of the proposed scope of work to determine whether an exception can be made.*

- [The FEMA Plan Set](#), was recently updated in 2019 and is formally titled “Vulnerability-Based Seismic Assessment and Retrofit of One- and Two-Family Dwellings, Volume 2A - Plan Set for Crawlspace Dwellings” (October 2019).<sup>2</sup>

This is a set of customizable plans to be completed by the owner’s contractor and is generally usable on a wood frame house up to two stories (without split levels) on a relatively flat site. It is designed to reinforce and secure the perimeter of the house using panels, bracing, etc. prescribed by simple measurements and calculations that your contractor can complete. In this case, you do not need a licensed design professional, so **design costs for FEMA Plan Set eligible projects are not reimbursable**. See below for more details regarding FEMA Plan Set eligibility. *NOTE: in some cases, a compromised foundation may mean that a retrofit otherwise eligible for the Plan Set may need engineered modifications.*

- Chapter A3 of the 2016 California Existing Building Code (CEBC), available at: [https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/chapter/2168/?site\\_type=public](https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/chapter/2168/?site_type=public).

This is a traditional set of building code provisions that provides generic design rules to be applied by a licensed architect or engineer. It is to be used when the FEMA Plan Set is not appropriate for the building. NOTE: Chapter A3 also allows a prescriptive approach that does not require an engineer, but because this results in a retrofit design essentially identical to the FEMA Plan Set, the FEMA Plan Set must be used instead to ensure that this standard is met. *(It is also possible for the design professional to produce a design based on CEBC Chapter A3 and modify the FEMA Plan Set details to document that engineered design.)*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.earthquakeauthority.com/EQA2/media/PDF/who-we-are/FEMAP-1100-Vol2A-Planset-Crawlspace.pdf>

These two sets of criteria both consider three components that transfer the weight of the house through the crawl space to the foundation:

- **Foundation anchors** connect the wood sill plate (the bottom horizontal member of the wall) to the concrete foundation to resist sliding.
- **Wood structural panels** are added to the wood framed cripple wall to resist collapse of the crawl space. This item is not needed in cases where concrete stem walls extend all the way to the underside of the first-floor framing.
- **Framing clips** connect the cripple wall top plate (or the wood sill plate, in the case of concrete stem walls) to the wood floor framing above.

With this work, the required retrofit is intended to improve the seismic performance of the building by addressing the most common collapse-prone deficiency in a wood frame house with an unbraced cripple wall. **It is possible, however, that the building might have other structural or nonstructural deficiencies outside the scope of this program.**

*PLEASE NOTE: Both sets of criteria are likely to be updated during the course of the program and ESHP is likely to adopt the updated versions, with appropriate notice, when they become available. Projects submitted for Preliminary Design Review using the current criteria will be allowed to move forward even if the criteria are updated before construction is complete.*

### ***Eligible Retrofit Activities: Optional Measures***

Within an eligible building, the following work is eligible for reimbursement with ESHP approval on a case-by-case basis. This work is not required. While encouraged for purposes of seismic risk reduction, any such work will be subject to FEMA EHP review (described below), which could delay the project if the completed work is visible from outside the building. Participants are encouraged to consult with ESHP before proceeding with design of optional measures.

- Anchoring of an otherwise compliant gas-fueled water heater tank in accordance with guidance from the Earthquake Country Alliance, available at: <https://www.earthquakecountry.org/step1/waterheater/>
- Additional mitigation or retrofit of structural or nonstructural seismic safety hazards, such as structural strengthening of upper stories, bracing of porticos or attached patio covers, or removal of heavy roofing or veneer. (Bracing of personal property and contents, such as bookshelves or artwork, is not eligible.)

