

NEPA Environmental Assessment Questions

PLEASE NOTE: The review factors covered in this guidance document are only applicable for Environmental Reviews completed at the Assessment Level. Please See the [Determining Level of Environmental Review](#) document to help determine if your project requires an Assessment Level review.

For questions, contact the [Environmental Officer](#).

This guidance document contains Assessment Questions that should be considered for analysis of the required Environmental Assessment Factors. The questions listed below are a compilation of those listed in the [HUD Green Book](#) and [HUD's Environmental Assessment Factors Guidance](#). These sources should be consulted for additional guidance. *All* Assessment Questions for each factor *do not* need to be specifically addressed in every Environmental Assessment, but *all should be considered*, and those questions that are applicable to a proposed project should be addressed.

Land Development	Assessment Questions
Conformance with Plans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the proposal consistent with completed components of the local or regional comprehensive plan, whether adopted or in draft stage (if applicable provide the plan's name and date of approval)? 2. Is the proposed project consistent with other plans including those prepared by area wide planning agencies, special districts and boards and state agencies in various functional areas? 3. Is the proposed project consistent with adopted community or area wide policies and goals? 4. Will the project be unduly influenced by a planned transition of land uses?
Compatible Land Use and Zoning / Urban Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the proposed project comply with existing zoning and subdivision regulations? If not, does the proposal require a zoning variance. 2. What is the existing land use at the project location? What is the current zoning classification of the project location? 3. How does the project relate to the existing land uses of the adjacent and surrounding properties? Do the abutters and neighbors think the proposed project will be compatible or incompatible with existing uses? 4. Will the project have adverse effect on the economy of a core area? Will it contribute to urban sprawl? Will it displace economic activity from a central business district? 5. Will the proposed project result in induced development which will alter existing land use or which will be incompatible with the existing scale and density of development? 6. Are the changes which will result from any induced development regarded by the community as beneficial or negative? 7. Does the proposed project contribute to reducing the racial ethnic and income segregation of the area's housing?
Scale & Urban / Environmental Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How will the project alter the land form? Will the project destroy or alter the natural or man-made environment? 2. How does the project "fit" or conform with the surrounding and established built environment? Does the proposed building represent a significant change in size, scale, placement, or height in relation to neighboring structures in an inappropriate manner? 3. Will there be intrusion of elements out of character or scale with the existing physical environment? Does it differ in materials, color or style from its neighbors in an inappropriate manner? 4. Does the project affect building density in the community? 5. Are levels of activity reduced or detrimentally increased? Does the project enhance street-level activity and community interaction? 6. Will the proposed structure block view or degrade them, change the skyline or create a new focal point? Is objectionable visual pollution introduced directly or indirectly due to loading docks, trash collectors or parking? Is this mitigated visually?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Is signage and street furniture in character with existing architectural styles? 8. Does the project conform to locally adopted design guidelines?
Slope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the site on a slope (slight, moderate, severe, or very severe)? 2. Will the project significantly affect or be affected by the slope conditions? If the slope is unstable, what are potential problems that may require remedy? 3. Does the proposal call for development on a steep slope and, if so, does its design plan include measures to overcome potential erosion, slope stability and runoff problems? 4. Does the county, local or site-specific soil survey mention that slopes are unstable for any of the soils on the site? 5. Is there a history of slope failure in the project area environment? 6. Is there visual indication of previous slides or slumps in the project area, such as cracked walls or tilted trees or fences? 7. Will slope modification activities remove micro-climatic conditions that facilitate the growth of unique natural habitats? 8. Will the slope modification activities affect social and cultural resources?
Erosion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project involve development of an erosion sensitive area (near water, on a steep slope, or on a sandy silty soil)? Will the project site significantly affect or be affected by erosion or sedimentation conditions? If so, does the design plan include measures to overcome potential erosion problems? 2. Does the proposed project create slopes by cut and fill? 3. Does site clearance require vegetation removal? How many acres will be cleared and for how long? How will erosion be managed and controlled? 4. Is there evidence of erosion or sedimentation? 5. Is an erosion control plan included as part of construction?
Soil Suitability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there any visible evidence of soil problems (foundation cracking or settling, basement flooding, etc.) in the neighborhood of the project site? 2. Were structural borings or dynamic soil analysis/geotechnical study needed and conducted? If so, please discuss the findings of the report. 3. If the proposed project involves either new construction or very substantial rehabilitation activities, does the project design include appropriate mitigation measures to address the problem of poor soil conditions (if poor conditions exist)? 4. Will the project site significantly affect or be affected by unsuitable soil conditions? 5. Is there evidence of ground subsidence, seismic activity, a high water table, or other unusual conditions on site? 6. Are there visual indications of filled ground? 7. Will the project significantly affect soils that may be better suited for natural resource management activities such as farming, forestry, unique natural area preservation, etc.?
Storm Water Runoff / Drainage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will existing or planned storm water disposal and treatment systems adequately service the proposed development? 2. Will the project overload the design capacity of these facilities? 3. Will the proposed project be adversely affected by proximity to these facilities? 4. If the public storm sewer is not available, how will storm water drainage be handled? 5. Will the project itself cause or substantially contribute to off-site pollution by storm water run-off, leaching chemicals, or other pollutants? 6. Will the project site significantly affect or be affected by drainage and storm water conditions? If so, does its design plan include measures to overcome potential runoff problems? 7. Are there visual indications of filled ground, active rills, or gullies on site? 8. Is there indication of cross-lot runoff, swales, or drainage flows on the property?
Hazards and Nuisances including Site Safety	<p>Potential Sources of Public Health and Safety Problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise • Vibration • Odor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Light • Air Pollution • Toxic Chemical Dumps • Uranium Mill Tailings • Reclaimed Phosphate Land (Radioactive) • Inadequate Street Lighting • Uncontrolled Access to Lakes and Streams • Drilling Operations • Lack of Access for Emergency Vehicles • Pipelines • Steep Stairs or Walkways • Recreation areas located next to freeway or other high traffic areas • Dangerous intersection/hazardous streets • Inadequate separation of pedestrian/vehicle traffic • Hazardous cargo transportation routes • Unfenced railroads or highways • Unfenced water bodies/uncontrolled access to lake or streams • Unfenced construction sites • Vacant/boarded up buildings • Vermin infestation • Improperly screened drains or catchment areas • Quarries or other excavations • Oil or gas wells • Dumps/sanitary landfills or mining • High pressure gas or liquid petroleum lines on-site industrial operations • Gas, smoke, or fumes • Cliffs, buffs, crevices • Hazardous terrain features • Poisonous plants, insects, animals • Railroad crossings or transmission lines • Geological faults • Land slides • Avalanches • Subsidence • Beach erosion • Very high tides • Shifting river channels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project involve any of the potential hazards listed above? Any that are not listed including hazards created by the project construction, operation and design as well as those existing on and near the site? 2. Are there project users or neighboring populations whose special health and safety needs are not anticipated in the project design? Have actions been taken to protect children from “attractive nuisances”? Have measures been taken to reduce the potential risk for elderly from dust and temporary walkways and traffic around construction sites?
<p>Noise - Contribution to Community Noise Levels</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the project itself a noise-generating facility in a noise-sensitive area, such as a site in close proximity to schools and housing (consider noise contribution from construction activities)?
<p>Energy Consumption</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the location of the site have any special related advantages or disadvantages? Can these be maximized or overcome? 2. Have the architectural plans and building orientation taken full advantage of potential energy saving measures related to climate, sun and wind (such as insulation, window design and placement, lighting, heating, cooling and hot water systems)? Are they in conformance with HUD Minimum Property Standards and other applicable energy saving codes (ex. VT Residential Building Energy Standards and VT Commercial Building Energy Standards)? 3. Does the project include programmable thermostats, occupancy sensors in common areas, water filters, insulated water pipes, and/or point-of-

