

Project Description Standard

Version: 1.7

Purpose

The purpose of the Project Description Guideline (Item 3 on the LR Form) is to direct applicants to provide sufficient descriptive information about any discretionary or ministerial land use action and any development project that would be facilitated by the application. The Project Description is a document which conveys information in written form to the Department of City Planning, the City Planning Commission, local Community Boards, elected officials and the general public. As such, it is imperative that the Project Description is clear, concise and covers all pertinent information.

When to Use

The Project Description is a required component of most land use applications for discretionary or ministerial actions filed with the Department of City Planning. DCP will confirm application requirements with the applicant and applicant's representatives at the Interdivisional Meeting.

Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout DCP application standards, and applicants should use these terms when describing their proposed project.

- **Project Area:** refers to all property that would be subject to the proposed actions.
- **Development Site:** refers to all property to be improved as part of the specific development proposed by the applicant, which the land use actions are proposed to facilitate.

Typically, the Development Site and the Project Area will comprise the same property or properties, unless the application is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment covering an area greater than an applicant's property, or a large-scale special approval involving multiple tax lots. In these cases, the Development Site may be one of several tax lots within the broader Project Area.

- **Lot or Zoning Lot:** A lot or zoning lot is a tract of land comprising a single tax lot or two or more adjacent tax lots within a block. An apartment building on a single zoning lot, for example, may contain separate condominium units, each occupying its own tax lot. Similarly, a building containing a row of townhouses may occupy several separate tax lots within a single zoning lot, or two or more detached homes on one zoning lot may each have its own tax lot.

The zoning lot is the basic unit for zoning regulations and may be subdivided into two or more zoning lots, and two or more adjoining zoning lots on the same block may be merged, provided that all resulting zoning lots comply with applicable regulations.

- **Surrounding Area:** refers to an area approximately 600 feet beyond the edge of the Project Area boundary.

Project Description Overview

In creating the Project Description, the applicant must provide a clear explanation of the action(s) requested and the reason(s) for each action. The guidelines presented here provide an organized outline of required information to ensure that all essential information is included, and to facilitate review of the application. The Project Description consists of two elements:

1. On the Land Use Application Form, the applicant shall provide a short, approximately 300-word, description of the proposed project, the needed land use actions, and any development that would be facilitated by the land use actions. This can be the same description as the one prepared for the Pre-Application Statement, if the project has not changed since the description was submitted.
2. A detailed Project Description shall be attached to the application as “Attachment 3”. An outline of the “Attachment 3” follows below, and a template is available in Microsoft Word on the DCP website. The Project Description must be written in narrative form, using full sentences and paragraphs.

Land Use Form Summary Statement – (on the Land Use Application)

The space on the LR Form should be used to provide a concise one or two sentence summary (approx. 300 characters) of the proposed project: the location, the zoning districts, and the reason for the proposal. If the proposed project is intended to facilitate a development project, include how it would facilitate the development, and the specifics of the development, as concisely as possible. For example:

Sample

The Octave Development Corporation proposes the rezoning of two underutilized blocks in Symphony Valley, in the Borough of WQXR, CD 32, from an M1-3 district to an R5A district with a C1-1 overlay. The proposed zoning map change would facilitate the development of not-for-profit senior musician housing building with retail stores on the ground floor. The proposed building would not be allowed under the existing M1-3 district. (67 words)

Attached Detailed Project Description – “Attachment 3”

It is strongly suggested that the applicant follow the outline listed below. A template is also available in Microsoft Word format, and includes the following headings with appropriate content to be included under each heading. The Project Description must be written in narrative form, using full sentences and paragraphs.

1. Introduction

- State the applicant’s name.
- Identify the location of the proposed project, including the number of blocks, and the current and proposed zoning.

- Include a summary description of the action or actions requested as part of the application.
- If the proposed actions are intended to facilitate a related development project, identify the development, and explain how the land use action would facilitate such development.
- Identify any other actions associated with this proposal, either as part of this application or apart from this application (BSA Variances, for example).
- **FOR CITY MAP CHANGE:** Name the applicant(s), the proposed change to the City Map, and its purpose. To describe the changes to the City Map use language from the titles of the Application Map and Area Map. For example: The applicant is proposing a change to the City Map involving the elimination, discontinuance and closing of 1st Avenue between 2nd Street and 3rd Street; the establishment of 4th Avenue between Jones Street and Grace Street; and the establishment of parkland on 2nd Street between Highland Avenue and Lowland Place.