*PLEASE NOTE: Within an eligible building, work concurrent with the seismic retrofit but that is not eligible for reimbursement is not expressly prohibited, but all activities conducted before project close-out will be subject to FEMA EHP review and approval (described below) and must also be final before reimbursement can be processed. Non-reimbursable activities must be described under a separate permit with design and construction costs tracked separately and described at the same level of detail as the retrofit project.*

## FEMA PLAN SET ELIGIBILITY

More information and adaptable plans:

<https://www.earthquakeauthority.com/EQA2/media/PDF/who-we-are/FEMAP-1100-Vol2A-Planset-Crawlspace.pdf>

The FEMA Plan Set uses 11 Yes/No questions to determine eligibility. For this program, the questions are modified and explained below. **To be eligible for the FEMA Plan Set within this program, you must be able to answer YES to all the following questions:**

1. Is the building entirely residential, containing fewer than five residential units?
  - The FEMA Plan Set is normally limited to single-family and duplex residences. This program expands eligibility to 3- and 4-unit buildings if they are structurally similar and entirely residential.
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method also allows buildings with up to four units. It is intended for “residential buildings” but does not explicitly rule out use on mixed-use buildings.*
2. Is the home two stories or less above a crawl space?
  - For this question, do not count the crawl space as a story, no matter its height. The height of the crawl space is addressed by Questions 7 and 10.
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method allows three-story buildings, but only with very short cripple walls that would not satisfy FEMA Plan Set eligibility Question 6. Thus, any building that would be ineligible for the FEMA Plan Set because of its height would also be ineligible for the Chapter A3 prescriptive method.*
3. Are all the floors in each story at the same elevation?
  - This question refers only to floors above grade. The intent is to exclude split-level houses, which are not eligible due to complex framing and behavior.
4. Are the home’s walls, floors, and roof constructed of wood framing?
  - If the house has walls made of brick, concrete block, or concrete, answer No.
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method similarly excludes structural systems that rely on embedded columns or poles, but houses that would otherwise qualify for the FEMA Plan Set are practically non-existent in the Bay Area.*
5. Does the home have a continuous perimeter concrete foundation?
  - If the foundation is built of brick or stone, answer No.
  - If a concrete foundation has distinct, disconnected pieces under wood posts, answer No.
  - An insufficient or compromised foundation may mean that a retrofit otherwise eligible for the Plan Set may need engineered modifications or work outside of the scope of this program. Concrete testing may be required in certain situations. Consult the Plan Set sheets S2, section H for more information.
  - *The 2016 Chapter A3 prescriptive method does not make this limitation because it allows for foundation extension or replacement (Section A304.2). For ESHP, this requires engineering.*
6. Does the home have an accessible crawl space?
  - This question is intended primarily to rule out houses that are entirely “slab on grade” construction. However, even if the ground floor is made from wood joists, if the area

between the joists and the ground is too tight for a worker to access, or if the underfloor area has no access hatch, answer No.

- If part of the house has a crawl space and part is slab on grade, answer Yes.
  - If part or all of the crawlspace is tall enough to stand in, answer Yes. The height of the crawl space is addressed by Questions 7 and 10.
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method similarly screens out slab on grade houses.*
7. Are all the cripple walls less than seven feet in height?
- The “cripple walls” are the wood stud walls enclosing and within the crawl space. The height of a cripple wall is measured from the top of the concrete foundation to the underside of wood floor joists above.
  - The height in question therefore refers only to the height of the wood portion of the wall, not to the total height of the crawl space (which can sometimes be high enough to stand in).
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method allows cripple wall heights only up to 4 ft. Thus, any building eligible for that method would also be eligible for the FEMA Plan Set.*
8. Is all brick or stone veneer covering exterior walls, excluding chimneys, less than four feet in height above grade?
- If the home does not have any brick or stone veneer, answer Yes.
  - This question is intended to screen out especially heavy structures. The four-foot limit is intended to allow wainscot-style veneer. Small areas that rise more than four feet above grade are acceptable. If you are unsure, consult with ESHP.
9. Is the weight of the home's roof covering less than 11 pounds per square foot?
- If the roofing material is asphalt shingle, wood shingle, or metal, answer Yes.
  - If the roofing material is clay, terra cotta, concrete, or stone (including slate), answer No.
  - Some tile roofs are lightweight but made to look like traditional clay tile. If you are uncertain, consult with ESHP.
10. Is the difference in height between the shortest and tallest cripple walls less than 4'-2"?
- Where the floor joists sit directly on a sill plate and foundation, with no cripple wall studs, the “shortest” height to be used in this comparison should be taken as 0'-0”.
  - This question is intended to screen out sloped and hillside sites, which lead to complex behavior. If you answered No to this question but your site is not sloped, consult with ESHP.
  - *The 2016 CEBC Chapter A3 prescriptive method allows cripple wall heights only up to 4 ft. Thus, any building eligible for that method would also be eligible for the FEMA Plan Set.*
11. Is the site seismicity less than  $S_5 = 2.34$  and  $S_1 = 0.97$ ?
- Answer Yes. Seismicity throughout Oakland is less than the limiting values given in the question, except for perhaps a mile on either side of the Hayward Fault, which runs roughly along Route 13. In this area near the fault, the short-period seismic parameter,  $S_5$ , reaches values as high as 2.49, about 6 percent over the FEMA Plan Set limit. For purposes of this voluntary retrofit program, the City is waiving this limit with the expectation that an engineered retrofit of an otherwise eligible house would not be substantially different.
  - *2016 CEBC Chapter A3 puts no limits on seismicity.*

