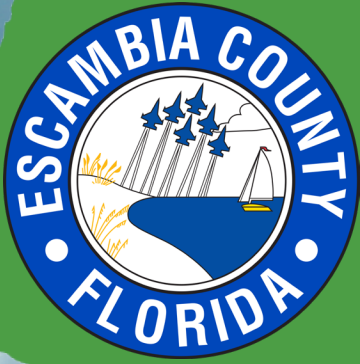
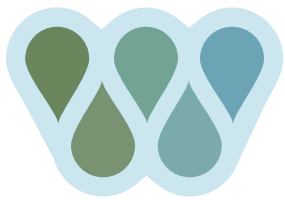




ESCAMBIA COUNTY GUIDANCE

CONDITIONAL USES

August 2025



**COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE
CENTER**
AT THE WATER INSTITUTE



This work was funded by Escambia County and led by The Water Institute and Williams Sale Partnership Ltd. (WSP). Additional technical and financial support was provided by the Community Resilience Center at The Water Institute. The Water Institute is a not-for-profit, independent, non-advocacy applied research institute dedicated to reducing the vulnerability of people, communities, ecosystems, and economies through transformative approaches to interconnected environmental and social challenges. In furtherance of these goals The Water Institute established the Community Resilience Center whose mission is to increase community-led resilience in the Gulf Coast by addressing systemic barriers and making available more capacity and expertise to support a broad array of communities.

DeJong, A., Bentley, A., Haertling, A., Storck, H., Wowk, K. 2025. Escambia County Guidance: Conditional Uses. The Water Institute and WSP.

*Cover image: Escambia County seen from above. (Photo credit George/Adobe Stock)
Escambia County (Graphic credit Danlersk/Adobe Stock)*

Contents

Purpose	2
Section I: Incompatible Land Uses	3
Section II: Compliance Process Guidance	5
A. General Compatibility	6
B. Facilities and Services	7
C. On-Site Circulation	8
D. Nuisances and Hazards	9
E. Solid Waste	10
F. Screening and Buffering	11
G. Signs and Lighting	12
H. Site Characteristics	13
I. Use Requirements	14
Final Determination: Other Conditions of Approval	15
Section III: Incompatible Land Uses Checklists	16
County Staff Checklist	16
Developer Checklist	20
Appendix 1: Additional Public Survey And Public Meeting Comments	23
Appendix 2: Legal Citations On Expected Impacts	25

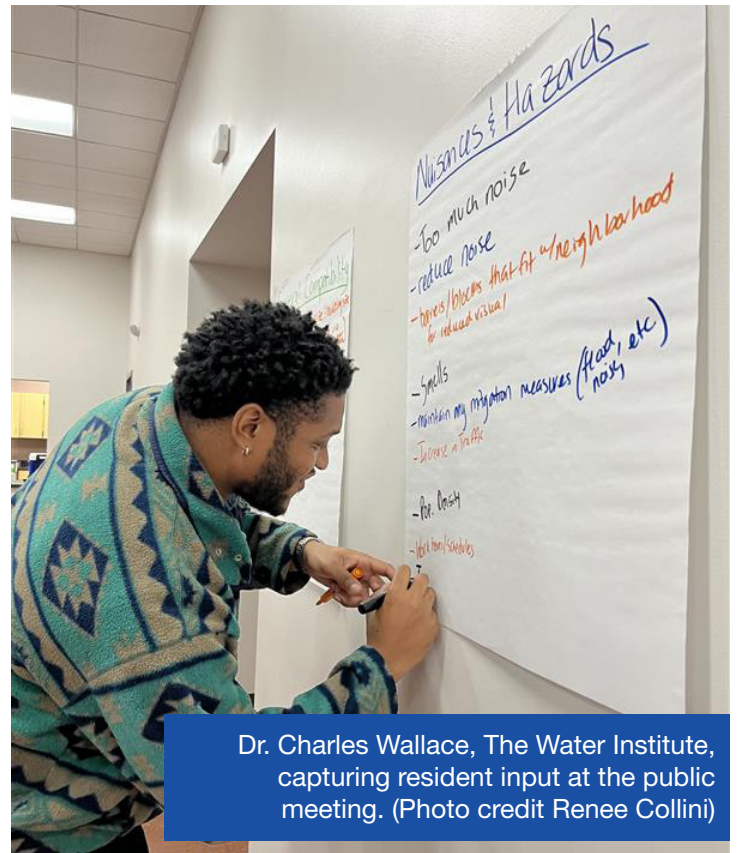
Purpose

Neighborhoods in Escambia County have varying exposure to incompatible land uses¹ that can be considered a “nuisance” to communities. To discourage future impacts on communities, and in particular on those neighborhoods that have historically faced increased levels of exposure, this guidance document is intended to support Escambia County planning staff in considering and interpreting criteria for conditional uses when preparing reports for the Board of Adjustment. The Land Development Code (LDC) of Escambia County details the special conditions and circumstances for conditional uses in Chapter 2, Article 6, Section 2-6.4 of the code. Several of the County’s zoning districts require applications for specific land uses to go through this conditional use process. For example, the Rural residential (RR) district (Sec. 3-2.3) requires that a request for salvage yard use must go through the conditional use process. If a nuisance use is listed as a conditional use, it must go through this process. This guidance document provides considerations when examining the conditional use provisions laid out in Sec. 2-6.4.

It is important to also recognize what this guidance document does not provide. This guidance document specifically applies to conditional use review only and does not provide any additional procedural mechanisms for such uses when they are by right, meaning that a property may be used in a way that is permitted by the current zoning regulations without needing special permits or variances. This guidance uses categories to consider the potential impacts of nuisance uses in the conditional review process. While those same categories may be relevant to understanding impacts of such uses more generally, a by right use would not be required to provide any of the information below. Finally, this guidance document is not legal counsel and is not legally binding.

This document is separated into three main sections. Section I: Incompatible Land Uses describes uses that are incompatible with the surrounding neighborhoods and provides a summary of public input gathered to help assess which land uses were perceived to be most incompatible with neighborhoods. Section II: Compliance Process Guidance discusses the conditions for compliance review in the conditional use process, and for each condition, includes the specific descriptive text from the LDC, provides an interpretation of the text, and then provides guidance on questions county staff may consider when reviewing applications for incompatible land uses in the conditional use process. Finally, Section III: Incompatible Land Uses Checklists simplifies the guidance provided for each condition into two checklists that are tailored to support the review process for the three incompatible uses prioritized by residents as having the highest concern. One checklist is for county staff to support the review process. A second checklist mirrors the staff checklist but is less detailed and can be offered to developers to provide transparency in the conditional use process.

¹ An incompatible land use can be considered a use that, if not mitigated, could result in real or perceived harmful impacts to nearby residents and neighborhoods.



Dr. Charles Wallace, The Water Institute, capturing resident input at the public meeting. (Photo credit Renee Collini)

Section I: Incompatible Land Uses

While the terms *incompatible land use* or *nuisance use* are not specifically defined in the LDC, an incompatible land use can be considered a use that, if not mitigated, could result in real or perceived harmful impacts to nearby residents and neighborhoods. For the purposes of this work, such uses were identified in collaboration with county staff and are included in Box 1: Incompatible Land Uses. While this document provides considerations that may apply to all uses listed in Box 1 in the conditional use process, it especially focuses on the top three nuisance uses identified by Escambia County residents through a public input process that included a mailed and electronic survey, as well as a public meeting.

