

GOALS AND CONCERNS

Before you begin, it is important to know why you are building an ADU. It's helpful to think about both your short-term needs and your long-term goals. One of the benefits of an ADU is that it can adapt to your living situation as it changes over time. At first, it might be rented for income, then it might turn into a children's playroom, and eventually it might house aging parents or yourself.

It is also important to think about your concerns. Ways to address these potential challenges are explored in this workbook. It is good to list concerns early in the process to make sure they are addressed sufficiently.

What are some of your overall goals for building an ADU?

Goals

SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rental income
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing for a family member
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helping out the community (e.g., housing a teacher)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing for someone with special needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning for retirement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increased resale value
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Downsizing/moving into the ADU
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing domestic help (e.g., an au pair)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with chores or to watch over things when you are away
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing an in-home caregiver

Concerns

SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty of approval and/or construction management
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Privacy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Site constraints
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Challenges of renting and managing the ADU
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conflict with neighbors
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scrutiny from planning & permitting department

ADU Vision

There will likely be challenges along the way. To stay motivated, some people find it helpful to write down what building their ADU will allow them to do, such as “take the kids to Disneyland every year,” or “make sure my mom has a safe place to live.” If you think it would be helpful, use this space to write a sentence or two to express your goals. Feel free to cut it out and keep it somewhere you will see it.

“As a kid, I played Monopoly, and it was always better to have two houses rather than one. The land cost is already built in; I might as well capitalize on it.”

– Local ADU owner



My ADU will allow me to:



Photo: Adam Long

GATHERING INFORMATION

One of the first steps when building an ADU is to gather important information about your property. It's easiest and most accurate to collect this information by contacting your city. City contact information is on the ADU standards sheet for your specific city, which can be found on www.adumarin.org/standards. Before you contact the city, you should first read through this section to familiarize yourself with the concepts. Alternatively, you can gather the information yourself as described on the following pages and on the ADU standards sheet.



Property Information Summary

My APN

Minimum lot size for an ADU

Maximum permitted FAR

Floor area ratio

My lot size

My zone's maximum permitted lot coverage

Other information

It may feel scary to contact the city, but remember: city staff are there to help you. The city is not going to inspect your property or look for code violations if you inquire about building an ADU.

Basic Information

It will be helpful to know the assessor's parcel number (APN) of your property. Every site or lot in California is assigned a unique APN, which is like a social security number but for your property.

To locate your APN, go to the County of Marin's Property Jurisdiction Information Lookup at <http://gis.marinpublic.com/lookup/JurisdictionLookup/>. Enter your address, then select "Look Up" and your APN will be displayed.

Alternatively, the city can probably tell you the APN, or you can find it on your property deed or tax bill. Real estate websites like Zillow® or Trulia® often list APN numbers as well, sometimes calling them parcel numbers.

Contact Your City Planning and Building Departments

Belvedere 415-435-3838

Corte Madera 415-927-5064

Fairfax 415-453-1584

Larkspur 415-927-5038

Mill Valley 415-388-4033

Novato 415-899-8989

Ross 415-453-1453

San Anselmo 415-578-0112

Sausalito 415-289-4128

Tiburon 415-435-7390

Unincorporated Areas and Marin County
415-473-6269

To check what jurisdiction your property is located in, go to www.adumarin.org/thinking, scroll towards the bottom and select "Click Here to Lookup What Jurisdiction You Live In."

Review the parking requirements on the ADU standards sheet for your city online at www.adumarin.org/standards and/or talk to your city.

Parking

Adding parking is much less of a concern than it used to be. At most, you will need to add one spot for the ADU, and it can be tandem (directly behind another spot in the driveway).

You will not need to add any parking for your ADU if it meets any of the following conditions:

- A studio apartment
- Within ½ mile of public transit
- Within an existing structure (e.g., garage)
- In a designated historic district
- Within one block of car share locations

If you convert a garage to an ADU (or demolish a garage and build an ADU), you do not need to make up the lost parking spot.

Other Standards

There are other standards or regulations for ADUs that apply. These are listed on the ADU standards sheet for your city, which can be found on www.adumarin.org/standards. Several cities may have additional rules near the coast. City staff will be able to tell you if there are additional standards or regulations that apply to your property.

MEETING WITH THE CITY

Use the following page to take notes from your meeting with the city planner. One of the best things you can do is to talk to your city's planning department early in the process about the potential for and restrictions on an ADU.

Most cities have a planning/zoning counter where you can ask questions without an appointment. Some cities might require appointments.

Be sure to bring this workbook.