## **ESHP RETROFIT PROCESS SUMMARY: THREE PHASES**

ESHP retrofit projects are conducted in the three Phases shown below. Each must be completed before the project moves to the next Phase. These are described in detail in the following sections. Also refer to the [ESHP Retrofit Process Summary](#) document available at the website for a one-page reference as you move through the process.

### ***Phase I: Design Development***

- Develop retrofit design and plans and hire a construction contractor

### ***Phase II: Project Submission and Review***

- FEMA reviews plans. The City issues a building permit.

### ***Phase III: Completion and Reimbursement***

- Construction is completed, the permit is final, and reimbursement is processed.

## **PHASE I: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

Once an ESHP project has been issued a Notice to Proceed with Design Development, the applicant must take the steps summarized below and described in detail on the following pages. Each must be completed before proceeding to *Phase II: Project Submission and Review* to be approved for construction. Refer to the [ESHP Retrofit Process Summary](#) and [ESHP Owner Instructions](#) for additional step-by-step guidance on how to proceed.

1. Review guidelines and confirm intent to proceed with your retrofit by returning the [Intent to Proceed](#) form.
2. **Develop the Retrofit Design**
  - **If eligible to use the FEMA Plan Set**, obtain at least two bids for design/build services. Each must include the [ESHP Construction Bid Form](#). Summarize the bids on the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids-For Owners](#) and submit everything to ESHP for approval of the maximum reimbursable amount for construction.
  - **If not eligible to use the FEMA Plan Set**, find a qualified engineer to develop custom plans and discuss the terms with ESHP before you commit to a contract.
3. Hire your chosen design professional or contractor and forward the signed contract and appropriate [Engineering Addendum](#) or [Construction Addendum](#) to the ESHP office.
4. Have the design completed and forwarded in PDF format to ESHP.
5. If engineered plans are being used, obtain at least two bids for construction. Each must include the [ESHP Construction Bid Form](#). Summarize the bids on the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids-For Owners](#) and submit everything to ESHP for approval of the maximum reimbursable amount for construction.

## **1. Intent to Proceed**

Once a project has been selected for Design Development, ESHP will notify the applicant and request a completed [Intent to Proceed](#) form along with supporting documentation to confirm eligibility. On that form, the owner must state the availability of funding for up-front costs for both design and construction and provide proof of owner-occupancy, homeowner's insurance, and evidence that mortgage payments and property taxes are current. **Each owner must be a United States Citizen or legal resident alien and must have resided in the home for not less than two years.** No code violations may be outstanding. If a selected owner's response is not received within the time provided, funding may be released to other applicants. Any intentionally falsified information will cause the application to be rejected.

Once ESHP receives the completed [Intent to Proceed](#), staff will contact the owner to confirm receipt and request any additional information needed to confirm eligibility. After eligibility is confirmed, participants are responsible for hiring licensed professionals to prepare and document the retrofit design and eventually perform the construction. **That approval will provide 45 days to submit bids for initial services and 90 days to submit the permit application package or request an extension.** Extension requests must be justified and will be approved at ESHP discretion on a case-by-case basis.

