

Developer Readiness Assessment

STEP ONE: CORE QUESTIONS

1. Do your bylaws or governing documents explicitly disallow property ownership, debt, or development activities?
2. Has your board confirmed that real estate development aligns with your mission and strategic priorities?
3. Is the board willing to take on debt or other uncertain risks to ensure the project is completed (assuming the project budget demonstrates sustainability)?

YES

If you answered **“YES”** to all the above questions, you may be in a position to be a developer in your community.

Continue with the following assessment to determine your best next steps.

NO

If you answered **“NO”** to any of the above questions, your organization likely can't lead as the developer without structural changes.

- If there's strong interest from the organization to fill a developer role despite identified challenges, complete the following assessment to determine what you might bring to the table as a co-developer.
- If you're unable to move forward in a development role, you can explore other ways to influence community outcomes through this project (e.g., help identify another local developer, support reuse planning activities, facilitate community engagement activities, etc).

STEP TWO: ASSESSMENT

Now that you've addressed the core criteria, it's time to dig a little deeper. This section will help you understand your organization's current capacity, financial readiness, governance alignment, and ability to manage project complexity. Your answers will clarify your strengths, where you might need support, and which development role is the best fit right now.

YES = 1 POINT

NO = 0 POINTS

CAPACITY & SKILLS

	YES	NO
Do you have staff or board members who can manage complex timelines, budgets, and reporting, or oversee someone else doing it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have systems (staff, consultant, or board) to track budgets, cash flow, and compliance with funders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have staff capacity or a plan to supplement with consultants/shared services, so development won't overwhelm existing programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you, as the nonprofit organization, have the confidence, relationships, or organizational culture to build the team you need? Including identifying, hiring, and coordinating outside experts (architects, attorneys, contractors, finance advisors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL (Possible Points: 4)	<hr/> / 4	

YES = 1 POINT NO = 0 POINTS

CAPITAL ACCESS

	YES	NO
Is your organization eligible and prepared to apply for funding (with up-to-date nonprofit status, financial records, and compliance requirements)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your board approved pursuing debt or investment if required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have existing funder or investor relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you successfully raised or managed significant funding before (e.g., >\$500K for a project)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have reserves, collateral, cash flow, or access to bridge funding to cover upfront expenses before reimbursements arrive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL (Possible Points: 5)	/ 5	

ABILITY TO MANAGE PROJECT COMPLEXITY

	YES	NO
Does your organization have experience successfully completing projects with significant technical, environmental, or regulatory requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you previously managed projects involving tax credits, layered financing, or environmental remediation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have existing funder or investor relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your staff coordinated phased, mixed-use, or multi-site projects before?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your staff have established strategies to navigate public or political scrutiny related to project development (e.g., zoning variances, community pushback, multiple government approvals)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL (Possible Points: 5)	/ 5	

GOVERNANCE & RISK TOLERANCE

	YES	NO
Has the board been educated on the risks and rewards of development? <i>Development can bring benefits such as new revenue streams, asset ownership, and stronger alignment with your mission. It also carries risks, including financial exposure and added operational responsibilities.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there agreement that assuming ownership of this project aligns with the organization's mission and strategic priorities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the board have a clear process for making timely decisions about financing, partnerships, and risk (i.e., something to protect you from getting bogged down by debate or indecision)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL (Possible Points: 3)	/ 3	

If you got to the end of this assessment thinking, "Oh man, we're not ready for this," don't worry—this isn't the end of the road. There are still plenty of ways to play a meaningful role in a development project, even if you're not ready to lead it just yet.

Use your section scores to determine where your organization currently falls on the Development Spectrum. Your scores don't determine whether or not you're a developer. They help clarify the most appropriate role for your organization right now and what kind of support or partnerships might be needed to move forward.

Category	Threshold for Readiness
Core Questions	Q1 must be YES
Capacity & Skills	Score 3 or higher
Capital Access	Score 4 or higher
Governance & Risk Tolerance	Score 2 or higher
Ability to Manage Project Complexity	Score 2 or higher

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement TR-84066401 to The Center for Creative Land Recycling and TR-84066901 to Groundwork USA. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document.

DIY Developer

- Core Criteria: All answered YES
- All Section Scores meet thresholds

You have the internal systems, board support, and financial capacity to lead a project from start to finish. This role is best suited for smaller-scale or phased projects, where the stakes are more manageable and you can build experience over time.

Development Consultant Path

- Core Criteria: All answered YES
- Most Section Scores meet thresholds, but with minor gaps (e.g., limited capital access or board alignment)

You are well-positioned to lead the project, but would benefit from targeted development expertise, especially in areas like deal structuring, complex financing, or project management. This model builds your team's capacity while keeping you in the lead.

Co-Developer Path

- Core Criteria: YES to at least Question 1
- Scores show mixed strengths and weaknesses across categories (e.g., strong mission alignment and board support, but limited project experience or financial readiness)

You're not fully ready to lead alone, but you bring mission alignment, credibility, and community trust to the table. A joint venture or other co-development model can help share risk while keeping your organization directly involved in shaping the future of the project.

Fee Developer Path

- Core Criteria: All answered YES
- Readiness scores are low across multiple categories

You may not have the internal capacity to manage a development process, but you can still guide the project's vision and ensure long-term community benefit. Hiring a fee developer allows your organization to retain ownership and reduce risk.

Not Yet Developer Ready

- One or more Core Criteria answered NO, or Readiness scores are low in all categories

Your organization is not currently positioned to take on a development role, but that doesn't mean you can't play a meaningful part in the project. You can still influence outcomes through and build toward a future development role if desired.