

Glenn County Healthy Housing Assessment Tool Instruction Manual

A. Purpose of Tool

The Glenn County Healthy Housing Tool is a self-guided, non-binding tool to be used by the public to score the "healthiness" of proposed residential development.

The goal of the project is to rekindle Public Health involvement in land use planning, educate government staff and the public concerning the need to address health impacts related to residential development, and to widely disseminate a tool that can be used to score proposed development in the cities and county while empowering citizens to be more meaningfully engaged in land use decisions.

This tool is designed primarily for urban-like areas, where growth is occurring more rapidly, such as in Orland, Willows and Hamilton City. Some future projects could be large enough to function as stand alone communities. Therefore, when applying this tool to a project, consider the context of the proposal. For example, is the project a large stand alone project that can start with a clean slate and incorporate all the elements (land use, transportation/pedestrian, and conservation) in this tool? Is the project part of a developed area where some of the elements already exist, so does the proposal integrate these existing elements? Is the project small and in a rural area where fewer elements are possible? In this last case, if it is in a rural area, how does the project integrate with the surrounding environment and incorporate natural features of the nearby landscape?

Since there are differences between rural and urban areas, the Glenn County Healthy Housing Assessment Tool must be calibrated. To accomplish this, there are bonus points that can be assigned at the end of the tool because some projects will be small and rural and will by default get low scores, as well as some projects will integrate into existing neighborhoods where some elements already exist, but they must be well integrated.

B. Document Familiarization

Where to find documents you will need to use the tool:

There are a number of documents that can be used to help glean information about a proposed project. These documents can be found at the local planning department, the developer and the architect. Sometimes larger documents are on file at public libraries for public review. The most common documents that are useful include the General Project Application, Environmental Review Documents, Project Master Plans, Tentative Vesting Subdivision Maps (most common) and the Drawing Sheets (detailed schematics of each proposed building).

How to interpret documents: As you review this manual, you will find explanations and tips on where to find information in these various documents. Most documents are organized in such a way that the information is readily available, others will require closer scrutiny. Some information may only be found on the drawing sheets or diagrams (such as sidewalk widths).

C. Complete the Questions Asked on the Tool:

Q1 Define the Neighborhood

Review project documents such as proposed master plans, conceptual drawings or subdivision maps. As you review the documents think about what the size of the project is, the number of units, how they are planned on the ground. Look at project maps and using a ruler, check the scale to determine the distance across the projects. You can also use a compass to draw circles on the diagrams that represent half mile/10 minute walking distances. How many circles can be drawn over the project?

Neighborhood elements - What elements define a sense of place for the proposed neighborhood?

Q2 Street as Outdoor Living Space

Street trees – Review project documents that depict the location of existing and proposed trees. There may be specific maps for this purpose. Look for the legend to check for the

symbols used for trees to be saved and removed. Tree locations should be numbered and correspond to a table that lists the species of trees for that number and the size of the trunk of the tree. This helps determine trees worth saving.

5' Sidewalks – Look at the proposed tentative vesting subdivision map. There may also be diagrams in the general application and the master plan that depict the cross section of the street, which will indicate traffic lane and sidewalk widths and will also show if the sidewalk is set back from the street and if the lanes are divided by a median. These extra features improve pedestrian use.

Front porches - At least 6 feet deep. Review building drawing sheets and look for drawings of the proposed building exteriors. Here you will find if there are any proposed porches and their dimensions.

Q3 Auto Features Non-Dominate

Garages Do Not Dominate the Street – Look at conceptual drawings and building drawing sheets. Where are the garages located? Are the garage frontages closer to the street than the house? Is the garage closer to the street than the front door? Do the garages take up a majority of the lot frontage along the street (in other words, is the garage wider than the rest of the house that faces the street)? You want street frontages that are houses, windows and porches, which enhance the streetscape.