*PLEASE NOTE: Additional assistance from ESHP during the bidding and design phase is available on a case-by-case basis. Participants should discuss any challenges with ESHP staff as soon as possible.*

## **2. Bids and Selection of Engineers and Contractors**

The first critical question regarding retrofit design is whether the project requires a licensed design professional (typically a structural or civil engineer), or whether an experienced retrofit contractor can adapt the FEMA Plan Set to the building so that engineering services are not required.

Before you hire an engineer or contractor for their services, participants must request a written estimate of the expected cost. Ultimately, it is the participant's responsibility to verify the qualifications and proper licensing of contracted service providers. Bids for design/engineering are handled differently than bids for construction as described below.



**Who you contact depends on the type of project you have.** In addition, design professionals and contractors bidding on ESHP projects should closely review the [Design and Construction Fact Sheet](#) and CEBC Chapter A3 and may contact ESHP directly with any questions about what measures are eligible for ESHP reimbursement.

- **If the project is eligible for the FEMA Plan Set<sup>3</sup>** (you can answer yes to all questions on the checklist), a licensed design professional is not needed and their services will not be reimbursable. Design and construction costs will be bid together using the [ESHP Construction Bid Form - For Contractors](#). All services should be itemized in the bid and summarized on the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids](#) form. All buildings eligible to use the FEMA Plan Set must do so with no separate contract between the owner and a design professional.
- **If you need an engineer to develop custom plans** (you answered no to one or more questions on the checklist or the foundation is found to be compromised or insufficient to meet the Plan Set requirements), the retrofit will require engineered plans by a licensed design professional in accordance with CEBC Chapter A3.

**Design/Engineering Bids** must include all activities up to and including design approval by ESHP, FEMA, and the Building Department, as well as the cost of structural observation during the construction phase, if necessary. Typical costs for engineering services range \$2000 - \$4000 and at that rate do not require the need for multiple bids. However, participants should discuss the terms of the engineering agreement with ESHP before entering into a contract, to ensure that the proposed fee is reasonable and that the proposed services and resulting design will meet ESHP criteria.

**Construction Bids** are either based on the cost for the contractor to adapt the FEMA Plan Set to the building and complete construction, or to complete construction according to the engineered design. A minimum of 2 bids are required and each should include all itemized activities required to secure approvals, not including the cost of the permit. The cost of special inspection(s) potentially required during the permit process may be included as part of the reported construction bid, or the contractor may require the owner to engage a special inspector through a separate agreement. Each should include itemized activities and be submitted with the [ESHP Construction Bid Form - For Contractors](#). Summarize those bids and submit them to ESHP using the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids](#) form and email all documents to ESHP for approval. Once bids for Phase I have been approved, the ESHP office will confirm the maximum reimbursable amount based on the estimates and property characteristics such as size and unit count. If the required number of bids cannot be obtained,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.earthquakeauthority.com/EQA2/media/PDF/who-we-are/FEMAP-1100-Vol2A-Planset-Crawlspc.pdf>

attempts must be documented and submitted with an explanation for approval before costs are incurred. Also refer to the [ESHP Owner Instructions](#) for step-by-step guidelines.