Escambia County residents attending the public meeting. (Photo credit Nicole Ricketts)



PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

The public survey resulted in a ranking of the incompatible land use listed in Box 1: Incompatible Land Uses; this survey asked residents to indicate how concerned they would be to live next to one of these land uses, the results of which can be seen in Figure 1. A total of 393 complete responses were received. This meets the survey response rate target number to reach a 95% confidence level, meaning that if the county population were sampled repeatedly, the results would be very similar and reflect the larger population's preferences. The three land uses that received the highest number of "very concerned" responses were hazardous waste storage or disposal (362 responses), chemical manufacturing (345 responses) and solid waste landfills and transfer stations (325 responses) (Figure 1).

Beyond the ranking of incompatible land uses by level of concern, the survey asked whether there were additional land uses residents were concerned with that were not on the survey list, and whether residents wanted to offer further comments. Appendix 1: Additional Public Survey And Public Meeting Comments provides a summary of additional comments from the public survey.

Box 1: Incompatible Land Uses (identified by technical and county staff)

- 24/7 drive through business
- Auto repair shops
- Bars and nightclubs
- Borrow pits
- Chemical manufacturing
- Compost facilities
- Concentrated animal feeding operations
- Concrete batch plant
- Concrete crushing facility
- Construction and equipment yards
- Event venues and stadiums
- Food processing plants
- Hazardous waste storage or disposal
- High-volume retail centers and shopping malls
- Large distribution centers and warehouses
- Meat processing
- Recyclers and scrap metal yards
- Salvage yards and junk yards
- Solar farms
- Solid waste landfills and transfer stations
- Storage of materials - bulk
- Storage of materials - heavy equipment
- Storage of materials - indoor/mini storage
- Storage of materials - outdoor
- Storage of materials - vehicles
- Tattoo parlors
- Trucking terminals
- Wastewater treatment

Resident Concern With Incompatible Land Uses

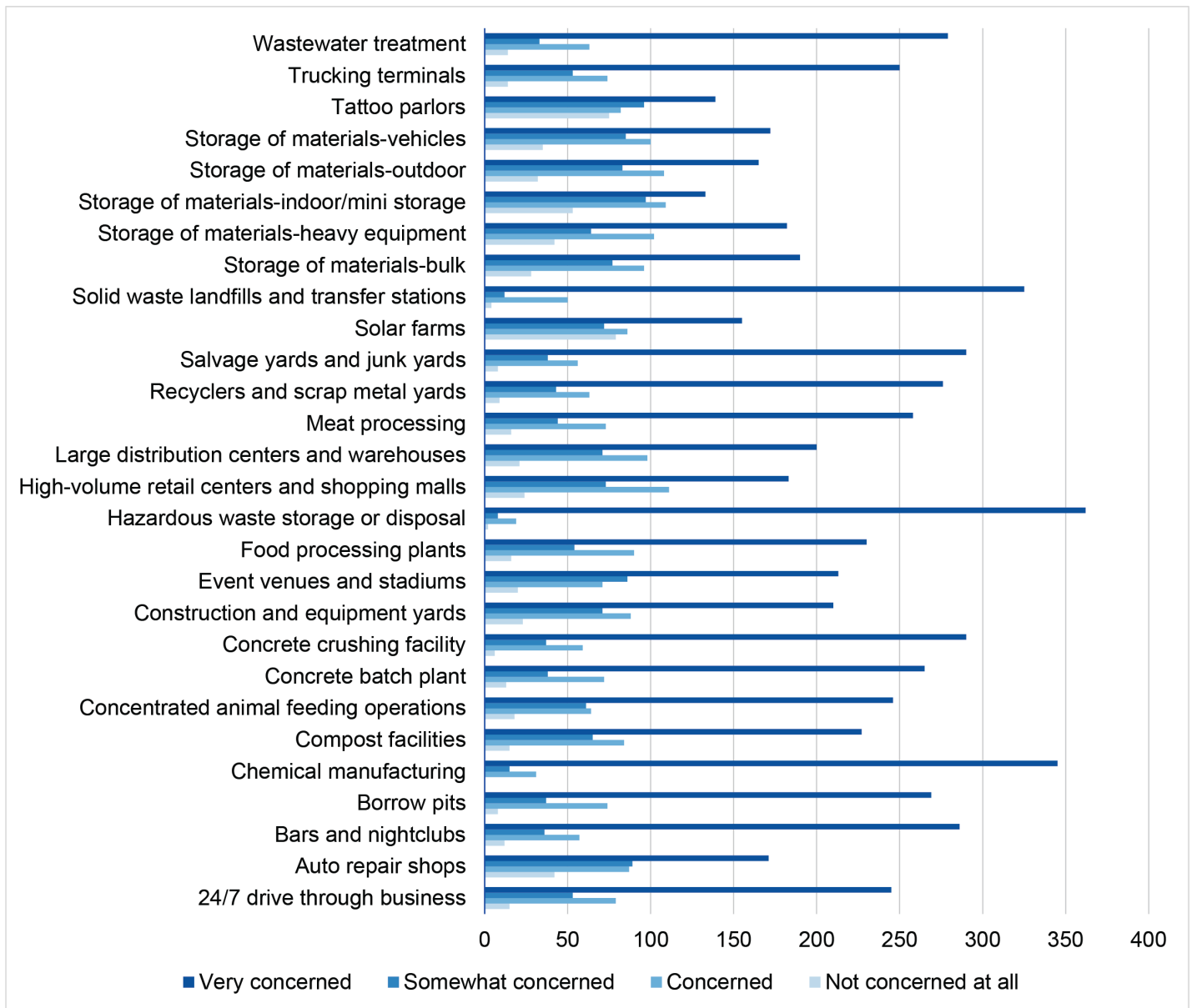


Figure 1: Escambia County public input to a survey asking residents to rank their level of concern with living next to a list of incompatible land uses. The survey resulted in 393 complete responses.

Appendix 1: Additional Public Survey And Public Meeting Comments also provides a summary of comments received at the public meeting. It is important to note, however, that while additional land uses were identified at the public meeting that raised concerns, such as dispensaries, and additional details were collected on “why” specific incompatible land uses were concerning, the results of the survey were unchanged.

Therefore, as stated above, while the following guidance may be useful to consider against all incompatible land uses, the guidance and the checklists that follow are most directly relevant to the top three incompatible land uses of highest concern raised by Escambia County residents: hazardous waste storage or disposal, chemical manufacturing, and solid waste landfills and transfer stations.

Section II: Compliance Process Guidance

Prior To Compliance Review

Before reviewing a conditional use application for compliance, a few up-front considerations can assist in a review for potential community impacts.

1. Consider the intended use and determine the primary potential impacts (e.g., noise, dust, truck traffic, etc.).
2. Determine what an appropriate “immediate area” is for the given use. Is it just the adjacent properties, or is it a broader radius around the parcel?
3. Review adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood. What uses are directly next to the property in question? Does the neighborhood already have similar uses or similar impacts from different uses?

