



Disclaimer: These notes are intended as helpful guidance only. For the most accurate and up-to-date information on meeting audit requirements, always refer to the latest official handbook. You can think of this document like Wikipedia—a useful starting point—whereas the program manual is your definitive source of truth.

Imperative 17 | Universal Access

Access to fresh air, sunlight and natural waterways, and prevention of audible noise

Intent

The intent of this Imperative is to allow equitable access to and protections from any negative impacts resulting from the development of Living Building projects.

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that Living Building projects are not blocking access to, or diminishing the quality of fresh air, sunlight, and natural waterways for the public or adjacent developments, and are not creating inappropriate audible noise. The following provides guidance about how you might approach this requirement of the Universal Access Imperative.

Guidance

Step 1: What are the existing conditions of your site?

Prepare a summary of the existing site conditions, describing all features relating to fresh air, sunlight, and natural waterways, and utilising any relevant or appropriate metrics or assessment criteria.

Step 2: Describe your project's approach to equitable access

Prepare a short narrative, including imagery if appropriate, that describes your project and how through its design it has considered and is managing the impacts regarding fresh air, sunlight, natural waterways and audible noise.

Step 3: Document the proposed project

Prepare a summary of the proposed site conditions after completion of your project, using the same metrics or assessment criteria as used for the existing conditions. In particular, focus on providing a description of the project's impact on the surrounding sites and broader community and clearly demonstrate how your project is being sensitive to the neighbours and public.

TOWN PLANNING

Projects in New Zealand and Australia may be required to go through a town planning approvals process as part of the development process. If this is the case for your project, this may be an opportunity for you to leverage some of the design thinking and documentation that is required for that process, e.g. shadow diagrams.

SUNLIGHT

When considering the sunlight impact of your project on neighbours' properties, it is recommended to focus on the following areas:

- Roofs (skylights, and potential locations for solar PV systems)
- Facades (windows)
- Exterior gathering spaces (terraces, gardens, balconies, etc.)

FURTHER GUIDANCE

The Living Building Challenge v4.1 Program Manual provides additional guidance relating to noise, fresh air and shading. Specific details include:

- Noise is considered publicly audible if it is above 85 decibels (dBA).
- Shading should be modelled and/or measured, at minimum, on the winter solstice between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. in order to review and consider impacts on facades, roofs, and exterior gathering spaces.

There are also a number of Exceptions applicable to this Requirement that may be relevant to your project.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

When developing your project's response to this Requirement, also take consideration for the construction process and how it may impact the local community through noise, dust or other pollutants. The project's construction environmental management plan should be developed with this in mind, and may be able to be used as part of the documentation response to this Imperative.

Basic Documentation

I17-1 Universal Access Narrative

READY AUDIT

Narrative with images outlining the project team's approach to each of the principles and guidelines of Universal Design, and outlining measures taken to provide benefit to all and to enhance the public realm.

I17-2 Universal Access Statement

READY AUDIT

Signed statement by the Architect, affirming that the project complies with ADA and ABA requirements and Universal Design principles (or international equivalent as per exception EQ-003), that noxious emissions are not present, that there are no unresolved noise complaints from the community, and that all waterways have public access.

I17-3 Solar Shading Narrative and Calculations

READY AUDIT

- Narrative describing if any neighbouring buildings are shaded, what the impacts are (if any), and how they are being addressed.
- Diagrams demonstrating maximum shading of adjacent properties, measured on the winter solstice between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

I17-4 Waterway Access (if applicable)

READY AUDIT

Site plan with dimensions showing compliant access to waterways.