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Common Issues and FVMs (Frequent Vignette Mistakes): LARE Section C — Site Design

2011

Specific common errors on Section C include but are not limited to:

CIRCULATION DESIGN:

- DID NOT FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
- Design is unsafe or sets up conflicts (unsafe intersections, pedestrians must cross main/primary vehicular traffic flow, etc.)
- Traffic flow impeded (drop-off areas not adequate in size, parked cars are trapped by stacked vehicles, etc.)
- Site elements or distances too small (turning radii, parking space width, etc.)
- Elements sited in setbacks (zoning, environmental, etc.)
- Required program elements missing
- Program elements missing in the *required amounts*
- *L.A.R.E. Reference Manual* not used correctly (accessible routes, number of parking space, offsets, etc.)

CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAMS (PLANNING PROBLEMS):

- DID NOT FOLLOW DIRECTIONS
- Site elements/functions drawn too small
- Sited elements in setbacks
- Required program elements missing
- Program elements missing in the *required amounts*
- Program elements don't relate to one another
- Required two different solutions are not significantly different
- Conflicting land uses not screened or buffered
- Failure to utilize site to maximize land use relationships (i.e. locating commercial/shopping areas deep within site instead of along the road frontage)
- *L.A.R.E Reference Manual* not used correctly (zoning, minimum required setbacks or sizes, etc.)

EXPLANATION OF COMMON PROBLEMS ON SECTION C

The content and examples are based upon prior LARE vignettes. This document does not claim to cover all situations that may be encountered in the actual Section C exam. This information is advisory and is for candidate practice and study purposes only. CLARB cannot as the exam provider endorse this document or any review sessions or any commercially available study guides.

Implicit expectations vs. explicit expectations

While you must address each vignette based on the clearly stated (explicit) expectations in the problem statement and *Reference Manual*, you should use common landscape architectural practices/knowledge to identify and address implicit, unstated expectations. For example, activities and spaces involving children should be sited away from vehicular traffic. Don't site land uses outside of the given property or limit-of-work boundaries. Competencies such as these should not have to be brought to the attention of a competent landscape architect, and thus are not specifically

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detailed in writing.

Failure to meet program requirement, codes, and zoning

In practice, different jurisdictions often have very different zoning and building code requirements, and the detail and scope of these codes and regulations can be enormous. CLARB has simplified and standardized the exam codes in the *L.A.R.E. Reference Manual*. This provided code is what is required for your exam jurisdiction, and you must be familiar with it. [Note: CLARB periodically updates the *Reference Manual*, so be sure you have the most up-to-date version that will be used for your exam.]

The *L.A.R.E. Reference Manual* provides explicit codes and regulations for the jurisdiction in which your vignette is located. Each vignette *problem statement* will provide additional information and requirements specific to that vignette. The problem statement may give a specific footprint for a building or specify required relationships between elements or activities. All program requirements must be incorporated into your solution at the size, shape and number specified and, if so instructed, using the graphic conventions provided. You cannot alter footprints or other elements unless the problem statement explicitly allows the alteration.

The problem statement may also include site-specific zoning requirements pertinent only to that particular vignette. (Additional setbacks for environmentally sensitive areas or elements, protection for trees over a certain size, etc.) If so, these requirements are in addition to the zoning requirements in the *L.A.R.E. Reference Manual*. An example of a problem statement requirement would be allowing only one access point/entry. The *Reference Manual* does not address number of entry points but does deal with offsets from adjacent road intersections, sight triangles, etc., thus you are expected to satisfy the site-specific entry condition in addition to the *Reference Manual* requirements.

Back to implicit expectations... If information is given to you in the problem statement, expect to use it. However, the problem statement may not tell you *how* to use it. Thus, if soil profiles are given, the competent landscape architect would implicitly know to verify bedrock and water table depth to ensure the proposed land uses and site elements are appropriately located.

Reference Manual and problem statement graphic conventions

Some vignettes include graphic conventions to use in your solution. Always draw as directed. Additionally, clearly label program elements, setbacks, etc. For example, accessible parking spaces should be labeled with a note and the graphic convention provided in the problem statement, with access lanes and curb ramps clearly and accurately drawn and labeled with dimensions. Don't just draw the accessible spaces "a little bit larger" compared to regular size parking spaces. Crosswalks should be clearly labeled, and if a minimum width is specified, the crosswalk should be drawn, dimensioned, and labeled accurately.

Failure to provide two significantly different solutions

Some Section C problems require you to produce two "significantly different" solutions. Examples include commercial site, residential site or park site. This means that each solution should represent a different design concept. Examples include centralized vs. dispersed layout or interior looped path vs. outer loop path. In actual practice, it is common for a landscape architect to explore multiple alternatives, with the best solution selected for further development.