Having these factors in mind prior to reviewing the application will assist the reviewer in using this guidance. Table 1: Expected Impacts of Priority Incompatible Land Uses also provides a list of expected impacts for the priority incompatible land uses, which will facilitate consideration of the above questions. This table is informed by peer-reviewed literature and legal cases, as well as input from Escambia County residents.

Table 1: Expected Impacts of Priority Incompatible Land Uses

Incompatible Land Use	Description of Use	Expected Impacts Associated with Incompatible Land Use
Hazardous Waste Storage or Disposal	Facilities where solid waste comprised of physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics may pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly transported, disposed of, stored, treated, or otherwise managed (Sec. 6-0.3).	Air Quality Impacts Water Quality/Groundwater Pollution (General) Public Health Impacts
Chemical Manufacturing	Facilities that chemically transform materials or substances into new products, including the assembling of component parts, and the blending of materials (Sec. 6-0.3).	Air Quality Impacts Water Quality/Groundwater Pollution (General) Public Health Impacts
Solid Waste Landfills and Transfer Stations	A disposal facility that requires state permitting and engineered environmental protection systems for the placement of wastes, or industrial facilities where non-hazardous solid waste from collection vehicles is consolidated, temporarily stored, and may be sorted, for subsequent transport to other facilities for processing or final disposal (Sec. 6-0.3).	Dust and Air Quality Impacts Noise Truck Traffic Water Quality/ Groundwater Pollution (General) Debris and Environmental Pollution

Code Provisions: Compliance Review

Per the LDC, the developer “has the burden of presenting competent substantial evidence that establishes each of the following conditions:” a) General compatibility; b) Facilities and services; c) On-site circulation; d) Nuisances and hazards; e) Solid waste; f) Screening and buffering; g) Signs and lighting; h) Site characteristics; and i) Use requirements.

While each condition is briefly defined, some language used may be open to interpretation. This clearer guidance expands on each definition to provide firmer expectations for county staff and developers when reviewing or submitting applications for incompatible land uses.

A. General Compatibility

“The proposed use can be conducted and operated in a manner that is compatible with adjacent properties and other properties in the immediate area.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC specifically highlights the operations of the proposed use. Incompatible land uses that involve operations with significant impacts, such as noise, air pollution, groundwater impacts, truck traffic, or intrusive lighting should demonstrate that they are compatible with adjacent properties. The demonstration of compatibility should consider the full range of operations of the proposed use. For example, the impacts of conducting and operating the site at both its least and most busy days and times should be considered.

It may also be reasonable for the County to expect that some incompatible land uses have a larger “immediate area” than others, and in this regard it may be useful to consider both the adjacency area as well as the impact area. The adjacency area refers to the land immediately bordering or in proximity to the development site. The primary concern with an adjacency area is compatibility of the direct interactions between the new development and its adjacent neighbors. The impact area is the region that will be directly affected by a proposed land development project. This includes not only the project site, but also the broader area where the project’s consequences will be felt. The impacts can be positive or negative and are a key part of the environmental review and planning process. For example, if a resident of a property can hear and smell a waste transfer station, that may constitute the impact area, even if their property is not directly adjacent to the proposed conditional use.

Regarding interpretation of compatible, the LDC defines compatible in Chapter 6 as “a condition in which land uses, activities or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use, activity, or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use, activity, or condition.” This definition allows consideration of both direct and indirect impacts for an area proximate to a land use. It also acknowledges that conditions over time are an important element of compatibility. This text provides leeway for the County to specify that indirect negative impacts may accrue over time to a community in relative proximity (or the impact area), rather than just adjacent to the proposed conditional use.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *General Compatibility* include:

- A.1. What kind of negative impacts can be expected? Are they direct or indirect?
- A.2. Based on the intended use, what is a prudent definition of “immediate area”? Should prevailing winds and/or groundwater flows be considered in the definition of immediate area?
- A.3. How could the impacts of the use change over time? How might adjacent properties or properties in the impact area be negatively impacted in the future?
- A.4. Does the immediate area already have uses that have similar impacts as the proposed use? Consider that the cumulative impacts may be significant while the impacts from each individual use may not be significant on their own.

B. Facilities and Services

“Public facilities and services, especially those with adopted levels of service, will be available, and will provide adequate capacity to serve the proposed use consistent with capacity requirements.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC text defining facilities and services addresses publicly provided and maintained facilities and services (e.g., roadways, water, wastewater) needed to support a proposed conditional use. The availability, or capacity, of these facilities and services must be adequate to support both proposed and existing uses on the site and in the relevant service area. The text further specifies that adopted levels of service, if they exist for the facility or service in question, should be used to determine adequacy.

The LDC defines public facilities as, “Major capital improvements, including transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, stormwater management, potable water, educational, and recreational facilities” (Sec. 6-0.3). Facilities may be provided directly by the County, or by designated public facility providers such as the Emerald Coast Utilities Authority, which provides water, wastewater/sewer, and sanitation services.

Determining compliance for this condition requires understanding the service needs of each proposed conditional use and comparing that to available services. If there is not enough existing, excess capacity to meet the proposed use’s needs, then there are not current adequate services for that proposed use. The scale or intensity of the proposed use may need to be decreased to a point where there is adequate capacity, or additional new capacity may be needed to fill the gap.

Chapter 5 of the LDC, General Development Standards, includes Article 2 – Adequate Public Facilities (Concurrency). This article “establishes land development standards for public facilities that implement comprehensive plan policies requiring wastewater, solid waste, stormwater, and potable water, to be available when needed by proposed development. It is the intent of these standards that new development bears its fair share of the costs of providing adequate public facilities. The adequacy of these essential facilities shall be demonstrated in the ability to maintain their adopted levels of service concurrent with all existing and additionally proposed demands.”

Roadways are an important public facility that should be considered when reviewing a proposed conditional use, ensuring that the adjacent and nearby roadways can accommodate the quantity and type of travel the use will generate. The LDC notes, however, that “Escambia County does not require roadway concurrency for development; however, the county monitors and requires intersection analysis” (Sec. 5-2.3).

Adequacy of fire and emergency service coverage for the proposed use should also be reviewed. If the proposed use involves hazardous materials, specialized fire and emergency equipment may be required. Availability of necessary, specialized equipment should be confirmed.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Facilities and Services* include:

- B.1. Which public facilities and services will the proposed use require? Is there sufficient information in the application to understand the quantity of public facilities/services that will be required by the proposed use, and the intensity of that use? How might the use impact available water, sewer, and power capacity?
- B.2. What are the anticipated roadway impacts (e.g., increased volume and/or vehicle weights)?

- B.3. Could the use have increased need for emergency services either from on-site worker accidents or a facility incident? Would a specialized response be needed?
- B.4. Do the identified facilities/services have adopted service level standards, and if yes, what are they? What are the associated service areas?
- B.5. What is the service capacity currently available in the location? Is there enough excess capacity to accommodate the proposed new use?
- B.6. If there is inadequate capacity, how might the gap be met? Can the proposed use be scaled down to require less, or is there the ability to create additional capacity?