Q4 Natural Environment

Grading work uses the landscape well - Look at documents to see the extent of proposed grading. Sometimes the grading plan will be depicted in a separate diagram or sometimes in the tentative vesting subdivision map (look for contour lines on the diagram that indicate the slope of the land). Sometimes this information will be in the environmental review documents. Grading is not fully regulated so it may be hard to understand how grading will be done. Does the proposed grading work well with the natural landscape? Will there be significant grading due to steep slopes? Will such grading appear to affect run off, trees or stand out because of elevation? Is the project designed to preserve as much of the natural elements as possible, preferably making such elements a selling point for the project?

Q5 Stream Protection

Creek Buffers – Are buildings and improvements set back away from waterways and swales? Minimum setbacks should be 25' from edge of bank with 75' preferred. This will be depicted on the tentative vesting subdivision map, the environmental documents or the master plan. You might have to look closely to validate setbacks. Review the vesting tentative subdivision map for setbacks. Sometimes this is depicted as an outline of a building on the lot with the stream, as a “no development zone”, or as a condition written and represented on the map.

Q6 Trees

Review the information above in #2. Vesting tentative subdivision maps and other maps submitted with the application will show the location of existing trees, which will be saved and removed, and locations where new trees will be planted, such as trees that line the streets. These maps should also depict the species and if an existing tree, its size.

Q7 Parks

Recreation sites, playgrounds, parks or open space should be within a five minute walking distance from any part of the neighborhood. Review any maps for the project to see if land within the proposed development is slated for park space or look at existing area maps to determine walking distance to existing parks or open space. Look at the tentative vesting subdivision map and master plan to determine the scale of the project and use a ruler or compass to determine the walking distances. If the project is rural, how well does it integrate with the surrounding environment so that residents can take advantage of enjoying the natural environment around them and encourage outdoor activities and exercise?

Q8 Transportation and Pedestrian Access

Walking Access to Local Schools – Review a local map to determine the distance the proposed project is from schools.

Q9 Bike Paths

Review the general application and the master plan if there is one. Try to locate a cross section of the proposed roads or a project diagram. Look for how bicycle traffic will be accommodated. Are there bike paths separated from the roadway near parks, open space or waterways? Will there be striped bicycle lanes for major roadways? Bike lanes can be painted or could be a different surface treatment, such as colored concrete.

Q10 Traffic Calming

Look at the project diagrams, is there any indication that attention has been paid to calming or slowing down traffic? Look at the “*Curb Bulb-Out and Crosswalk Example*” presented with the question. Notice how the sidewalk is wider at the intersection? By narrowing intersections, traffic will slow down. Sometimes crosswalks are raised and serve as speed bumps. Sometimes crosswalks are made of alternative materials, such as brick, to make them more apparent to approaching traffic. Some intersections may incorporate roundabouts or traffic circles to slow traffic at the intersection without bringing it to a stop. If the project proposes long, straight and wide streets, traffic will most likely be fast and traffic calming may be necessary.

Q11 Transportation Modes Integrated

Look in the general application, master plan, or environmental documents and find a cross section of the proposed roadways. Look at how the road will incorporate all modes of travel. You will see lanes of traffic, sometimes separated by a median. Are bike lanes or paths depicted? Are there parking lanes? Look for the sidewalks. Are they separated from the street by a park strip? Sidewalks should be at least 5’ wide in order to be inviting and to accommodate pedestrians.

Q12 Public Transit

Review the environmental documents to see if there is any information about public transportation. Some larger master plans may actually show proposed bus routes. Review any

information available from the public transit provider to see if there are any existing bus lines near the project. Does the project incorporate the public transit into its design? If public transit is incorporated into the design, are there turn outs, benches and shelters? For larger shopping centers, ask the Planning Department to make sure that roadways into the project are of sufficient thickness to support buses.