In past exams, the two concepts might have different vehicular access and circulation schemes and/or alternate locations for several or the most significant project elements. Simply moving a required program element slightly one

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way or the other, or shifting a road without creating an alternate circulation concept, would not constitute two “significantly different” solutions. For example, one solution might use a single circulation spine from which all use areas are accessed; the second solution might use multiple circulation systems. One concept could involve a linear arrangement of land uses and the second concept a cluster arrangement.

However! It is important to remember that, in addition to being *different*, both solutions must be *viable*. They both must respond to all applicable site, program and zoning issues. For example, environmental or other concerns might dictate that there is only one acceptable location for certain project element(s). A competent landscape architect would recognize this and thus begin with and maintain the optimal location of those elements, yet arrange the remaining elements to create two different solutions. While both solutions must function adequately and meet all the requirements, it is not necessary that both solutions be equally suitable. The purpose is to demonstrate your ability to generate two different yet competent solutions.

Land Use Issues, Economics and Environmental Considerations

In Section C, you are expected to locate land uses to optimize relationships between on-site and off-site uses as well as protect the environment. You will likely need to consider a wide range of functional issues (such as traffic flow) and environmental concerns (such as noise, soil suitability and slope stability). You will also need to consider the economic ramifications of your decisions.

Economic considerations? In 75 minutes? There are no cost estimates in the vignettes, but a competent landscape architect would be aware of costs conceptually, such as minimizing the length of roadways. While the exam graders will not measure the length of road to fit within a predetermined range, a large amount of unnecessary pavement will likely be penalized. Often economic impacts are tied to environmental concerns. For example, avoid steep slopes when locating land uses that obviously require relatively flat slopes (parking lots, sports fields, etc.). This minimizes both the environmental and economic impacts of significant (and unnecessary) earthwork.

Evaluate the quality and quantity of existing vegetation and consider the potential impacts. In actual practice (as well as in prior Section C vignettes), it is often necessary to remove some existing vegetation to meet program, zoning or health, safety, and welfare (HSW). A competent landscape architect will weigh the alternatives by understanding the quality of existing vegetation stands (large established trees vs. immature vegetation) and the impact when siting land uses (taking out one large tree instead of three).

Circulation Safety

The ability to create safe and efficient circulation systems is clearly related to HSW; therefore, odds are there will be at least one vignette that challenges you to design safe and efficient circulation for cars and pedestrians, and perhaps buses, bikes, etc. as well. Safe circulation includes entering and exiting the site as well as negating or minimizing conflicts within the site. Connections to adjacent roads must maintain visibility and reduce confusion. Site entries (access drive into the site from a road or street) should not be blocked from the view of oncoming vehicles and should be located either directly opposite other intersecting roads or sufficiently offset.

In real life we fuss about having to back out of a full dead end parking lot or a dead end street. Both site features exist and we grumblingly back out (and occasionally hit a car or other object in the process). Dead end parking lots may be in your repertoire at your office, but the *Reference Manual* clearly states that dead end parking lots are forbidden. All streets that dead end must include an acceptable turn around such as an adequately dimensioned cul-de-sac.

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Conflicts between parking spaces and stacking areas for drop off or drive up activities should be avoided. (In real life, you may calmly accept being trapped in your parking space by a line of cars at the drive-through window, but you should not design that situation in your vignette.) Don't make parked vehicles back out into major traffic routes--as a general rule, parked vehicles should back out into parking access aisles and not into major circulation routes, or streets.

A minimally competent landscape architect will minimize pedestrian/vehicular conflicts whenever possible. For example, pedestrians should not have to cross major vehicular circulation routes to move from most parking spaces to the building entrance. Nor should pedestrians be required to weave through parked cars to walk to the main building entrance.

References

The CLARB reference list for Section C:

- [*Landscape Architectural Graphic Standards*](#) / Hopper
- *Time-Saver Standards for Landscape Architects, 2nd Edition* / Harris and Dines
- [*The Dimensions of Parking*](#) / ULI

These are additional references that may be useful for your preparation:

- *Anatomy of a Park*/Molnar & Rutledge
- *Architectural Graphic Standards, 9th Ed.*/Ramsey
- *A Concise Guide to Community Planning*/Hall & Porterfield
- *Basic Elements of Landscape Architectural Design*/Booth
- *Construction Methods & Planning*/Illingworth
- *Design for Dignity*/Lebovich
- *Environmental Planning for Site Development*/Beer
- *A Guide to Site & Environmental Planning*/Rubenstein
- *Handbook of Landscape Architectural Construction*/Nelischer
- *Landscape Architecture, 2nd Ed.*/Simonds
- *Landscape Architecture Construction, 2nd Ed.*/Landphair & Klatt
- *Site Planning*/Lynch & Hack
- *Site Planning & Design for the Elderly*/Carstens
- *Time-Saver Standards for Housing & Residential Development*/DeChiara