C. On-Site Circulation

“Ingress to and egress from the site and its structures will be sufficient, particularly regarding vehicle and pedestrian safety and convenience, efficient traffic flow and control, on-site parking and loading, and emergency vehicle access.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC describes the need to review how people and vehicles get into, out of, and move around on the proposed site. Factors influencing on-site circulation include number of motorized vehicles, types (e.g., size, turning radius) of vehicles, location of drive aisles and parking areas, loading areas, pedestrian walkways and crossings, and placement of buildings and structures. Further, this text allows staff to consider convenience of vehicle and pedestrian facilities, suggesting that conditions beyond merely adequate (i.e., safe) may be sought.

Ingress, egress, and internal circulation should be managed within the site, with minimal negative impacts external to the site. Applications should consider access and traffic patterns of adjacent and nearby uses, and proposed uses should not negatively impact those existing conditions. As an example, delivery trucks should not queue in travel lanes of the main roadway or block driveways of neighboring uses. Proposed uses must also ensure safe and efficient access for emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks, which may have specific ingress, turnaround, and egress requirements.

Developers can use traffic and circulation studies to demonstrate compliance with this review element. These studies may be reviewed by the Engineering Department’s Transportation and Traffic Operations group. Measures such as access control measures and pedestrian and vehicular signage can help mitigate potentially negative impacts and provide sufficient on-site circulation. If the impacts cannot be mitigated, the scale, intensity, or type of the proposed use may not be appropriate for the selected site.

Finally, requirements for certain elements of on-site circulation, including access, parking, and loading may be found in the LDC. Chapter 5 Article 5 – Streets and Access includes standards for street design, site access, traffic control, sidewalks, and bikeways; Article 6 – Parking and Loading includes parking demand, stall and aisle design, off-site and joint use parking, loading, and unloading.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *On-Site Circulation* include:

- C.1. What is the current condition of on-site circulation for vehicles and pedestrians? What are the circulation patterns for adjacent and nearby sites? Are there nearby uses that generate a large number of trips, especially at specific times of the day?
- C.2. Does the application include a reasonable program for how motorized vehicles will be accommodated within the site? Does it consider type and volume of vehicles, traffic flow, and efficiency?
- C.3. Can all traffic and circulation impacts be managed internal to the site? Are mitigation efforts (e.g., signage, access control) described?
- C.4. How are materials associated with the use that are coming into or out of the site controlled, such that off-site impacts are minimized?
- C.5. Does the site layout locate pedestrian and vehicular facilities in a way that is both safe and convenient for users? Can emergency vehicles be safely and efficiently accommodated on-site?
- C.6. Are all relevant standards in Chapter 5 Article 5 (Streets and Access) and Article 4 (Parking and Loading) met?

D. Nuisances and Hazards

“The scale, intensity, and operation of the uses will not generate unreasonable noise, glare, dust, smoke, odor, vibration, electrical interference, or other nuisances and hazards for adjoining properties and other properties in the immediate area.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC states that a use’s scale, intensity, or operation will not create unreasonable nuisance or hazardous conditions on adjacent or nearby properties. Conditions described include noise, glare, dust, smoke, odor, vibration, and electrical interference. As with General Compatibility, it is reasonable to expect that some nuisance conditions may generate negative impacts for a larger “immediate area” than others, which may include both the adjacent and impact areas (as described above). The functional definition of “immediate area” may vary by scale and intensity of proposed use, as well as nuisance or hazard condition type.

Several of the described nuisance conditions are included in the County Noise Abatement Ordinance, Chapter 42, Article III, Noise. Metrics for acceptable and unacceptable levels of sound and noise are included. The LDC also provides General Development Standards specific to preventing adverse off-site impacts in Sec. 5-9.2. Nuisance conditions described include noise, vibrations, air pollutants (smoke, odor), fire and explosive hazards, glare, solid waste, and selected prohibited nuisance conditions. Sec. 5-9.3 supplements with code language specific to exterior lighting.

While “unreasonable” is not included in the LDC Definitions, the Noise Abatement Ordinance does describe what may be considered “unreasonably” loud in Sec. 42-64 (b). For other assessments of what might constitute unreasonable impacts to nearby properties, there are at least two potential methods of comparison. First, the County could compare the expected amount of nuisance and hazard conditions of the specific proposed conditional use against amounts generated by similar uses. Anything greater than comparable impacts might be considered unreasonable. Second, the County might compare the existing amount of glare, noise, etc., on nearby properties with the amount anticipated from the specific proposed conditional use. In this second method, there may be some increment of increased glare, for example, that would be deemed acceptable given a use change, but more glare in an area already receiving amounts of glare may be deemed unreasonable.

It is worth noting that “unreasonable” may vary depending on the adjacent use; for example, the amount of glare that may be reasonable for a commercial building adjacent to a new proposed conditional use may be much greater than the amount deemed reasonable for an adjacent residential building. Additionally, while one or two separate nuisance conditions may be judged acceptable, several may be unreasonable when taken together.

In any assessment, consideration should be given to potential strategies for mitigating off-site impacts (e.g., limiting hours of certain activities), as well as whether adjusting the scale, intensity, or operations of a proposed use would make it more appropriate for the selected site.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Nuisances and Hazards* include:

- D.1. What types of nuisances and hazards might the proposed conditional use generate? What noise, glare, dust, smoke, odor, vibration, and electrical interference impacts might the use generate?
- D.2. What are adjacent and nearby uses? What are existing nuisance or hazardous conditions for adjacent and nearby areas?
- D.3. What might the cumulative impacts of anticipated nuisances and hazards be on the immediate area, i.e., the combined effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions?
- D.4. How does the application mitigate or minimize potential nuisances or hazards? If the proposed conditional use’s scale, intensity, or operation were altered, would the negative impacts be reduced or removed?

E. Solid Waste

“All on-site solid waste containers will be appropriately located for functional access, limited off-site visibility and minimal odor and other nuisance impacts.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC describes the placement and condition for on-site solid waste containers. Functional access, limited off-site visibility, and minimized odor and other nuisance impacts are included as considerations.

As mentioned above, general odor and nuisance conditions are included in Sec. 5-9.2 of the LDC, as well as in Chapter 82 of the Code of Ordinances of Escambia County. Chapter 82 discusses solid waste, including odor and condition of containers, and required types and residential placement (Sec. 82-169). Size and quantity of on-site solid waste containers should also be considered.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Solid Waste* include:

- E.1. What types of solid waste containers are proposed? What are the dimensions, materials, and how many will the proposed conditional use need?
- E.2. Where on-site will the containers be located? Will they be accessible (for use and retrieval) and not visible from off-site? Would screening or buffering mitigate any potentially negative impacts?
- E.3. Are the containers designed to reduce nuisance conditions (e.g., odor, leakage, vectors)?
- E.4. Are the containers consistent with code language in LDC Sec. 5-9.2, and Chapter 82 of the Code of Ordinances?



Landscape of Escambia County, Florida.
(Photo credit Forestpath/Adobe Stock)

F. Screening and Buffering

“Where not otherwise required by the LDC, screening and buffering will be provided if appropriate to the proposed use and site.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC presents appropriate screening and buffering as an element for consideration in the conditional use process. It emphasizes meeting applicable requirements in the LDC and acknowledges that screening and buffering may still need to be provided for conditional uses, even if not otherwise required by the LDC.