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CITY PLANNER

1. Am I allowed to build an ADU on my property?
2. Does the city have handouts or additional information? Are ADU resources on the city's website?
3. Are there common pitfalls or mistakes to watch out for?
4. Can you explain the ADU approval process for this city?
5. How long does it usually take to obtain approval, and how many times do applicants typically need to resubmit plans?
6. What is the FAR for my zone and does lot coverage apply to the ADU I hope to build?
7. What other important development standards should I know about, such as setbacks?
8. Does the city have an estimate of my current floor area?
9. Does the city have information on my lot coverage?
10. Will I need to add parking? Does my existing home meet parking requirements? Do state law parking exemptions apply to my situation?
11. Are there any fire safety or fire sprinkler regulations I should know about?
12. (If converting an existing garage or accessory building) How do I know if my garage was built legally?
13. Are there restrictions on how I can use my ADU?

Notes

Use this section to take notes from your meeting with the city planner.

PUTTING PEN TO PAPER: DRAWING A ROUGH SKETCH OF YOUR PROPERTY

The site plan needs to be drawn to scale eventually, but to start you should use scratch paper.

If the site plan is feeling too stressful, you can skip it for now or go outside and do a really rough sketch on a napkin. It's better to meet with the city earlier than to get everything right.

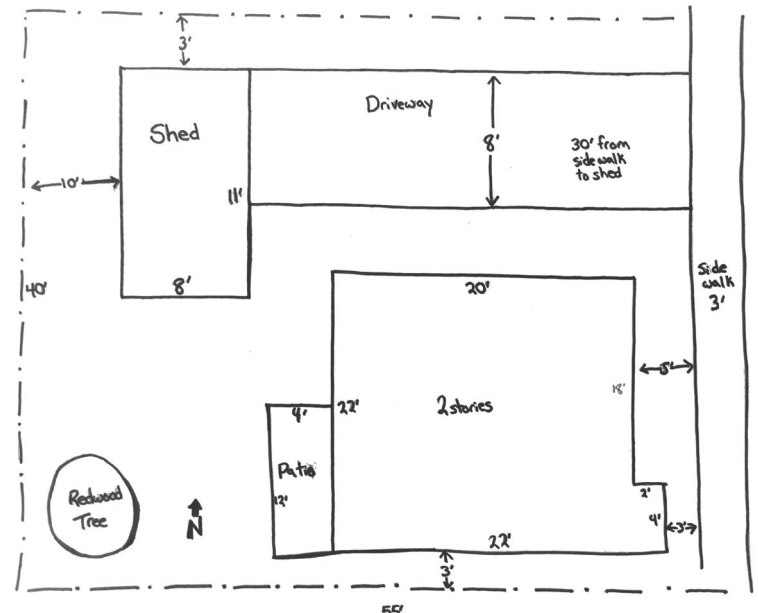
Drawing a site plan is an essential step, both for your own planning and to get city approvals. A site plan shows your property line and key information such as buildings, setbacks, lot line, etc. Most homeowners hire a professional to produce the final version, but it is often helpful to have a rough sketch to start. At this stage, you are going to draw major elements like building footprints, driveways, trees, etc.

Start by sketching out your property lines, measuring and marking them accordingly. (You can use fences to estimate property lines, but you may need to get a professional survey.) Add any existing structures. Focus on the basic shape. You don't need to worry about inside floor plans, you just need to capture the footprint and whether it is one or two stories. Note special features like porches, trellises, and exterior stairways.

Next, add in the driveway. Be sure to measure the length and width of the driveway. Pay attention to other significant features like trees, drainage ways, steep slopes, etc. When you are done, you will have something that looks like the sketch to the right.

Now, try doing a drawing to scale. Depending on your lot size, a good scale might be one inch equals ten feet. If possible, try to have your north arrow direction pointing upwards on the page. Besides drawing the lines, be sure to make notes about the exact length as well. Be sure to use a pencil.

You'll want to copy your site plan or take a photo with your phone, because you will probably end up drawing on it several times as you explore ideas.





BUDGETING EXERCISE

These questions will help you think through and get started with financial planning for your ADU.

1. What are my estimated construction costs? (Use the ADU calculator at calculator.adumarin.org.)
2. How much cash (or other liquid assets) can I put into the project?
3. How am I planning to finance the project?
4. How much equity do I have in my home (market value of home - mortgage balance)?
5. If a family member or friend is going to live there, can they contribute by paying rent?
6. Will my income support a loan?



7. Which loan(s) best suit my situation?
8. Do I expect to qualify for a loan?
9. Do I prefer a bank, credit union, or non-traditional financing?
10. What banks do I want to reach out to? (Make sure to include your current lender.)
11. What do I expect to rent my ADU for? (The ADU calculator at calculator.adumarin.org can estimate.)
12. Is my priority to maximize income or to help meet the housing needs of the community?
13. What other financial considerations do I have and/or what ideas do I want to explore?