
SITE IMPROVEMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS

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Division of the State Architect (DSA) documents referenced within this publication are available on the [DSA Forms](#) or [DSA Publications](#) webpages.

PURPOSE: This Interpretation of Regulations (IR) outlines DSA policy regarding site improvements for school building projects.

1. SITEWORK COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL, CITY OR COUNTY, ORDINANCES

In addition to the Education Code, the district is subject to compliance with local, city or county, ordinances as required by law (e.g., local ordinances governing drainage, waste, the Health and Safety Code, the Government Code, etc.). It is the school district's responsibility to identify and comply with all such applicable statutes and regulations.

2. SITEWORK NOT INVOLVING STRUCTURES OR THEIR UTILITIES

For school site improvement projects that involve **only** grading, landscaping including fill placement, paving, storm drains, or other work that does not support structures or involve their utilities, the school district is not required to file an application for DSA Structural Safety approval as identified in Section 1.2 of *IR A-22: Construction Projects and Items Exempt from DSA Review*.

The school district is required to file an application for Fire and Life Safety and/or DSA Access Compliance approval for site improvement projects as identified in *IR A-22*.

3. SITEWORK INVOLVING NEW OR EXISTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS OR SITE UTILITIES

All site improvement plans and specifications involving new construction, reconstruction or alterations to existing school buildings shall be submitted to DSA for approval prior to start of construction, including engineered fill designed to support structures, retaining walls, underground structures, utility systems, solar systems, grading, landscaping including fill placement, paving and striping, storm drains, or other items as required.

Associated site work in this section will not be exempt from DSA approval based upon the construction cost thresholds identified in Section 1.3.2 of *IR A-22*.

Options for submitting school building project plans and specifications for site improvement are as follows:

Option A – Single Application. The entire project may be submitted for approval at one time under a single application, or site improvements may be listed as increment 1 of a multi-increment project submitted under a single application in accordance with *IR A-11: Incremental Submittals*. The plan review fee for either of the above shall be based on the estimated cost of construction of the entire project.

Option B – Multiple Applications. Plans and specifications for site improvement work may be submitted under one application, and the school buildings for this site may be submitted under another separate application. The estimated cost and plan review fees

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for each application shall be based on the scope of work designated to each application. This option is intended for special circumstances and requires pre-approval by DSA.

4. EXISTING SITEWORK AND ENGINEERED FILL INVOLVING NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND THEIR UTILITIES

For projects involving school buildings and their utilities erected on an existing site with previously placed engineered fill, the architect shall show "existing fill" on the plans. Adequate data concerning the existing fill is required. The site soil investigation, compacted fill requirements and inspection and testing records of the original fill placement, which has been verified by a geotechnical engineer's affidavit, shall be provided. If this documentation is not available or adequate, an investigation of the existing fill shall be made by a geotechnical engineer who shall prepare a report making recommendations regarding fill adequacy and allowable soil bearing pressures for the footings of the proposed buildings. This report shall be submitted to DSA with the plans and specifications for the project.

5. ENGINEERED FILL

In all cases, the geotechnical engineer making the investigation of new or existing engineered fill and certifying to its adequacy for supporting school buildings is to be employed by the school district. The geotechnical engineer is prohibited from having an employment relationship with the contractor or developer for the existing site work during the placement of the engineered fill material.

REFERENCES:

Education Code, Section 17280

This IR is intended for use by DSA staff and by design professionals to promote statewide consistency for review and approval of plans and specifications as well as construction oversight of projects within the jurisdiction of DSA, which includes State of California public schools (K–12), community colleges and state-owned or state-leased essential services buildings. This IR indicates an acceptable method for achieving compliance with applicable codes and regulations, although other methods proposed by design professionals may be considered by DSA.

This IR is subject to revision at any time. Please check DSA's website for currently effective IRs. Only IRs listed on the webpage at www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/publications at the time of project application submittal to DSA are considered applicable.