**For all bids:**

- All bidders must estimate both the cost and the time needed to complete the work.
- Costs to obtain bids are not reimbursable and are not to be included. If a bidder charges up-front costs, you can request that the payment be credited to the final bill.
- If the lowest bidder is not selected, an explanation must be provided.
- Once bids are approved, the maximum reimbursable amount will be confirmed.
- All bids must be obtained from contractors and design professionals with an active license to practice in the state of California and who are properly insured. You may verify a contractor's license at <http://www.cslb.ca.gov> and an engineer's license at <http://www.bpelsg.ca.gov>.
- Expenses paid in cash and work completed by owner-builders are not eligible for ESHP reimbursement.
- The contract and appropriate ESHP Addendum with the selected service provider must be submitted to ESHP once signed by both parties.
- **Design Bids** must include all activities up to and including design approval by ESHP, FEMA, and the Building Department, as well as the cost of structural observation during the construction phase, if necessary. Bids must be summarized using the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids](#) form and submitted to ESHP for approval and confirmation of the maximum reimbursable amount for design. Bids from design-build contractors must indicate a design portion and a construction portion; the owner must report the construction portion separately in the next step.
- **Construction Bids** are obtained based on the plans for the completed design and shall include all activities not included as design, including the costs of securing permits and approvals. The cost of a special inspection, if required, shall be included as part of the reported construction bid, though the contractor may require the owner to engage a special inspector through a separate agreement. Each should include itemized activities and be submitted with the [ESHP Construction Bid Form - For Contractors](#). Summarize those bids and submit them to ESHP using a second copy of the [Documentation of Design or Construction Bids](#) form.

### **3. Design Preparation**

Once a design professional or contractor is under contract they must prepare the plans to comply fully with the program criteria. Seismic work must be described in a single permit application, *which must not include any non-reimbursable activities*. Three sets of paper plans and one electronic plan set are required along with two sets of structural calculations, as needed. (See below for more information about what should be included in the submission.)

For general questions regarding the permit process and the documentation required to submit a permit application, call the City of Oakland Permit Center at 238-3443 or visit their website at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/building-permits>.

In addition to the retrofit design considerations discussed in the eligibility section above, the project scope of work should also take into consideration **FEMA's required Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) review**, which is required before individual projects are approved for construction. Because ESHP grants are federal funds, in addition to compliance with local codes, the design must also pass EHP review to determine whether the property has historic significance and whether visible changes to the exterior will result from the completed retrofit. If the finished retrofit work will not result in any visible changes to the exterior of the building, the EHP review is quick and uncomplicated. Therefore, a design that avoids any such changes is strongly recommended. **Projects that proceed with permit issuance or construction before they are notified of FEMA approval will no longer be eligible for reimbursement through ESHP.**

In addition, **all non-reimbursable work conducted concurrently under a separate permit is also subject to EHP review** and a thorough description of those activities must be included as an attachment to the permit application. **Be advised that work beyond the scope of the retrofit application may also complicate EHP Review and is strongly discouraged.**

## **PHASE II: PROJECT SUBMISSION AND REVIEW**

Once the design is complete and a contractor has been chosen, the project is submitted for review directly to ESHP and will be forwarded to the Planning and Building Department and FEMA for their concurrent review. The necessary steps are summarized below and described in more detail on the following pages. Each step must be completed before the permit can be issued and construction can begin. Refer to the [ESHP Retrofit Process Summary](#) and [ESHP Owner Instructions](#) for additional step-by-step guidance on how to proceed.

1. The permit application and plans are prepared and submitted directly to ESHP in both paper (3 copies) and electronic PDF format. Program staff performs preliminary review of application to confirm eligible activities.
2. ESHP submits the application to the Planning and Building Department internally and Building Bureau staff contacts the applicant to follow up with plan check and permit fees.
3. ESHP submits the project to FEMA for their required review.
4. Once FEMA approves the project, ESHP notifies the owner and permit staff. Once permit requirements are met, the permit is issued and construction may begin.

## **1. Project Submission and ESHP Review**

The design professional and/or contractor prepares and submits the following directly to ESHP for preliminary review by the deadline provided in the approved [Intent to Proceed](#). All documents that are to scale at 11x17 or smaller may be submitted in PDF format via email (digital PDF copies of the plans and calculations should have already been forwarded to ESHP).

- **[ESHP Project Description](#)**: This document is necessary for FEMA's review. Clearly describe the retrofit scope of work, any visible exterior changes that will result, and any non-retrofit activity planned at the same time for completion under a separate permit. If visible changes are expected, note whether alterations will be replaced in-kind or reversible, or whether changes to any design elements will result.
- **[Permit Application](#)**: this is the standard permit application and will be submitted internally to the Planning and Building Department after preliminary ESHP approval.
- **Plans and Calculations**: 3 paper sets of plans and 2 paper sets of structural calculations are required for the permit submission. Plans to scale at 11x17 or smaller can be printed by the ESHP office. If plans require a large format printer, three hard-copies must be forwarded to submit with the permit application.