2. Background

- Describe any land use action approvals that affect the proposed Project Area. Land use actions that are relevant include recent DCP-initiated re-zonings and recent landmark designations or landmark district designations.
 - Any land use action approvals are relevant.
 - Actions within a minimum 600' radius beyond the Project Area boundary, as shown on the Area Map should be described.
 - DCP's website can be used to learn a great deal of information about recent actions in the surrounding 600'. The Land Use Application Tracking application or LUCATS can provide information about applications in the surrounding area. LUCATS can be accessed here:
<http://a030-lucats.nyc.gov/lucats/welcome.aspx>
 - Additionally, to find City Planning Commission reports for specific, known projects from the recent past, applicants can use the CPC Report page on DCP's website:
<http://a030-cpc.nyc.gov/html/cpc/index.aspx>
- Describe any prior approvals and/or land use actions that affect the proposed project, including previous actions by the City Planning Commission, the Board of Standards and Appeals or other City, State or Federal agencies.
- Include any other pertinent background information deemed necessary.

3. Description of the Surrounding Area

- Define broadly where in NYC the Project Area is located by stating the Borough, Community District, and any neighborhood names that are commonly used.
 - The neighborhood is defined as at least a 600 foot radius from the outer boundary of the project area, or rezoning area.
 - Significant neighborhood features, resources, amenities, or employers just outside of the 600' radius should also be noted.
- Describe the existing land uses in the immediate surrounding area (600' minimum) around the proposed Project Area.

- Describe the prevailing built form (apartment buildings, rowhouses, small detached homes, etc), number of floors (typical), and major land uses
- Include a description of the following:
 - Major thoroughfares
 - Mass Transit, including subway lines, station names and nearby bus service
 - Major institutions, including medical facilities, and schools
 - Open space, parks, and other notable features
 - Other pertinent information as necessary (Landmarks, Historic Districts, major buildings, waterfront, etc)
- Briefly describe the existing zoning districts within the Project Area/in which the Project Area is located.
- Describe any zoning special districts, designated Inclusionary Housing Areas, FRESH areas, and other special zoning/policy areas (Urban Renewal areas, or Industrial Business Zones) in which the Project Area is located.

4. Description of the Proposed Project Area

- Define specifically where in the Borough or neighborhood the Project Area is located by using street names and intersections, tax blocks and addresses.
- Describe the existing land uses in the proposed Project Area.
- Describe the prevailing built form (apartment buildings, rowhouses, small detached homes, etc), number of floors (typical), and any major land uses.
- Be sure to include details of the existing conditions on properties affected by the proposed land use action, whether under the applicant's control or not.
- Indicate the existing land uses within each zoning district, with regard to use, bulk and height of buildings.
- Include a discussion of similar concerns for adjacent properties and properties across the street from the Project Area.
- **FOR CITY MAP CHANGE**, also include the following:
 - Describe any and all pertinent technical attributes of the street(s) in question. Include street width, traffic direction, ownership, etc.
 - Describe the existing conditions adjacent to and/or underlying the subject street.

5. Description of Proposed Development Site (if different than the Project Area)

- Adequately and thoroughly describe the borough, tax blocks and tax lots within the proposed Development Site.
- If the Development Site is on a zoning lot that contains multiple tax lots, please explain.
- Mention any relevant addresses if applicable, or helpful to the reader.
- Describe the existing built conditions of the zoning lot(s) that is the proposed Development Site (if different than the Project Area).
- The Development Site description shall include a discussion of:
 - Size of the zoning lot(s), in square feet or acres
 - Existing land uses of buildings on the proposed development site
 - Previous land uses if relevant (for example, for properties with vacant buildings)
 - Existing bulk (FAR, floor area in SF, number of units)
 - Existing height (number of stories, building height)
 - Existing open space (yards, courts, open space ratios/ lot coverage)
 - Existing number of parking spaces
 - Existing driveway and curb cut locations and dimensions of curb cuts, as well as distance between existing curb cuts and the nearest intersection
 - Approximate year(s) the building(s) was constructed (or enlarged, or extended),
 - Street(s) upon which the zoning lot(s) front, the street(s) which bound the site, and the width of those streets, or whether they are narrow or wide (as appropriate)
 - Other pertinent information, as necessary.

