



Visual Impact Rating Form Instructions

Project Name: PROJECT NAME **EDR Project No:** [X]
Date: DATE
Reference: Visual Impact Rating Form - Instructions

These instructions are intended to guide personnel conducting visual impact assessment contrast ratings through EDR's Visual Impact Rating Form.

Viewpoint #/Viewpoint Location:

Please fill this in based on the information in the title block for each photograph/viewpoint that is provided.

Your Name/Date:

Please complete.

Landscape Similarity Zone:

The definition of landscape types found in a given study area provides a useful framework for the analysis of available visual resources and viewer circumstances. These landscape types, or Landscape Similarity Zones (LSZs), are defined based on the similarity of features such as landform, vegetation, water, and land use patterns. The LSZs within the study area include:

INSERT LIST OF LANDSCAPE SIMILARITY ZONES FOR PROJECT

Viewer Type:

Please infer who the mostly likely viewer(s) is/are based on the location and context of the view. Please also refer to the Viewpoint Location Map and title block for photographs. For instance, if the photo shows a residential or concentrated settlement, check *resident*. If the viewpoint is a roadway location, check *traveler*, and if the viewpoint is from an aesthetic/recreational resource, check *recreational*.

Designated Aesthetic Resources:

The visual study area includes numerous public resources and/or designated visually sensitive resources that are of potential statewide significance. These include sites or districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, designated scenic sites, and several designated trails. The visual study area also includes several public resources that could be considered regionally or locally significant or sensitive, due to the type or intensity of land use they receive. These include local park and recreational facilities, campgrounds, camps, town forest lands, golf courses, nature preserves, tourist attractions, fish and game clubs, schools, churches, cemeteries, areas of concentrated human settlement (i.e., Villages and hamlets), and heavily traveled highways. Please refer to the Viewpoint Location Map and title block for photographs from each viewpoint to determine whether the view is from a specific visually sensitive resource.

Viewpoint Description:

Please describe the view in your own words, focusing on the landscape components described below.

- *Landscape Composition:* The arrangement of objects and voids in the landscape that can be categorized by their spatial arrangement. Basic landscape components include vegetation, landform, water and sky.
- *Form, Line, Color, and Texture:* These are the four major compositional elements that define the perceived visual character of a landscape. Form refers to the shape of an object that appears unified; often defined by edge, outline, and surrounding space. Line refers to the path the eye follows when perceiving abrupt changes in form, color, or texture; usually evident as the edges of shapes or masses in the landscape. Texture in this context refers to the visual surface characteristics of an object.
- *Focal Point:* Certain natural or man-made landscape features stand out and are particularly noticeable as a result of their physical characteristics. Focal points often contrast with their surroundings in color, form, scale or texture, and therefore tend to draw a viewer's attention. Examples include prominent trees, mountains and water features. Cultural features, such as a distinctive barn or steeple can also be focal points.
- *Order:* Natural landscapes have an underlying order determined by natural processes. Cultural landscapes exhibit order by displaying traditional or logical patterns of land use/development. Elements in the landscape that are inconsistent with this natural order may detract from scenic quality.
- *Atmospheric Conditions:* Clouds, precipitation, haze, and other ambient air related conditions affect the visibility of an object or objects and can greatly impact the design elements of form, line, color, texture, and scale.
- *Lighting Direction:* Backlighting refers to a viewing situation in which sunlight is coming toward the observer from behind a feature or elements in a scene. Front lighting refers to a situation where the light source is coming from behind the observer and falling directly upon the area being viewed. Side lighting refers to a viewing situation in which sunlight is coming from the side of the observer to a feature or elements in a scene.
- *Visual Clutter:* Numerous unrelated built elements occurring within a view can create visual clutter, which adversely impacts scenic quality.

Viewpoint Sensitivity:

Please rate the sensitivity of each viewpoint as determined by scenic quality and viewer exposure, as follows:

Scenic Quality:

Please rate the scenic quality of the existing view according to your opinion about the quality of the existing landscape, without the project in place, for the general public. An undeveloped landscape, or one containing aesthetically important structures, might be at the high end of the scale, while a landscape already impacted by infrastructure or industrial facilities might be at the low end. Most residential areas will fall into the moderate category, unless they are either historic neighborhoods, or degraded/abandoned. Note that designation as a scenic or

recreational resource is an indication that there is broad public consensus on the value of that particular resource. The particular characteristics of the resource that contribute to its scenic or recreational value provide guidance in evaluating a project’s visual impact on that resource. However, the scenic quality rating you assign depends on your individual judgment.

View Exposure:

Some views are seen as quick glimpses while driving along a roadway or hiking a trail, while others are seen for a more prolonged period of time. Longer duration views of a project, especially from significant aesthetic resources, have the greatest potential for visual impact. Please infer the frequency and duration of views based on the Viewer Type, LSZ, viewpoint context, and viewpoint location map. Please indicate whether there is potential for continuous or repeated exposure (such as residences, village intersections, and principal transportation routes with an open view towards the project), brief or occasional exposure (such as openings in otherwise screened areas or secondary roads that most people will not use on a daily basis), or rare exposure (such as viewpoints that are clearly off the beaten track and/or represent small areas of narrow visibility in otherwise completely screened areas).

Contrast Rating:

Please rate the level of contrast that you perceive between the existing landscape components (as they appear in each in photo) and the effect that the proposed project has on those components. Please provide a numerical rating between 0 and 4 for each landscape component, where:

- 0 = Insignificant Contrast
- 1 = Minimal Contrast
- 2 = Moderate Contrast
- 3 = Appreciable Contrast
- 4 = Strong Contrast
- * (please make use of .5 to allow for refinement or ambivalence between any of these ratings, e.g., 2.5 = Moderate to Appreciable Contrast).

Please then also describe in your own words the factors in the appearance of the photo that contribute to or affect the degree of contrast for each landscape component. Please consider the following for each landscape component:

Landform: Please consider the effect of the project relative to the appearance of the type/form of the landform, the edge of the line, the strength and range of color, the density of relief, the space as defined by the landform, and the extent of its scale.

Vegetation: Please consider the effect of the project relative to the appearance of the form(s) and variety of vegetation, the edge of its lines, the range of color, the density of texture, its space as defined by the vegetation, and its hierarchy/diversity of scale.

Land Use: Please consider the effect of the project relative to the appearance of identifiable land use(s) in the view, and evaluate the degree to which the project is compatible with the appearance of existing land use(s) in the view.

Water: Please consider the effect of the project relative to the appearance of water features in terms of the form of the water body(ies), edges of its (their) lines, clarity of color, texture, which refers

here to movement; for space, degree of enclosure around the feature(s); and the scale, or extent of the presence of water in the view.

Sky: Please consider the effect of the project relative to the appearance of the sky in terms of form (including the appearance of clouds), the edges of its lines (perhaps in terms of the horizon), clarity of color, texture, which here could refer cloudiness or other atmospheric conditions, the degree of openness or enclosure, and the scale, or extent of the sky in the view.

Viewer Activity: Please consider the effect of the project on the viewer's perception of the scenic quality and potential viewer enjoyment of the view, taking into account the viewpoint location and context, viewer type, and viewer exposure.

Variable factors that may have influenced rating:

Please note any conditions, based on what is visible in the photographs that may influence the degree of contrast perceived between the project and the existing conditions (e.g., atmospheric condition, season, etc.).

Perceived effect on scenic quality/viewer enjoyment:

Please summarize your evaluation of the project's overall effect on the appearance of the view, taking into account the viewpoint location and context, sensitivity of that location, scenic quality of the existing view, viewer type, and viewer exposure.