	<p>use/tankless hot water heaters?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. If the project entails residential new construction or substantial rehab of single-family buildings up to three-stories, is the project being designed and constructed to meet the current version of the Energy Star Performance Standards for Buildings? 5. Is the proposal being rated under LEED Enterprise Green Communities, or other green standard or sustainability program? 6. For multi-family project, is there individual metering for utilities or tenant energy efficiency education programs? 7. Are renewable energy strategies being implemented in this project? If this is rural project, was on-site energy generation considered in lieu of or in addition to a grid connection? 8. What is the estimated energy consumption of the proposal, and are the energy resources of the utility provider sufficient to support the proposal? 9. Are state and federal rebates, tax incentives for energy efficiency strategies, and renewable energy components being considered? 10. Is there an opportunity to enter into an energy performance contract? 11. What is the estimated energy consumption of the proposal, and are the energy resources of the utility provider sufficient to support the proposal? 12. What are the project greenhouse gas emissions of the project upon full occupancy? Are they significant? 13. Is the location of the project in close proximity to transit, shopping services and employment locations (see WalkScore)? 14. Will the project encourage additional private vehicle trips and increase energy consumption?
<p>Air Quality-Effects of Ambient Air Quality on Project and Contribution to Community Pollution Levels</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project require an installation permit, operating permit or indirect source permit under local pollution control agency rules? If so, have permit requirements been satisfied? 2. Is the project located in the vicinity of a monitoring station where the air quality violations have been registered? If so, will the project exacerbate air quality problems in the area? 3. Is the project, or its potential users, particularly sensitive to existing air pollution levels (or those expected 10 and 20 years hence)? Has the project been designed to mitigate possible adverse effects? 4. Will the proposal establish a trend, if continued, may lead to violation of air quality standards in the future? 5. Will the proposed project have parking facilities for 1,000 cars (within Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) or 2,000 cars (outside Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) or generate traffic of a corresponding magnitude (heavy traveled highway-6 or more lanes)? 6. Are there air pollution generators nearby which will adversely affect the site (heavy industry, incinerators, power generating plants, cement plants, etc.)?