Screening is defined in the LDC (Sec. 6-0.3) as “A method of visually shielding or obscuring a structure or use from view by fencing, walls, berms, or vegetation” while a buffer is a “designated area with natural or manmade features functioning to minimize or eliminate adverse impacts on adjoining land uses, including environmentally sensitive lands” (Sec. 6-0.3). These two definitions capture the importance of screening and buffering as strategies for mitigating both adverse visual, aesthetic, and environmental impacts.

Specific examples of screening and buffering are well defined in various instances where required throughout the LDC (e.g., for outdoor storage, service and loading areas, borrow pits, etc.). However, inclusion of this text in the compliance review process provides coverage for all other instances where screening and buffering may be appropriate but are not already clearly defined.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for Screening and Buffering include:

- F.1. Is the proposed use/site situated between zoning districts with distinctly different allowable uses and/or intensity of uses (e.g., commercial from industrial)? If so, there will be increased need for screening and buffering.
- F.2. What is the purpose of the screening and buffering, e.g., to reduce visual impact, provide noise reduction, limit smells and dust leaving the site, or other purposes?
- F.3. If screening and/or buffering are appropriate for the proposed use/site, what height, width, and opacity are needed to block public view? For example, would the proposed use/site need to be 100% blocked from public view, or is 75% sufficient?
- F.4. What screening and/or buffering materials, style, and colors would be most appropriate (e.g., landscaping or fencing) for compatibility with the proposed use/site?

G. Signs and Lighting

“All exterior signs and lights, whether attached or freestanding, will be compatible with adjoining properties and other properties in the immediate area, especially regarding glare and traffic safety.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC describes the need to ensure exterior signs and lighting are compatible with nearby properties. It states compatibility must be with both adjacent properties and those in the immediate area, and highlights glare and traffic safety as two important compatibility review criteria.

Chapter 5, Article 8 of the LDC contains code related to Outdoor Signs (Sec. 5-8). The purpose is to “provide reasonable, content-neutral, nondiscriminatory sign regulation through time, place, and manner of use.” (Sec. 5-8.1). Article 9 of that same Chapter contains general exterior lighting guidance, stating, “Lighting is to be located for safety and visual effect. With the exception of street lights, it shall be installed so as not to shine directly on adjacent property. Lighting shall avoid annoyance from brightness and glare.” (Sec. 5-9.3). It goes on to reference where guidance on beachfront lighting can be found in the code. Additionally, some zoning districts contain sign or lighting guidance; the Perdido Key town center overlay, for example, contains district-specific sign and lighting guidance for non-residential sites (Sec. 3-3.9).

Considering the LDC provides specific, extensive guidance on outdoor sign requirements in Article 8 and general lighting guidance in Article 9, the conditional use compliance review text can ensure proposed signs and lighting are compatible with the look and feel of other properties in the surrounding area. In citing ‘glare and traffic safety’ the text encourages staff to consider safety as well as visual impacts of signs and lighting.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for Signs and Lighting include:

- G.1. How do the project’s signs and lighting for the site comply with the requirements in the LDC?
- G.2. Are there lights or signs that the conditional use will require that cannot meet the requirements in the LDC? If so, how will the impacts be mitigated?



Escambia County seen from above.
(Photo credit George/Adobe Stock)

H. Site Characteristics

“The size, shape, location and topography of the site appear adequate to accommodate the proposed use, including setbacks, intensity, bulk, height, open space, and aesthetic considerations.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC describes how proposed uses should “fit” a site in terms of setbacks, intensity, open space, bulk, etc., and the site’s capacity to serve the proposed uses based on its existing topography, location, size, and shape. It gives weight to both functional and aesthetic considerations. Reviewing site characteristics is critical for ensuring that proposed uses align with a site’s physical characteristics, are appropriately scaled for the location/site, and that the site itself can accommodate the uses proposed.

A site’s size, location, and topography (i.e., its shape, elevation, features, landforms, etc.) must be able to support proposed uses while meeting all existing requirements, including the site’s:

- Setback requirements, which ensure a minimum distance from the property/boundary line to any structures on the site.
- Intensity requirements, which are defined by the LDC as an “objective measurement of the extent to which land may be developed or used, including the consumption or use of space above, on, or below the ground; the use of or demand on natural resources; and the use of or demand on facilities or services” (Sec. 6-0.3).
- Bulk requirements, which refer to the physical characteristics of a structure or building, including its size, shape, and placement on the site.
- Open space requirements, defined as “Land or portions of land preserved and protected, whether public or privately owned, and perpetually maintained and retained for active or passive recreation, for resource protection, or to meet lot coverage requirements. Open space includes required yards, developed recreation areas and improved recreation facilities, natural and landscaped areas, and common areas” (Sec. 6-0.3).
- Aesthetic requirements, which refer to the visual appearance and character of a site and its surrounding areas.

The site must also be able to accommodate onsite circulation and other elements with onsite spatial implications, as discussed in the compliance review.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Site Characteristics* include:

H.1. Does the site’s shape, elevation, existing landforms, and features meet the requirements of the proposed use? Can the site accommodate the proposed use?

H.2. Does the site meet LDC requirements in terms of:

- Setbacks (e.g., can the site accommodate the proposed use and still meet the minimum distance requirements from all boundaries/property lines)?
- Intensity (e.g., is the proposed use aligned with the site’s designated intensity or is it more intensive than the site allows)?
- Bulk (e.g., is the proposed use appropriately situated and the right shape and size for the site)?
- Open space (e.g., if proposed use is permitted, will there be enough open space remaining to meet lot coverage requirements)?
- Aesthetics (e.g., does the proposed use fit/align with the “look and feel” of the surrounding properties/area)?

I. Use Requirements

“The proposed use complies with any additional conditional use requirements of the applicable zoning district, use or other provisions of the LDC.” (Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. The LDC provides an opportunity for the reviewer to check for any other incompatibilities with the applicable zoning district, use, or other relevant provisions in the code. As a conditional use is determined through “discretionary county review of an applicant’s demonstration that specific conditions will assure compatibility with surrounding uses” (Sec. 3-1.4), this portion of the compatibility review is to address any other zoning district, use, or specific provision of the LDC that might not have been captured in the previous categories.

These requirements ensure that the development is compatible with the surrounding area and while mitigating negative impacts. Common considerations, which also are all mentioned in the above conditions, may include:

- **Compatibility with Surrounding Land Uses:** The proposed use must fit in with the character of the zoning district and surrounding land uses, including factors like building size, design, and materials to ensure they are consistent with adjacent properties.
- **Hours of Operation:** To prevent noise and traffic impacts on nearby residents, a conditional use approval may set specific hours of operation.
- **Traffic and Parking:** Potential increase in traffic and the adequacy of proposed parking should be assessed. Requirements could include a certain number of off-street parking spaces or a traffic study to determine if road improvements are needed.
- **Screening and Landscaping:** To minimize visual, noise, and environmental impacts, a conditional use approval might require landscaping, fencing, or other screening measures.
- **Lighting and Noise:** Potential light and noise pollution should be assessed and may require using shielded lighting to prevent light from spilling onto neighboring properties and installing sound-dampening materials to reduce noise.
- **Public Health and Safety:** The project must not pose a threat to public health or safety. This can involve requirements for fire safety, environmental protections, and stormwater management.

Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Use Requirements* include:

- I.1. Is the use correctly classified?
Check Sec. 3-1.4 (f).
- I.2. What is the underlying zoning district, and what are its criteria for conditional uses?
- I.3. Have the underlying zoning district’s conditional use requirements been met?
- I.4. Does the use meet LDC requirements for compatibility, hours of operation, traffic and parking, screening and landscaping, lighting and noise, and public health and safety?

Other Considerations

Final Determination: Other Conditions of Approval

“In granting a conditional use, the reviewing board shall have the authority to attach any conditions directly related to the use as the board may find necessary for the satisfaction of the conditional use conditions and preservation of the intent of the applicable zoning district. Such conditions include setbacks, height, impervious cover, total floor area, building orientation, screening, buffering, site signage and lighting, and hours of operation.”
(Escambia County, 2025)

Interpretation. A conditional use may be appropriate for some locations in a given zoning district if certain “existing or imposed conditions” are met (Sec. 3-1.4). This text allows for the reviewing board to attach or impose conditions directly related to the use. The conditions specified as the ones that can be imposed largely line up with the categories of this compatibility review, so the reviewer may determine that a deficiency can be addressed with an additional requirement. For example, a conditional use request for a waste transfer station could be required to address hours of operation and lighting to avoid nighttime disturbances to an adjacent residential neighborhood.

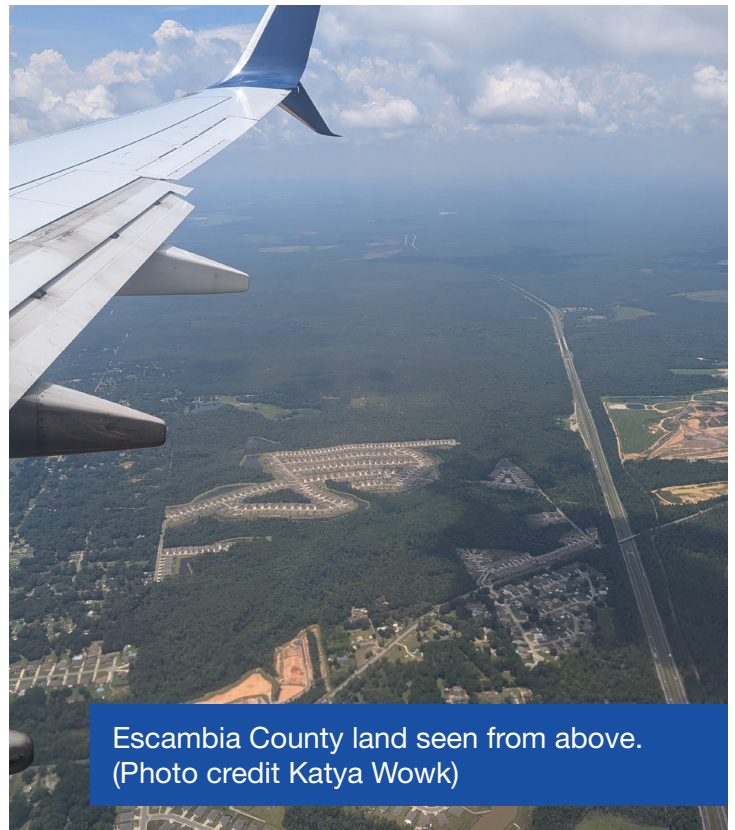
Guidance. Questions to consider when reviewing an application for *Other Conditions of Approval (OCA)* include:

OCA.1. Has the use been subject to previous community complaints in other areas? What conditions could have been placed on prior projects to lessen the complaints, and how can those conditions be applied to the current project?

OCA.2. Based on the issues and concerns raised throughout the review, what conditions of approval should be imposed?

Summary

Using the guidance presented in this document can increase public safety and well-being by allowing for specific, tailored requirements that mitigate a project’s potential negative impacts on neighborhoods. This goes beyond standard zoning rules to address unique challenges posed by a particular development while making new development safer for all. Beyond basic safety, the guidance can help improve overall quality of life for Escambia County residents by addressing issues like past, current and future impacts, while also considering privacy, noise, and aesthetics.



Escambia County land seen from above.
(Photo credit Katya Wowk)

Section III: Incompatible Land Uses Checklists

County Staff Checklist

The following checklist is to be used by county staff in the Escambia County conditional use process for land development to ensure new development can prevent or mitigate potential negative impacts on neighborhoods in the immediate area (including the adjacent and impact areas).

Staff can use the checklist to determine whether sufficient information is included in an application to assess each condition, or whether information is missing and thus the condition cannot be assessed. Staff are encouraged to rely on community definitions, descriptions and concerns when using the checklist (e.g., as found in Appendix 1 of the Guidance on Conditional Uses).

Project Name: _____

Project Number: _____

Developer Name: _____

Item	Sufficient Information	Insufficient Information	N/A	Notes
Compliance Review Conditions				
A. General Compatibility.				
A.1. What kind of negative impacts can be expected? Are they direct or indirect?	☐	☐	☐	
A.2. Based on the intended use, what is a prudent definition of “immediate area”? Should prevailing winds and/or groundwater flows be considered in the definition of immediate area?	☐	☐	☐	
A.3. How could the impacts of the use change over time? How might adjacent properties or properties in the impact area be negatively impacted in the future?	☐	☐	☐	
A.4. Does the immediate area already have uses that have similar impacts as the proposed use? Consider that the cumulative impacts may be significant while the impacts from each individual use may not be significant on their own.	☐	☐	☐	

Item	Sufficient Information	Insufficient Information	N/A	Notes
B. Facilities and Services.				
B.1. Which public facilities and services will the proposed use require? Is there sufficient information in the application to understand the quantity of public facilities/services that will be required by the proposed use, and the intensity of that use? How might the use impact available water, sewer, and power capacity?	☐	☐	☐	
B.2. What are the anticipated roadway impacts (e.g., increased volume and/or vehicle weights)?	☐	☐	☐	
B.3. Could the use have increased need for emergency services either from on-site worker accidents or a facility incident? Would a specialized response be needed?	☐	☐	☐	
B.4. Do the identified facilities/services have adopted service level standards, and if yes, what are they? What are the associated service areas?	☐	☐	☐	
B.5. What is the service capacity currently available in the location? Is there enough excess capacity to accommodate the proposed new use?	☐	☐	☐	
B.6. If there is inadequate capacity, how might the gap be met? Can the proposed use be scaled down to require less services, or is there the ability to create new service?	☐	☐	☐	
C. On-Site Circulation.				
C.1. What is the current condition of on-site circulation for vehicles and pedestrians? What are the circulation patterns for adjacent and nearby sites? Are there nearby uses that generate a large number of trips, especially at specific times of the day? See Sec. 2-2 of the Design Standards Manual in the LDC.	☐	☐	☐	
C.2. Does the application include a reasonable program for how motorized vehicles will be accommodated within the site? Does it consider type and volume of vehicles, traffic flow, and efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	
C.3. Can all traffic and circulation impacts be managed internal to the site? Are mitigation efforts (e.g., signage, access control) described?	☐	☐	☐	
C.4. How are materials associated with the use that are coming into or out of the site controlled, such that off-site impacts are minimized?	☐	☐	☐	
C.5. Does the site layout locate pedestrian and vehicular facilities in a way that is both safe and convenient for users? Can emergency vehicles be safely and efficiently accommodated on-site?	☐	☐	☐	
C.6. Are all relevant standards in Chapter 5 Article 5 (Streets and Access) and Article 4 (Parking and Loading) met?	☐	☐	☐	