6. Description of the Proposed Development

- Describe in detail the development/construction/enlargement/conversion/change of use/extension, etc. that the applicant is proposing on the Development Site
- Why is the applicant proposing this development?
- Where on the zoning lot is this proposed development to be located?
- The description of the proposed development shall include:
 - Proposed land uses
 - Proposed bulk (FAR, total floor area in SF, floor area per use, number of units)
 - Proposed height (number of stories, height of building, setbacks)
 - Proposed open space (yards, courts, open space ratios/ lot coverage)
 - Proposed number of parking spaces
 - Proposed driveway and curb cut locations and dimensions of curb cuts, as well as distance between existing curb cuts and the nearest intersection.
 - Other pertinent information, as necessary

- If the development is/will be within an existing/proposed Inclusionary Housing designated area, and the applicant intends to provide/preserve affordable housing pursuant to the City's IH Program, please describe the proposal.

7. Action(s) Necessary to Facilitate the Project

- Describe the action(s) required to facilitate the proposed project. If there is more than one action requested, list them all and describe each one accordingly.

For example, in addition to the zoning map amendment, there may be a zoning text amendment to establish an Inclusionary Housing designated area or an MX district, Special Permit, street mapping or de-mapping, etc.

- Explain the rationale for the proposed land use actions.
- Where applicable, fully describe the extent to which the proposed development complies and conforms to the applicable proposed district regulations/requested actions.
- For a zoning map amendment, indicate the proposed zoning districts. Compare the proposed zoning, or proposed actions with what is permissible today, and explain why the proposed zoning districts are appropriate.
- If the application requires a Zoning Text Amendment include the section numbers for the relevant sections and explain why the proposed text amendment is appropriate.
- If an application involves a Certification, Authorization or Special Permit:
 - Provide the Section of the Zoning Resolution pursuant to which the action is requested
 - Provide the Sections the requested actions seeks to modify or waive
 - Describe the type of waiver (use, bulk: height, FAR, other, etc)
 - Describe what portion of the building or zoning lot the waiver affects
 - Discuss why the waiver is necessary relative to the Zoning requirements
 - Quantify the extent of the modification that would be needed under the waiver requested. (For example, a waiver for the height of a building may increase allowed height by 20 additional feet)

- Describe any other actions needed pursuant to any other City, State or Federal agency.

8. Conclusion

- Summarize the Project Description and explain why the proposed land use actions are required in order to facilitate the project and/or any development proposed.

- Explain how the proposed action is consistent with existing or projected land uses and zoning in the area and general public policy.
- Describe how the proposed project would promote public health and safety, facilitate economic development or provide other public benefits.

Exceptions

Most land use applications filed with the Department of City Planning are required to include a Project Description that contains the information described above, and should be presented as in the outline described above. DCP will confirm application requirements with the applicant and applicant's representatives at the Interdivisional Meeting.

For More Information

See attached Detailed Project Description Guideline Template.

Related Documents

The following relevant documents are related to this standard:

Document	Description
LUR Item 3 Template	Detailed Project Description Template for the LU Attachment 3: Project Description

Revision History

Date	Version	Description	Author
11/2/11	1	Guidelines for Project Description Item 3 LR Form	Beth Lebowitz
2/8/12	1.1	Revisions	David Parish
06/07/12	1.2	Revisions and edits following Standards Forum	David Parish
06/11/12	1.3	Revisions following SME review	David Parish
06/26/12	1.4	Revisions for City Map Change Actions	Irene Sadko/David Parish
03/13/2013	1.5	Revisions to change titles in sections 3 &4	David Parish
06/13/13	1.6	Edit to fix mistake	D. Parish
09/16/13	1.7	Administrative Correction	D. Parish