Socioeconomic	Assessment Questions
<p>Demographic / Community Character Changes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is/are the identifiable community(ies) within the sphere of the likely impact of the proposed project? What are the factors which contribute to the character of the community(ies)? 2. Will the proposed project significantly alter the demographic characteristics of the community? 3. Will the proposed project result in the physical barriers or difficult access which will isolate a particular neighborhood or population ground, making access to local services, facilities and institutions or other parts of the city more difficult? Does the proposed project contribute to reducing or significantly altering racial, ethnic or income segregation of the area's housing? 4. Does the proposed project at this site create a concentration of low income or disadvantage people, in violation of HUD site and neighborhood standards and HUD Environmental Justice policies? 5. Will the proposed project destroy or harm any community institutions, such as a neighborhood church? 6. Will the proposed project severely alter residential, commercial or

	industrial uses?
Displacement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the project directly displace individuals or families? How many persons? Is the displacement covered by the Uniform Relocation Act and are funds available for payment? 2. Will the project destroy or relocate existing jobs, community facilities or any business establishment? Is the displacement covered by the Uniform Relocation Act and are funds available for payments? 3. Will identifiable groups be affected- older persons, females, single-parent families, racial/ethnic, or income groups, or minority group members? 4. Are replacement facilities or housing units available within the community or in nearby neighborhoods? What will be the effect of the relocation on these neighborhoods? 5. Will the project result in the probable indirect displacement? If so, have measures been planned to alleviate the hardship on those affected whose displacement is not covered under the Act?
Employment and Income Patterns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the project either significantly increase or decrease temporary and/or permanent employment opportunities? 2. Will the projects create conditions favorable or unfavorable to commercial, industrial, or institutional operation or development? 3. How many temporary and how many permanent jobs will be created by the project? 4. What is the profile of new jobs created by the project? What is the distribution across the skills and income scale? How do these relate to the skills and income profile of the project area residents? 5. Will the new jobs likely go to area residents, to lower income, unemployed and minority group members? 6. If the jobs don't go to area residents, where are the new employees likely to come from (inner city, suburbs)?