Item	Sufficient Information	Insufficient Information	N/A	Notes
D. Nuisances and Hazards.				
D.1. What types of nuisances and hazards might the proposed conditional use generate? What noise, glare, dust, smoke, odor, vibration, and electrical interference impacts might the use generate? See Sec. 5-9.2 for specific LDC requirements for noise, vibrations, air pollutants, etc. and exemptions.	☐	☐	☐	
D.2. What are adjacent and nearby uses? What are the existing nuisance or hazardous conditions for adjacent and nearby areas?	☐	☐	☐	
D.3. What might the cumulative impacts of anticipated nuisances and hazards be on the immediate area, i.e., the combined effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions?	☐	☐	☐	
D.4. How does the application mitigate or minimize potential nuisances or hazards? If the proposed conditional use's scale, intensity, or operation were altered, would the negative impacts be reduced or removed?	☐	☐	☐	
E. Solid Waste.				
E.1. What types of solid waste containers are proposed? What are the dimensions, materials, and how many will the proposed conditional use need?	☐	☐	☐	
E.2. Where on-site will the containers be located? Will they be accessible (for use and retrieval) and not visible from off-site? Would screening or buffering mitigate any potentially negative impacts?	☐	☐	☐	
E.3. Are the containers designed to reduce nuisance conditions (e.g., odor, leakage, vectors)?	☐	☐	☐	
E.4. Are the containers consistent with code language in LDC Sec. 5-9.2, and Chapter 82 of the Code of Ordinances?	☐	☐	☐	
F. Screening and Buffering.				
F.1. Is the proposed use/site situated between zoning districts with distinctly different allowable uses and/or intensity of uses (e.g., commercial from industrial)? If so, there will be increased need for screening and buffering. See Sec. 2-2.3 of the Design Standards Manual on residential abutting commercial buffering requirements.	☐	☐	☐	
F.2. What is the purpose of the screening and buffering, e.g., to reduce visual impact, provide noise reduction, limit smells and dust leaving the site, or other purposes?	☐	☐	☐	
F.3. If screening and/or buffering are appropriate for the proposed use/site, what height, width, and opacity are needed to block public view? For example, would the proposed use/site need to be 100% blocked from public view, or is 75% sufficient?	☐	☐	☐	
F.4. What screening and/or buffering materials, style, and colors would be most appropriate (e.g., landscaping or fencing) for compatibility with the proposed use/site?	☐	☐	☐	

Item	Sufficient Information	Insufficient Information	N/A	Notes
G. Signs and Lighting.				
G.1. How do the project's signs and lighting for the site comply with the requirements in the LDC?	☐	☐	☐	
G.2. Are there lights or signs that the conditional use will require that cannot meet the requirements in the LDC? If so, how will the impacts be mitigated?	☐	☐	☐	
H. Site Characteristics.				
H.1. Does the site's shape, elevation, existing landforms, and features meet the requirements of the proposed use? Can the site accommodate proposed use?	☐	☐	☐	
H.2. Does the site meet LDC requirements in terms of:				
• Setbacks (e.g., can the site accommodate the proposed use and still meet the minimum distance requirements from all boundaries/property lines)?	☐	☐	☐	
• Intensity (e.g., is the proposed use aligned with the site's designated intensity or is it more intensive than the site allows)?	☐	☐	☐	
• Bulk (e.g., is the proposed use appropriately situated and the right shape and size for the site)?	☐	☐	☐	
• Open space (e.g., if proposed use is permitted, will there be enough open space remaining to meet lot coverage requirements)?	☐	☐	☐	
• Aesthetics (e.g., does the proposed use fit/align with the "look and feel" of the surrounding properties/area)?	☐	☐	☐	
I. Use Requirements.				
I.1. Is the use correctly classified? Be sure to check Sec. 3-1.4 (f).	☐	☐	☐	
I.2. What is the underlying zoning district, and what are its criteria for conditional uses?	☐	☐	☐	
I.3. Have the underlying zoning district's conditional use requirements been met?	☐	☐	☐	
I.4. Does the use meet LDC requirements for compatibility, hours of operation, traffic and parking, screening and landscaping, lighting and noise, and public health and safety?	☐	☐	☐	
Final Determination: Other Conditions of Approval (OCA).				
OCA.1. Has the use been subject to previous community complaints in other areas? What conditions could have been placed on prior projects to lessen the complaints, and how can those conditions be applied to the current project?	☐	☐	☐	
OCA.2. Based on the issues and concerns raised throughout the review, what conditions of approval should be imposed?	☐	☐	☐	

Developer Checklist

The following checklist is to be used by developers in the Escambia County conditional use process for land development to better understand what County staff are considering in preventing or mitigate potential negative impacts of new development on neighborhoods in the immediate area (including the adjacent and impact areas).

Developers can use the checklist to ensure sufficient information is included in their application that will enable assessment of each condition, or whether information is missing and thus the condition cannot be assessed. Developers are encouraged to rely on community definitions, descriptions and concerns when using the checklist (e.g., as found in Appendix I of the Guidance on Conditional Uses).

Project Name: _____

Project Number: _____

Developer Name: _____

Item	Included	N/A
Compliance Review Conditions		
A. General Compatibility.		
A.1. Does the application describe any negative impacts the project may have on surrounding neighborhoods? Please consider both direct impacts, such as air emissions or inputs to groundwater, as well as indirect impacts, such as increases in traffic or noise.	☐	☐
A.2. Is the area where impacts should be expected described? Again, please consider the adjacent area that may incur impacts (e.g., from noise, dust, etc.), as well as broader areas that may receive impacts (e.g., from prevailing winds).	☐	☐
A.3. Does the application include information on how impacts of the project could change over time?	☐	☐
B. Facilities and Services.		
B.1. Is sufficient information included on the public facilities and services the proposed use will require (e.g., wastewater, solid waste, stormwater, potable water)?	☐	☐
B.2. Are any anticipated roadway impacts (increased volume and/or vehicle weights) described?	☐	☐
B.3. Could the proposed land use have increased need for emergency services either from on-site worker accidents or a facility incident? Would a specialized response be needed?	☐	☐
B.4. If there is inadequate capacity to provide public services, can the proposed use be scaled down to require less services?	☐	☐

Item	Included	N/A
G. Signs and Lighting.		
G.1. Does the application describe how the project's signs and lighting for the site will comply with the requirements in the LDC?	☐	☐
G.2. Are there lights or signs that the project will require that cannot meet the requirements in the LDC? If so, how will any impacts be mitigated?	☐	☐
H. Site Characteristics.		
H.1. Does the application discuss whether the site's shape, elevation, existing landforms, and features meet the requirements of the proposed project?	☐	☐
H.2. Does the site meet LDC requirements in terms of:		
• Setbacks (e.g., meet the minimum distance requirements)?	☐	☐
• Intensity (e.g., aligned with the site's designated intensity or is it more intensive than the site allows)?	☐	☐
• Bulk (e.g., appropriately situated and the right shape/size for the site)?	☐	☐
• Open space (e.g., enough open space remaining to meet lot coverage requirements)?	☐	☐
• Aesthetics (e.g., fit/align with the "look and feel" of the surrounding properties/area)?	☐	☐
I. Use Requirements.		
I.1. Is the proposed use correctly classified? Be sure to check Sec. 3-1.4 (f).	☐	☐
I.2. What is the underlying zoning district and its criteria for conditional uses?	☐	☐
I.3. Have the underlying zoning district's conditional use requirements been met?	☐	☐
I.4. Are LDC requirements met for compatibility, hours of operation, traffic, screening and landscaping, lighting and noise, and public health and safety?	☐	☐

Appendix 1: Additional Public Survey And Public Meeting Comments

Beyond the ranking of incompatible land uses by level of concern, the survey asked whether there were additional land uses residents were concerned with that were not on the survey list. Table A-1 provides the full list from county residents. This text is provided as written by residents and is put into alphabetical order. Table A-2 provides a summary of additional comments gathered that the public meeting.