Q13 Pedestrian Amenities

In this section you want to look closely at what the project includes that encourages pedestrian use. Look at the tentative vesting Subdivision map. Are the sidewalks separated from the curb of the street by a grass strip with trees? Sidewalks separated in this manner encourage walking because people are further from moving cars. Look at the general application and there should be a section that sets forth the installation of items that will become part of the right of way (the street), such as light posts. Often there will be a diagram of the light post. Are the light posts shorter or designed in such a way that they provide light for people to walk at night? Looking in the master plan might help to see if there are any proposed benches or other pedestrian amenities that encourage people to walk and recreate within the neighborhood.

Q14 Connectivity and Block Size

It is important for spreading out car traffic and improving the traffic flow by using grid like patterns that assure broad connectivity of streets and all modes of transportation throughout the development. Look at the tentative vesting subdivision map. It will show a layout of the streets and lots. Look closely at how the streets are laid out. Are they connected in short (no greater than 500') blocks (do the streets resemble a grid)? Is the development connected well to existing neighborhoods and the surrounding area? Walls and other features that avoid integration between new and older neighborhoods should be avoided.

Q15 Cul-De-Sacs

Since connectivity is important to access for all modes of transportation, cul-de-sacs should be minimal and used mostly in areas where the natural topography of the land requires it. If

cul-de-sacs are used in a typical residential development, they should be short in length. If cul-de-sacs are used, do they allow for through connectivity for pedestrians and bicycles by using a pathway to connect the end of the cul-de-sac to the next street? If streets are laid out in a grid like pattern, it is possible to disperse traffic in most neighborhoods to a level that makes living on a cul-de-sac attractive.

Q16 Energy and Conservation

To strive towards sustainable development, it is important that proposed projects address energy conservation through the design of the homes, the materials used to construct the home and the appliances.

The Envelope: R-Value – The R-value relates to the density and effectiveness of the insulation used in the walls (or envelope) of the houses. By reviewing the certifications in the drawing sheets for the project, as well as the diagrams, the R-value must be listed. Minimum R-values are listed in the tool. Remember, these are minimums.

Q17 HVAC Systems

HVAC systems, or the heating and cooling unit, continue to improve in efficiencies. Where the unit is located, is also important. For example, if the HVAC unit is located within the envelope of the house (within the insulated interior), it will operate even more efficiently as compared to in the attic or exterior wall. Cooling compressor units must be shaded. Electronic thermostats that can be programmed for several actions throughout the day improve energy conservation by restricting HVAC use to when the home is occupied.

Q18 Solar Access

Review the tentative vesting subdivision map, the general application and the master plan to determine how the houses will be oriented on the lot. Often project diagrams will indicate the footprint of the home. Solar access refers to the orientation of the home to assure access to the sun for heating and living purposes. Roof masses facing south and windows that face towards the north improve solar use. Trees can be used to shade the home, but care must be taken to not shade a south

facing housing mass that would accommodate solar panels or north facing windows. It is important that the layout of the home and placement of trees not reduce solar access for homes on adjoining lots.

Q19 High Efficiency Lighting

The type of lighting that will be installed in each home is disclosed on the certification pages of the drawing sheets for each type of home proposed to be built in the subdivision. There is a section that will indicate CFL types of lights and other types.

Q20 Water Conservation

The certification sections of the drawing sheets will indicate if there are any special water conservation measures, from low flow toilets and shower heads, to grey water systems for landscaping irrigation. Most projects must have a landscape design plan that will indicate the types of plants to be planted. Some tentative vesting subdivision maps may come with conditions that require drought tolerant landscaping.

EXTRA POINTS INSTRUCTIONS

To help calibrate the tool for varying conditions, you are asked to review the context of the proposed development to its surrounding environment. If there is an existing neighborhood it could determine if all Health Housing Elements are met in your review. A project that is small and in an isolated area may not be able to satisfy all the Healthy Housing Elements needs. Therefore, additional points are added to compensate.

Ruralness Extra Points (30 Points) – If the project is 12 units or less and in an isolated location such as out in the country, where many elements cannot be incorporated, add **30 POINTS**.

Infill Bonus Extra (25 Points) – If the project is surrounded on at least two sides by existing development and some of the elements (such as a park) are already in the existing development, add **25 POINTS**