Community Facilities and Services Assessment Questions

Educational Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the projected increase in student population to be created by the proposed development? 2. Will the additional school-age children exceed the capacity of the existing or planned school facilities? If so, what measures will be taken to resolve potential problems/conflicts? 3. Does/Do the potentially affected school(s) have adequate and safe access facilities (walking paths, bus routes, crosswalks and guards) given calculations done for the project population increase? Are these adequate both in terms of safety and access? 4. Will additional or alternative facilities have to be provided to ensure safety and suitable access? 5. What measures will be taken by the superintendent or school's governing body to resolve potential problems/conflicts?
Commercial Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there adequate and convenient access to retail services (within walking distance)? 2. Do local retail services meet the needs of the project occupants/users? Are they affordable and is the range of services adequate? 3. Will existing retail and commercial service be adversely impacted by the proposed project? Will existing businesses be placed at a competitive disadvantage or be displaced? 4. In areas not readily serviced by retail services, is public transportation that can carry commuters to retail services within one half hour available? If public transportation is not available will readily available transportation service be provided?
Health Care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are non-emergency health care services located within a reasonable proximity to the proposed project (less than one half hour commute/drive)? 2. Can ambulance trips to a hospital or other health care center be made within 10 to 15 minutes? 3. Is the number of doctors, dentists, nurses and other trained medical staff in realistic proportion to any increase in residents/users? If not, can provisions be made for additional skilled staff?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Will the increase in population from the proposed development increase the need for area health care services beyond current capabilities? 5. Will the project residents/users require special medical services or skills such as geriatric clinics?
Social Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are social services currently located in close proximity to the prospective users/residents? Are they within walking distance or convenient to public transportation and less than one half hour commute/drive? 2. Is the number of trained staff including social workers, counselors, psychologist, psychiatrists and related administrative and managerial personnel in realistic proportion to the anticipated increase in residents/users? If not, could provisions be made for additional skilled staff? 3. Will the demand for the social services increase and overburden existing facilities, can provisions be made to obtain alternative and/or additional space? 4. Will social services be overtaxed or negatively impacted by the proposed project? 5. Will the provision of additional social services at this site create a concentration of the disadvantaged in violation of HUD site and neighborhood standards (24 CFR 941.202)?
Solid Waste Disposal / Recycling	<p>Post Construction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What types of solid waste will be generated by the completed project? 2. If the project's end use will produce hazardous waste, does the service company/landfill accept hazardous waste? If yes, provide documentation. 3. Will the completed project require solid waste permitting? 4. Will the existing or planned solid waste disposal system adequately service the proposed development? 5. As a result of the project, will the design capacity of these facilities be exceeded? 6. Will the proposed project be adversely affected by proximity to these facilities? 7. Does the community have an adequate number of vehicles to provide the project with collection service (solid waste/trash)? 8. Will the residents/users of the proposed project have to pay annual/monthly costs for these services? Will these costs create severe financial hardships for project residents? <p>During Construction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. What types and amounts of waste are to be generated as construction debris? 10. What solid waste disposal system or company will handle construction debris? Does it have the capacity to handle the amount of debris?
Waste Water / Sanitary Sewers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a result of the project, will the design capacity of these facilities be exceeded? Does the existing or proposed sewer system have the capacity to adequately service the proposed development? <p>On-site Septic Systems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. In less developed areas, are soils suitable for onsite wastewater disposal such as septic systems? 3. Where on-site disposal is necessary, will the state or local health agency issue a permit? Have septic disposal systems been properly designed, installed and maintained as appropriate, to prevent effluent from contaminating soil or groundwater, including sole source aquifers?
Water Supply	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What private company or public organization or system will provide sufficient quantity of clean water needed for the proposal? 2. Will either the municipal water utility or on-site water supply system be adequate to serve the proposed project? 3. Is the water supply quality safe from a chemical and bacteriological standpoint? 4. If the water supply is non-municipal, has an acceptable system been approved by appropriate authorities and agencies? 5. Will the project water requirements of the proposal result in a significant consumption of the community's available water supply or result in a significant deterioration of water quality?

<p>Public Safety - Police - Fire - Emergency Medical</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project location provide adequate access to police, fire and emergency medical services? Does the project design provide easy access for emergency vehicles and individuals? Are there obstacles to access, such as one-way roads, narrow bridges, waterways, expressways and railroads which would prohibit access in an emergency situation? Will the project create such obstacles? 2. Does the area have a particularly high crime rate? Are there special plans for a security system which have been approved by the police department? Is the design and/or architectural configuration of the development such that it is easily patrolled by police from the street? 3. Will the project create a burden on existing facilities in terms of manpower and/or equipment? Can services either be expanded or be provided by the project, such as an in-house security force? 4. What police services are located within reasonable proximity to the proposed project? What is the approximate response time? Is the capacity sufficient to meet project needs? 5. What firefighting protection is located within reasonable proximity to the proposed project? What is the approximate response time? 6. Is the firefighting protection service adequate and equipped to service the project? 7. What emergency health care providers are located within reasonable proximity to the proposed project? What is the approximate response time?
<p>Open Space and Recreation - Open Space - Recreation - Cultural Facilities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are open space, recreational and cultural facilities within reasonable proximity to the project area? Is adequate public transportation available from the project to these facilities? 2. Is there an adequate supply of these resources for the users or resident population of the development? Will the project cause any overloading of existing open space, recreation or cultural facilities? 3. If the development is housing, has space for informal play for children of all ages been included on-site? Have areas for recreation for adults and the elderly been provided including places for passive recreation?
<p>Transportation and Accessibility</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project require a traffic study? Has one already been performed? Are there any actions identified in the study that need to be taken? 2. Is the project served by safe and adequate public transportation services? 3. Is the project safely accessible to vehicles and is the vehicle parking adequate, including parking for moving vans/trucks? 4. Does the project facilitate pedestrian movement (sidewalks pavement markings, landscaping, pedestrian-activated signal lights or pedestrian overpasses)? 5. Is the project area served by bicycle lanes or trails and does the project provide parking for bicycles, including covered secure parking for employees and residents? 6. Overall, will the existing and reasonably foreseeable transportation facilities and services be adequate to meet the needs of the project? Will it overload existing or proposed transportation service or conversely, create a situation whereby facilities are seriously underused? 7. Will the project itself cause a significant adverse impact on the local or regional transportation system? 8. Is the project accessible to the elderly and disabled? 9. Have special parking spaces been designated for exclusive use by the handicapped? 10. Are there special transportation issues (programs for the elderly, handicapped, bridge clearance for trucks, emergency vehicle access) which have not been adequately provided for? 11. Will the project serve to reduce the mobility of any group? 12. Will the users of the project be encouraged to use both auto and public transit? 13. Will the project create any safety hazard? Have curbs been designed with wheelchair ramps, have pedestrian activated signal lights or pedestrian overpasses been included in plans where needed? Is the traffic light timing adequate for elderly pedestrians?

