

# Small Home | Big Impact

## Accessory Dwelling Unit Program of Housing Trust Silicon Valley

### Homework Assignment

This exercise will help you understand your site constraints, learn how to access information on your city and county websites as well as start building a real estate development vocabulary, which will facilitate communication with those in the industry such as planners, plan checkers, designers, builders, lenders, real estate professionals, etc.

### Background

When thinking about developing your property, whether adding additional square footage to your home or building a detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU), you should take inventory and dimensions of all of the physical elements on your site. When you review your city's building requirements you will be able to evaluate what you can build and how big your project can be.

Next, you'll take this information and make a drawing or spatial representation of your site and what you are proposing to build, this is called a site plan. Site plans are useful to see the entire layout of your property and valuable as you speak to others about your site and proposed ADU.

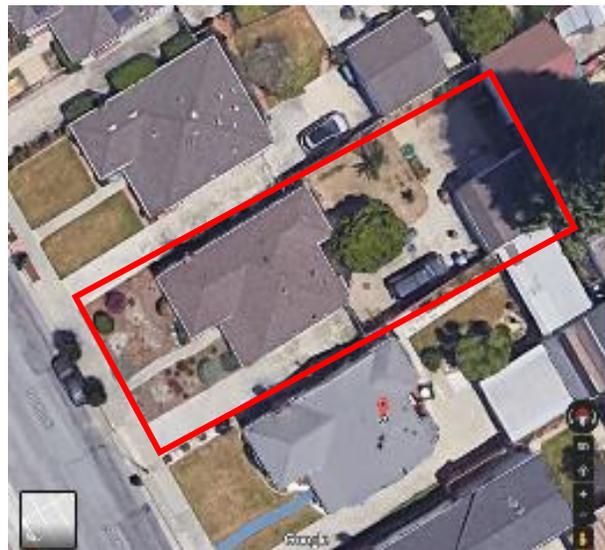
A site plan can visually represent just the lot you are studying or it may include the neighborhood context. For purposes of this homework assignment draw your lot and to take note of all site information and neighborhood context as explained in Step 1. b below.

*Please note: The instructions below are specific for San Jose residents, please consult your city's website for information.*

### Assignment

Step by step guide to drawing a site plan:

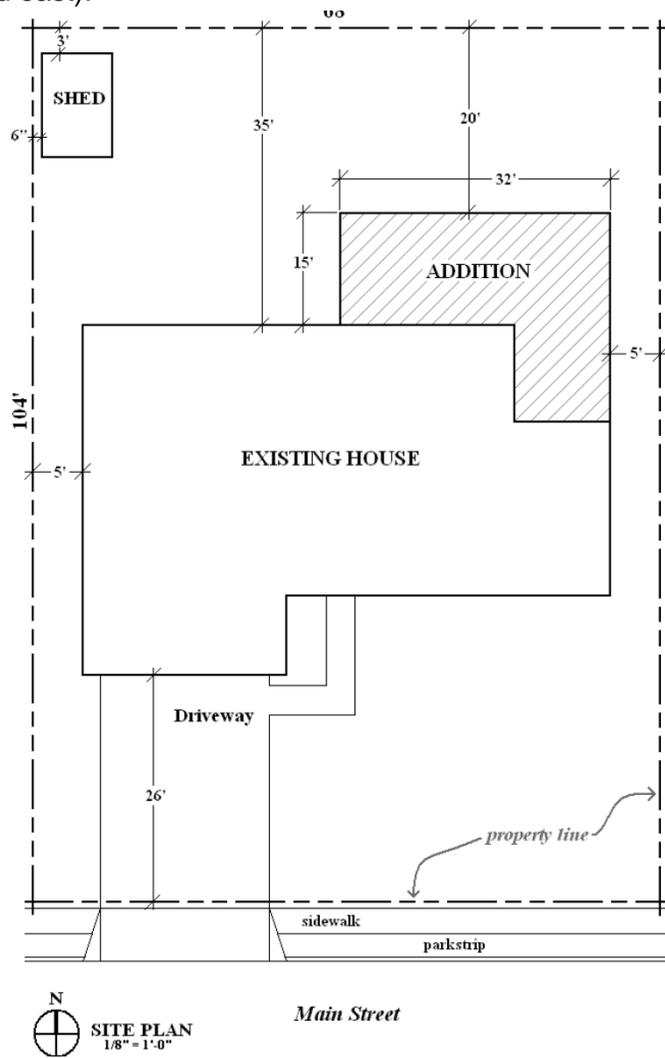
- 1) Obtain an aerial photo of your site so that you can see from above all of the man-made buildings (buildings, fences, decks, hardscape, etc.), natural physical features (trees, ground cover, steep terrain, etc.), circulation (streets, roads, alleys, sidewalks, corner lot, etc.) and utilities (overhead or underground) so that you may use as a guide as you set out to measure and draw these onto your plan.
  - a) Go to Google Maps, type in your address and change the view to satellite, zoom onto your site and print.
  - b) Zoom back out and take note of what you see all around your house, the type of street you live on (local, frontage, collector or arterial) and what's near (land uses) such as housing typology (single family--one or two stories or multifamily) and architecture (or elements about the architecture, like columns,



arches, clay roofs that have identifiable consistencies), retail, offices and parks, etc. and note direction (north, west, south and east).