Once received, ESHP staff will perform a preliminary review of the scope of work to determine what activities are allowed under the permit scope and what level of FEMA EHP Review will be required. Once any necessary adjustments are made, the project will then be submitted to the Planning and Building Department on behalf of the permit applicant.

Because this submission process differs from a standard voluntary retrofit permit application, please refer to the [ESHP Owner's Instructions](#) for step-by-step guidance and contact the ESHP office directly with questions about how to proceed.

## **2. Submission of the Permit Application**

Once ESHP has confirmed that the design package is complete and the described scope of work is eligible for reimbursement, the permit application will be submitted internally to the Planning and Building Department. An initial planning review will be conducted before the project is routed to plan check staff. The permit applicant will be contacted regarding any outstanding items, including payment of the fee. *The permit may not be issued until construction bids have been approved by ESHP and the project has also been approved by FEMA.*

For general questions regarding the permitting process, contact the City of Oakland Permit Center as recommended at their website: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/news/2020/planning-building-department-response-to-shelter-in-place>.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

*If unsafe conditions are identified during the retrofit, corrections will be required in accordance with the Oakland Municipal Code. It is not the intent of the City to seek or to report existing non-conforming conditions unrelated to the seismic retrofit. However, if code violations or past improperly permitted work is identified, the City has the authority to require abatement and impose fees and/or penalties for failure to correct the violations within the time provided.*

### **3. FEMA Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) Review**

Once the permit application has been submitted by ESHP, an initial planning review will be conducted before the project is forwarded for plan check and concurrently to FEMA for EHP review. The time necessary for this process will depend on the complexity of the project and resulting visual changes to the exterior. In some cases, more information and/or modifications to the design will be required.

If the project will result in visible exterior changes or is determined to have historical significance, it may be subject to a more detailed review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is conducted independently from the permitting process. The permit application may be allowed to proceed at the same time for review by the Bureau of Building but building permits may not be issued until FEMA provides final project approval.

### **4. Notice of FEMA Design Approval and Permit Issuance**

Once FEMA approves the project and the permit has been routed, ESHP will issue a Notice of FEMA Design Approval that confirms eligible activities, maximum reimbursable costs, and deadlines for project completion. The Permit Center can then issue the permit once their process is complete and all fees are paid. Construction may begin once the permit is issued. Due to the volume of projects that must be completed during the grant period, it is important that retrofits are completed promptly. Any extensions must be requested in writing to the ESHP office before the deadline has passed.

Once approved by FEMA, no changes to the approved scope of work are allowed without additional SHOP and FEMA review. Approval for design revisions must be requested with a revised ESHP Project Description form and documentation that clearly describes the new activities and any resulting visible exterior changes. This must be at the same level of detail as the original application and is subject to the same reviews as the original design package. If approved, ESHP will issue a revised notice. **Deviations from the approved scope of work may result in the entire project becoming ineligible for reimbursement.** Extensions to implement changes that are not necessary for reimbursable retrofit activities will only be allowed at the discretion of the ESHP office.

### **PHASE III: COMPLETION AND REIMBURSEMENT**

As a project nears completion, the owner should refer the instructions on the [Reimbursement Request](#) found at the program website. The first step is to submit a completed [W9](#) to program staff so that the payment account can be set up. This can and should be done in advance. Once the permit is final and all payments have been processed, the completed request form is submitted along with copies of invoices and proof of payment for all design, construction, and permit costs. A final ESHP close-out inspection is required to verify that all changes to the property were documented and approved by FEMA. Availability for that inspection is requested on the form. A check is processed within 30-60 days of a complete package.

*PLEASE NOTE: Reimbursement for costs that exceed the established reimbursement maximum must be justified and are subject to funding availability as approved by ESHP and confirmed in writing. If total documented project costs exceed the permit valuation, that valuation must be updated and any additional permit fees paid before submission of a [Reimbursement Request](#).*