

Environmental Studies 185 – Environmental Impact Assessment – Spring 2007
INITIAL STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Date due	Component	% of Grade
15 October	Draft Initial Study (6 copies)	20***
22 October	Peer Comment Letters	4
29 October	Final initial study/ND/NOP	6
29 October	Presentations	5

Overview:

- Prepare an Initial Study for the project we will visit next week. *Six copies* of a first draft will be due three weeks from today.
- The first draft should be the best effort you can muster in the time available to you. It is weighted much more heavily than is the final draft for grading purposes
- The focus for this exercise is on PROCESS and FORM more than substance
- Each member of your group will take a copy and write a response letter for the following week, which will also be graded.
- You will then read the response letters and revise your draft into a final version, taking into consideration all comments, and finally present your report orally to your classmates.

Use information at the following website and that you gather at the site visit next week.

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/eir/eir.asp>

You may use these documents for references, however:

- do not pull analysis language verbatim from these or any other documents, and
- do not assume that just because it exists in the real world, it is correct
- FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS BELOW
- Be critical and use your independent judgment

And, remember this is an initial study, not an EIR. Your information will be more general and approximate than a full-blown analysis would entail. Your job here is to find, analyze and **focus** available information on whether the project deserves a negative declaration or an EIR. You are not expected to conduct sophisticated tests yourself.

The draft initial study should have four general components:

1. Identifying Information/Location and Contacts

Include all information requested on p.313 (#s 1-9).

City of San Jose General Plan and Zoning Maps

http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/gp_maps/default.asp

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/zonemap/default.asp>

2. Project Description

The project description should be complete enough to evaluate what the major objectives of the project are, as well as important physical features such as square footage, # of employee/truck parking spaces, building materials, outdoor lighting, numbers of people/cars likely to be using the facility, etc.

Surrounding land uses should be complete enough to help evaluate cumulative impacts, but no impact assessment goes in the project description.

3. Checklist and brief discussion of impacts for each resource area potentially affected:

For environmental resources that may have impacts only, please incorporate the following information:

- a. Environmental setting before project: This section is the description of the condition of each potentially affected environmental resource at the time the application was filed.

- b. Objective threshold of significance: This is the “line in the sand” that falls between an impact that is less-than-significant and one that is significant for any project. The threshold does not reference the current project.
- o Using the language of the checklist (appendix G) is acceptable for some resources and impacts.
 - o For others you will need to refer to adopted standards for the community (check General Plan and Municipal Codes, as well as any other environmental guidelines available).
 - o In some cases a more descriptive threshold may be called for. In this case, be sure to explain clearly what threshold you are using in terms that are as objective as possible.

Wherever possible, supporting sources should be cited to justify threshold criteria you are using.

*** FORMAT note***:

Please number each relevant threshold/potential impact/mitigation in order using the form HYDRO-1, HYDRO-2 etc. DO NOT use letters from checklist for this assignment. Ask me what I mean here, if you need to!

- c. Significance level: Reiterate this from the checklist. Remember that “no impact” should truly mean none. If you are unsure, choose “less than significant.” If you choose “less than significant with mitigation incorporated,” be prepared to describe a feasible mitigation below.
- d. Impact explanation: Explain how you estimated the effects you expect the specific project to have on each impacted resource area. Use fact-based explanations to support any less-than-significant or potentially significant impacts. Where possible, cite sources to justify your projection.
- e. Mitigations may be
- *required* for impacts **that would otherwise be significant.**
 - they must be feasible (physically and economically) and
 - directly tied to (nexus) the impact they are mitigating. Referring to each impact number can make this easier
 - In order of preference, mitigations should
 - a. Avoid
 - b. Reduce
 - c. Reduce over time
 - d. Rectify
 - e. Compensate for impacts
 - Give performance-related success criteria for each mitigation, and contingencies for what to do if the criteria are not met
 - Be as precise as possible. Who will do it? What will be done? Where? When? How?
- f. Monitoring Plan: for each mitigation required, specify
- how it will be **monitored.**
 - how often
 - by whom

4. Recommendation for ND (MND) or EIR

You may require a mitigated ND or an EIR. If even one resource area has a potentially significant impact that cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant, however, you must require an EIR. If all potentially significant impacts can be mitigated, then recommend a mitigated ND.

Information on comment letters and final draft requirements will be provided on October 15.