

bedrock, depth to groundwater, seasonal high water table, and soil makeup. The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) has developed the *Standard Guide to Site Characterization for Engineering, Design and Construction Purposes*, ASTM D- 420. The standard guide provides the site designer with a consensus standard with which to plan and evaluate site characterizations.

Location

The first consideration of the site analysis is to locate the site. Site location entails more than simply locating the site on a map. “Location” in this sense is referring to the site in terms of the project’s relationship to the community. Commercial projects will be concerned with visibility, site access, and traffic. Is the traffic past the site adequate or too congested? Is the street infrastructure adequate for the anticipated increase? What sort of improvements might be anticipated? Is the site accessible from the street? What sort of on-site improvements might be expected to facilitate access? Is the interior of the site visible from the street? From how far away will drivers be able to see the site? Can traffic access the site from both directions? Is a left-hand turn possible? Are the neighboring sites commercial or residential? Are off-site improvements required? Are the necessary utilities nearby?

Residential projects raise different concerns. How far away are schools, government services, and shopping? Are local roads and streets adequate to handle increased traffic? Is the character of the area conducive to the proposed project? Will future residents be able to enter and leave the site without traffic congestion? Are adjacent properties developed? If not, what will zoning allow?

Collecting Site Information

There are a number of existing sources of site information for the site designer. In many cases these should be readily available within the office. The development of the Internet has significantly increased the availability of other sources. In many cases this information is available in fairly specific forms that may contribute to the site analysis effort at little cost.

Site analysis is an interpretive process. The site assessment process involves collecting a broad array of information from what are individually fairly limited sets of information and combining the data collected for the purpose of projecting a future use of the land. In general, preliminary site assessments are based on precious little new information—that is, much of the analysis is based on the existing sources of information or first-hand observation. It is how the site information is understood and used that makes the difference. Site analysis of course is not conducted in a vacuum; it is the context of the proposed use that frames the scope and character of the effort. For example, among the most important considerations is the topography of the site. Sites with significant change in elevations are typically difficult and more expensive to develop. Of course, the same steep slopes that are a source of concern for the commercial builder may be the bread and butter of the resort or high-end residential developer.