

Assess Your Site Conditions

1. TAKE INVENTORY

Take inventory of your lot. What are the site conditions of your lot?

Take inventory of your neighborhood. What does your neighborhood need?

2. CHOOSE YOUR PROJECT SITE

Sketch a diagram of your lot's features on pages 33-34.

Note areas of your lot that may be good candidates for transformation.

SOIL QUALITY

Soil that is healthier tends to have a darker color and lots of plant life. On the other hand, contaminated, nutrient-poor soil may be gray in color with little plant growth. Soil can be sent to a lab to be tested, or purchase your own soil-test kit.



SLOPE

Low areas that retain water are perfect for rain gardens, while flat areas are great gathering spaces.

WATER ACCESS

Determine whether your project will need water access for irrigation or programming. If you think it will, consider the following:

- Get access to an outdoor spigot
- Request that the Water and Sewer Authority installs a water meter on your lot
- Do a simple *percolation test* to see how well the soil can absorb water
- Avoid planting lawn grass. Due to its short root-system, most lawn grass doesn't have a large capacity for holding water and will require additional irrigation.

SUN EXPOSURE

Different plants require different amounts of sunlight—and not all parts of a lot are the same. Look for how trees, fences, and adjacent buildings cast shadows throughout the day.



FULL SUN

Receives direct sunlight for at least 6 hours or more each day, including some or all of the midday hours.



PART SUN

May receive sunlight during parts of the day, and can tolerate midday sun.



FULL SHADE

No direct sunlight on the ground.



PARTIAL SHADE

May only receive a few hours of sunlight during one part of the day. No midday sun.



LIGHT SHADE

Little if any direct sunlight, primarily traveling shade. Common under tall trees or trees with sparse foliage.

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EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Note site conditions, such as the location of trees, utility lines, and major infrastructure, any existing flooding or erosion issues, sun exposure, etc., as these conditions may affect the types of land uses that are possible.

There may be some infrastructure that remains underground. If your project involves digging or moving earth with power equipment, state law requires that you notify underground utility companies three to ten business days before you plan to dig.

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UNDERGROUND DEBRIS

Vacant lots in particular may have had a building on them in the past. If you plan to do any digging on site, there may be buried building materials underground. Conditions of vacant lots with or without buried debris vary widely across the City.

HELPFUL SKETCHING TIPS

When drawing your lot and its various features on the following pages, consider these pointers:

- Pick a Simple Scale**
 Does one grid square equal 1 foot? 2 feet? Pick a scale that makes drawing the whole lot easy and exact - this will help as you plan out where things go.
- Start with the Borders**
 Beginning with the property borders will ensure that you fit the whole lot.
- Try Using Color**
 Use colors to signify different elements, like blue for water, and green for plants. Have fun with it!

Site Conditions Worksheet

Use this worksheet to gather your basic site observations in one place.

SOIL QUALITY (choose one)

Sandy / Gritty
 Clay
 Average
 Healthy
 Rich

SLOPE (choose all that apply)

Steep
 Mild
 Varying
 Subtle
 Flat

SUN LEVELS (choose all that apply)

Full Shade
 Light Shade
 Partial Shade
 Part Sun
 Full Sun

WATER ACCESS (choose all that apply)

None
 Rain Barrell
 Neighbor spigot
 Site spigot
 Existing irrigation

TREE CANOPY (choose one)

No trees
 Trees in adjacent lots
 1-2 Trees
 3-5 Trees
 Many trees

SAFETY (choose one)

I don't feel safe
 Uneasy
 Neutral
 Mostly safe
 I feel safe

ACCESSIBILITY (choose all that apply)

Hard to get to
 Hard to see
 Not sure
 Easy to see
 Easy to get to