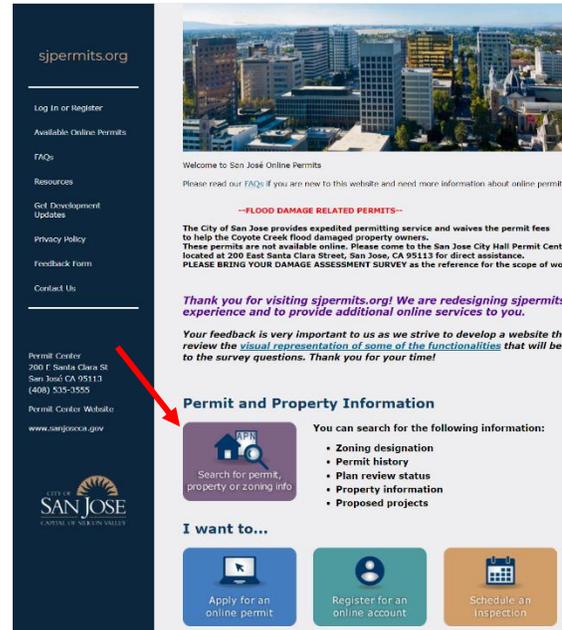
2) Draw a scaled site plan, like the one drawn here:

- a) Take measurements at the property line and around each structure with a measuring tape—you may want to enlist someone to help you take notes.
- b) If you have a title report, it is likely that a parcel map was included and this map will have dimensions of your lot. If you don't, you may download a free copy of the parcel map from the [Santa Clara County Assessor's Office](#) (Click [here](#) to learn more about parcel maps).
- c) Include setback dimensions—measure how many feet from outside of the building to the property line—do this for the front, back and sides. Include dimensions of your driveway and front landscape.
- d) Total the measurements so that you have: i) the total square footage of your entire lot; and ii) total square footage of the house, garage, deck and any other accessory building.
- e) Figure out the lot coverage by dividing the total footprint (see Step 2.d.ii above) by the total lot area (see Step 2.d.i above). [Note that some jurisdictions require a minimum about of lot coverage and others backyard lot coverage.]



It is important to know as much information about your property, such as general plan designation, zoning, school district, flood zone, seismic hazards, etc. as this will help me make additional determinations about building constraints that can result in additional costs. For example, if you live in a flood zone you will need to engineer the foundation accordingly; if your home is in a seismic hazardous site that has liquefaction you will need to hire a geotechnical engineer to produce a geotechnical investigation that will include testing the composition of the soils and design recommendations; if you live in a historic area you may be exempted from additional parking requirements, etc.

- 3) If you live in San Jose, go to:
  - <https://sjpermits.org/permits/>
  - a) Click on the purple icon that says “Search for permit, property or zoning info”
  - b) Enter your address or your APN if you have it from your parcel map
  - c) Click on the hyper link where your address appears
  - d) Click on “Property Info”
  - e) Click on “More Property Information”
  - f) Print out this sheet and keep it together with your parcel map and the site plan
- 4) Find the zoning ordinance regarding Secondary Units--you’ll use this information to determine if your site meets the zoning requirements.
  - a) Go to the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement [webpage](#) and on the left-hand panel under “Planning,” hover down to “Secondary Units”—or click [here](#).
  - b) There is a ton of information on this page, you should read through it all, the city recently revised it to give you step by step guidance. For this exercise click on the hyper link to get the long version of the [zoning ordinance](#) and the [worksheet](#)—print these out and study them.



- 5) Draw the footprint of the proposed ADU onto the site plan:
  - a) Use a hatch line; and
  - b) Label it “Proposed ADU” and include total square footage.

### Putting it all together

As you review the city requirements against all of the information you’ve gathered about your site, you should be able to determine if your site is eligible to build an ADU, the type of structure, i.e. attached, detached, junior ADU or garage conversion and the square footage of the structure.

With all of this information on hand you are now ready to have conversations with the planning department, land use consultant, designer, builder, etc. about the type of ADU you would like to build. Please bring your site plan to the workshop so that you may speak to the ADU practitioners about your individual site.