Natural Features	Assessment Questions
<p>Water Resources (Groundwater / Surface Water)</p>	<p>Groundwater</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the site subject to rapid water withdrawal problems which change the depth or character of the water table, affect water supply, and/or vegetation? 2. Will the project use groundwater for its water supply? If so, is the groundwater safe for use for the intended purposes? 3. Are there a large number of wells, or wells that pump large quantities of water from the water table near the proposed project site? 4. Will lowered water table require deep pumping for water? 5. Are septic systems being used? 6. Is there a large variance in the water table elevation? A high seasonal water table can prevent proper functioning of septic tank drain fields. 7. Have septic disposal systems been properly designed, installed and maintained to prevent effluent from contaminating groundwater supplies? 8. Is there impact on a sole source aquifer? 9. Will the project substantially reduce groundwater recharge due to increase in impervious surface are? If so, are sensitive groundwater dependent features (e.g. rare wetlands) present that could be affected? If yes, have appropriate measures been included in the design to promote groundwater recharge? <p>Surface Water</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Are there visual or other indication of water quality problems on or near the site (e.g., algae blooms or state listing as an impaired stream/waterway)? Will the riparian buffer (i.e., natural wooded buffer adjacent to a stream) be maintained in a conservation easement or, conversely, diminished damaged or destroyed? 11. Will the project involve discharge of sewage effluent into surface water bodies? If so, will it meet state, federal and other applicable standards? 12. Will the project involve a substantial increase in impervious surface area, and, if so, have runoff control measures and/or permeable surfaces been included in the design? 13. Will the project affect surface water flows or water levels in ponds as a result of excessive groundwater well pumping?
<p>Unique Natural Features</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are natural resources/unique natural features visible on site or in the vicinity? Will any such resources be adversely affected, or will they adversely affect the project (e.g. caves, cliffs, vistas/view sheds, canyons, waterfalls, sand dunes, or tree stands)? 2. Will the proposed project location, construction, or activities of project users adversely impact unique natural features on or near the site? 3. Will the project either destroy or isolate from public or scientific access the unique natural feature? 4. Will the unique feature pose safety hazards for a proposed development?
<p>Vegetation and Wildlife</p>	<p>Vegetation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the project damage or destroy existing remnant plant communities, especially rare or endangered species? 2. Will the project damage or destroy plant species that are legally protected by state or local ordinances? 3. Will the project damage or destroy trees without replacement and landscaping? 4. Will the project create environmental conditions which might threaten the survival of existing vegetation particularly changes in the native plant community habitats? 5. Will the project create problems by introducing nuisance or non-indigenous species of vegetation that may be ecologically disruptive, be invasive, threaten survival of indigenous plant habitats, or disrupt agricultural or silvicultural activities? <p>Wildlife</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Will the project create special hazards for animal life? What type and number of animals will be affected and how? 7. Will the project damage or destroy existing wildlife habitats? 8. Does the project site host any species that are monitored or listed by local,

	<p>state, tribal or the federal government?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Will the project create conditions (e.g., generate excessive noise, introduce pesticide usage) that could harm or harass wildlife species that are nationally, regionally or locally rare or protected by state or local ordinance?10. Will the project impact migratory birds? (Most birds protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act are not included in the Endangered Species Act, yet are protected by similar protections against a “taking” of bird nest or eggs. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be required. Construction activities should occur outside of the migratory bird nesting season, alternatively, the site should be surveyed for migratory bird nest prior to construction).11. Will the project damage or destroy existing wildlife habitats (e.g., removal or blockage of wildlife corridors, such as a riparian buffer)?12. Will excessive grading alter the groundwater levels and thus cause death of trees and ground cover which in turn diminish animal habitat?13. Will the project damage game fish habitat or spawning grounds? When answering this question, off-site damage resulting from erosion and storm water run-off should be considered.14. Will the project create conditions favorable to the proliferation of pest species?
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