HOW TO USE

Site Selection Comparison Lab

Use the screening rubric to compare residential separation and native landscape restoration without treating the score as a zoning or safety standard.

What this lab does

This lab is a first-pass community compatibility screen. It helps users ask where the closest homes are, how future land use may change the picture, and whether the landscape plan restores meaningful native canopy.

Use the lab well	Screening only. The score is not a setback, zoning, health, safety, environmental, engineering, or regulatory determination.

What you will get

- A transparent set of assumptions you can revise.
- A calculated result that changes immediately with the inputs.
- Plain-language questions for project review and public meetings.

Practical workflow

Use the lab in five steps

Work from a general assumption toward a traceable project comparison. Keep a record of what you changed and why.

1	**Start with the default** Use the opening values to learn how the model behaves before replacing anything.
2	**Replace assumptions** Enter the best documented project information available. Keep unknown values visible as assumptions.
3	**Read the result** Focus on the relationship between inputs and outputs, not only the largest number on the screen.
4	**Copy the comparison** Use the copy button to capture the inputs, result, and educational-use notice for meeting notes.
5	**Verify before reuse** Check every project-specific claim against current permits, filings, studies, agreements, and public records.

Record with every result — Project name, location, project phase, input source, source date, measurement unit, operating condition, and any remaining unknowns.

Good comparison habits

- Compare values from the same project phase and operating condition.
- Do not present a default planning value as a project commitment.
- Retain the source link or document name with copied results.

Inputs and calculations

Know what each control changes

Use the ranges to test relationships, then replace defaults with documented values from the project you are reviewing.

INPUT	RANGE OR CHOICE	HOW TO USE IT
Residential distance	100 to 3,000 feet	Distance from the facility to the nearest residential area or receptor.
Native replacement target	0% to 100%	Share of the identified replacement area planned for locally appropriate native trees or plants.

How the lab calculates the result

MODEL ELEMENT	METHOD
Distance score	1,000 ft or more = 100; 500-999 ft = 60; below 500 ft = 20.
Native planting score	Above 30% = 100; 15%-30% = 55; below 15% = 10.
Overall screening score	Distance score x 70% + native planting score x 30%.
Status	Good start, Needs study, or Rethink based on the distance and combined score.

Important Keep the same units, project phase, time period, and operating conditions when comparing alternatives.

Interpret and verify

Turn the result into better questions

The output is most useful when it reveals what is documented, what is assumed, and what still needs verification.

How to read the output

- A higher score means the two selected planning factors begin from a stronger position; it does not establish compliance.
- The modeled buffer should be checked against parcel boundaries, grading, topography, transmission routes, substations, generators, and future land-use plans.
- A native planting percentage should identify the measured area, species mix, installation size, mature canopy, maintenance responsibility, and survival target.

Questions to take to the meeting

- What is the nearest home today and under the adopted future land-use plan?
- Is distance measured from the property line, building, generator yard, substation, or another source?
- Where will mature native canopy be measured, and who replaces failed plantings?
- How do terrain, emergency access, transmission routes, and nearby schools affect compatibility?

Sources and records to check

SOURCE OR RECORD	LOCATION
EPA stormwater trees technical memorandum	https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-11/documents/final_stormwater_trees_technical_memo_508.pdf
Local zoning, comprehensive plan, and approved landscape plan	Use the current jurisdiction and project records.

Before making a claim

Replace illustrative values with traceable project data and record the source, date, location, unit, project phase, and operating condition.

The DMV Alliance provides educational comparison tools for clearer local conversations. Results should be checked against current project-specific records and applicable requirements.