

# 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 Ecubed 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 a shipping container 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.

**My ADU will allow me to:**



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*“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.”*

*– ADU owner*



Photo by: Andrea Nentwick

# GATHERING INFORMATION

One of the first steps when building an Ecubed 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 [accessorydwellings.org](http://accessorydwellings.org). Before you contact the city, you should first read through the rules 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.

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## 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

## Other Standards

There are other standards or regulations for Ecubed ADUs that apply. Several cities may have additional rules near bodies of water. 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 Ecubed 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 shipping container 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. 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.

Once you have a rough sketch of the site plan and shipping container ADU, we can render it to scale.

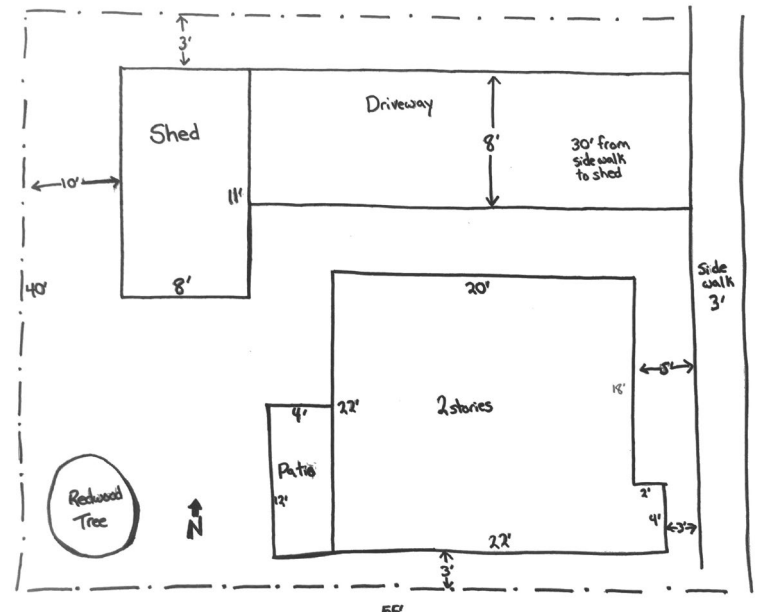
Drawing a site plan is an essential step, both for your own planning and to get city approvals. A site plan shows your property line and key information such as buildings, setbacks, lot line, etc. Most homeowners hire a professional to produce the final version, but it is often helpful to have a rough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

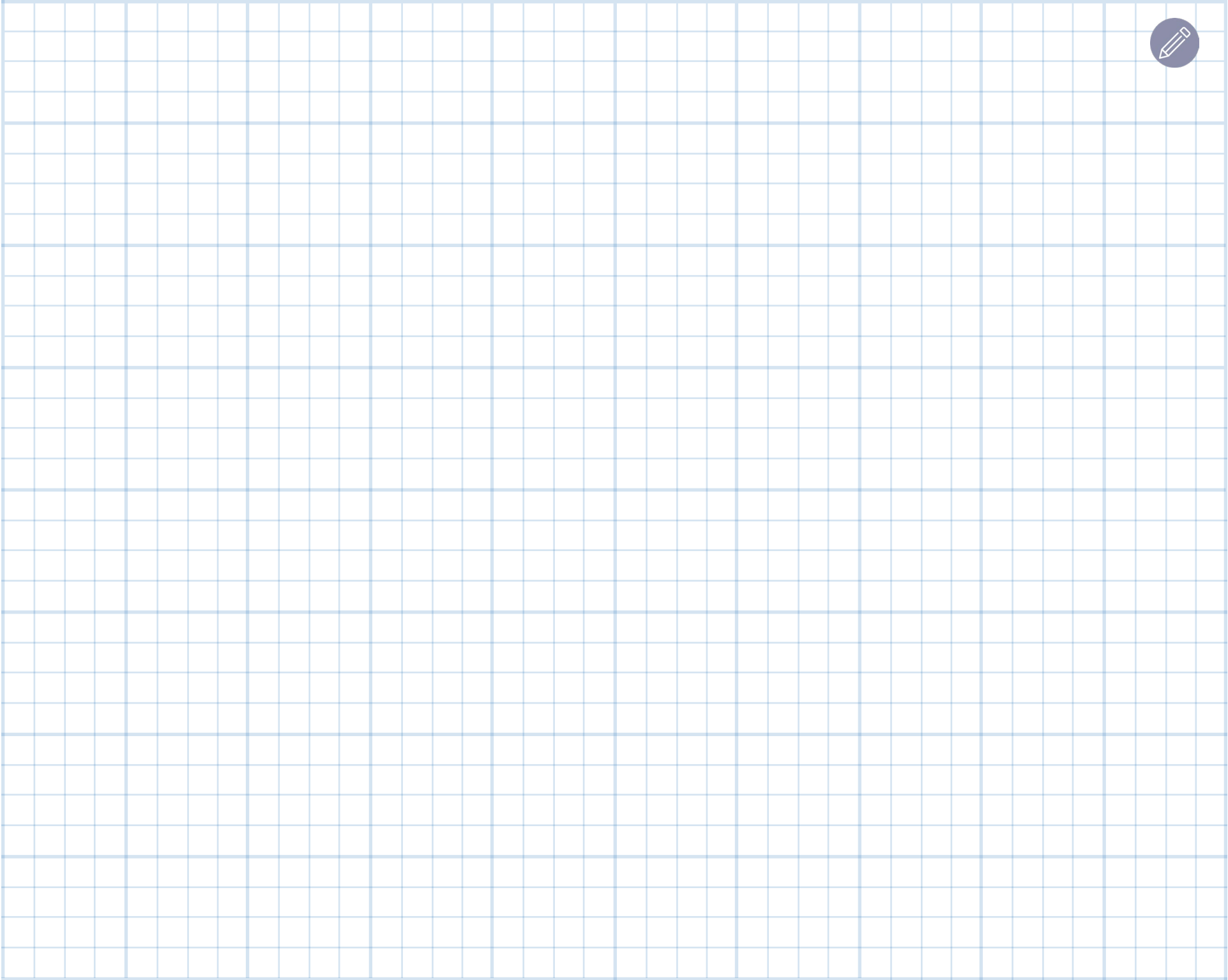
Start by sketching out your property lines, measuring and marking them accordingly. (You can use fences to estimate property lines, but you may need to get a professional survey.) Add any existing structures. Focus on the basic shape. You don't need to worry about inside floor plans, you just need to 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? (A shipping container ADU can cost between \$150-\$400 per square foot.)
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](https://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?