Table A-1: Public Survey Comments – Resident Entries for Additional Land Uses of Concern

Level of Concern	“Other” Incompatible Land Use Entry
Very Concerned	• Additional subdivisions • Adult entertainment • Air Quality-burning • Amount of Dollar Generals • Any business that reduces property value • Any chemical plant that emits terrible smells • Anything other than residences • Anything stinky or high traffic or attractive to crime • Apartments and building on wetlands • Business ethics for the very poor • Car dealership • Convenience store/gas station • Crack houses • Electric sub station • Gas stations • Grocery stores • Halfway house or sex offenders • High density neighborhoods • High Density Residential or Commercial Office • Homeless Camps • Hotels and skyscrapers • Housing developments • Large residential developments • Large water retention pools • Low-income housing • Massive new subdivisions • Medical • Multifamily development • New subdivisions • Noise producing businesses in neighborhoods • Nuclear power plant • Overpriced homes taking away green space • PFAS utilizing industries • Pickleball courts • Prison or detention facilities • Residential and commercial development that does not have proper infrastructure or community support • Small parcel subdivisions • Smokestacks, noise • Subsidized housing • Traffic • Townhomes overcrammed into poor LDC allowances that cut heritage trees flood the surrounding area • Urgent care, medical THC dispensary, plasma center, rehab facility etc. • Warehouses

Level of Concern	“Other” Incompatible Land Use Entry
Concerned	• Apartment complexes • Daycare, schools • High occupancy residential • Homeless/halfway houses • New large apartment complexes • Nuclear power plant • Strip clubs • Strip malls
Somewhat Concerned	• Apartment
Not Concerned At All	• Cafes, parks • Fun range • Multifamily housing • Natural environments and walking friendly shopping/cafe areas with native plant coverage • RV park • Schools
Unspecified	• Airport • Any development that directs more traffic through subdivisions • Any industrial or commercial facility that generates or discharges pollutants including bag houses • Anything with traffic, smells, noise • Chemical plant • Church • Farmland • Gun shooting range • High density housing complexes • High density tract homes • High traffic roads • Incinerator • Low-income housing • More Dollar Generals and/or Dollar Trees, vape/smoke shops • Overcrowded parks • Residential development • Sex offender halfway house • Short-term rental • Solar Farms • Stop building in or too close to wetlands and high hazard flood zones • Strip malls, subdivision developments, town centers, industrial parks • Subdivision • There are too many homes, apartments and RV parks being built in our county with not enough infrastructure to handle it

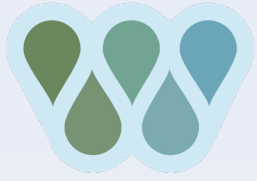
Table A-2: Summary of Public Meeting Comments

Discussion Topic	Summary of Public Comments
Discussion Station 1: Review survey results and tell us if you agree or disagree.	Participants largely agreed with the results of the survey. There were some uses some participants thought would have greater negative impact, including event venues and stadiums, solar farms and tattoo parlors. However, the top three priority land use concerns remained unchanged.
Discussion Station 2: Prioritize which three land uses are of highest concern to you and tell us why.	Land Uses: Hazardous waste, chemical manufacturing, solid waste, transfer stations, scrap yard, feedlot/processing, auto repair, solar farm, cannabis dispensary, multifamily residential, farm animals, paper mill, development that uses non-permeable surfacing. Why: flooding, environmental impacts, industrial pollution, accidental waste releases, health concerns, dust, odors, transportation noise, traffic, cleaning of trees (with solar farms destroying green space), inability to recycle solar farm materials, reckless driving (cannabis), poor rural infrastructure, pollutants reaching the Gulf, flood and salinity changes.
Discussion Station 3: If the county were considering an application for a land use of high concern, tell us what you'd want us to ask.	General Compatibility: same lot sizes, same utilities, business hours, buffer zones (green), understanding community capacity (schools and groceries) Site Characteristics: family oriented, uniform lot sizes, prioritize trees, no fill/uniform elevation, proximity to schools, tax implications, Nuisances and Hazards: noise, smells, industry wastewater, contamination during flooding, increased traffic, road destruction, work hours/schedules, toxic emissions, maintaining mitigation measures (flood, noise), barriers for reduced visuals, population density. Cumulative Impacts: population density, stormwater (future looking), losing greenspace, impacts to school systems, food desserts.

Appendix 2: Legal Citations On Expected Impacts

Table A-3: Legal Citations on Expected Impacts of Priority Incompatible Land Uses

Expected Impact	Legal Citations
Hazardous Waste	
Air Quality	§403.021(1), Fla. Stat.; §403.702(2)(e), Fla. Stat.; §403.723, Fla. Stat.
Water Quality	§376.30, Fla. Stat.; §403.021(1), Fla. Stat.; §403.702(2)(e), Fla. Stat.; §403.723, Fla. Stat.
Groundwater	§376.30, Fla. Stat.; §403.021(1), Fla. Stat.; §403.723, Fla. Stat.
Pollution	§376.30, Fla. Stat.; §403.021(1), Fla. Stat.; §403.723, Fla. Stat.
Public Health	42 USC §6901(b)(5); §403.021(1), Fla. Stat.; §403.702(1)(f), Fla. Stat.; §403.723, Fla. Stat.
Chemical Manufacturing	
Air Quality	42 USC §7412; §403.702(2), Fla. Stat.
Water Quality	33 USC §1362(6); §381.0011(7), Fla. Stat.
Groundwater	33 USC §1362(6); §381.0011(7), Fla. Stat.
Pollution	33 USC §1362(6); 42 USC §7412; §381.0011(7), Fla. Stat.
Public Health	42 USC §6901, §381.0011, Fla. Stat.
Solid Waste Landfills/Transfer Stations	
Dust and Air Quality	42 USC §6901(b)(3); §403.702(1)(a), Fla. Stat.; §403.702(2)(e), Fla. Stat.
Noise	42 USC §4901 (noise as a health and welfare problem); 42 USC §4905(a)(1)(C)(iii) (trucks as noisy); Art. II, §7(a), Fla. Const. (excessive and unnecessary noise); §403.031(11), Fla. Stat. (noise defined as pollution)
Truck Traffic	42 USC §4905(a)(1)(C)(iii) (trucks as noisy)



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