

CITY OF ANN ARBOR ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS VARIANCE REQUEST

October 22, 2025

520 Soule Blvd • Ann Arbor, MI 48103



Angelini & Associates
Architects

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Year Built: 1929
- One and one-half Story Single Family Residence, 1,917 square feet, with detached garage on a corner lot.
- Owners purchased this home in 1989 – 36 years ago this November, and are the longest tenured residents on the block. They would raise their children here and have become staples of the neighborhood.
- In 2010, a housefire engulfed the home resulting in widespread damage. Owners opted to rebuild and endured an exhaustive 11 month reconstruction process with the intention of it being their forever home.
- Owners would like to create living space atop the garage to accommodate counselling sessions detached from their private residence.
- The proposed ADU will provide flexibility for family members or caregivers to live on-site to better assist the Owners as they age-in-place.



Existing Residence, 520 Soule Blvd, looking north



Existing Residence, 520 Soule Blvd, looking west

EXISTING CONDITIONS – GARAGE

- The existing two-stall detached garage is located 2'-6" from the west property boundary, and 4'-1" from the existing house.
- The west boundary is subject to a prescriptive easement (DTE) extending 6'-0" on each side of the boundary line.



Existing overhead utility lines along west lot line

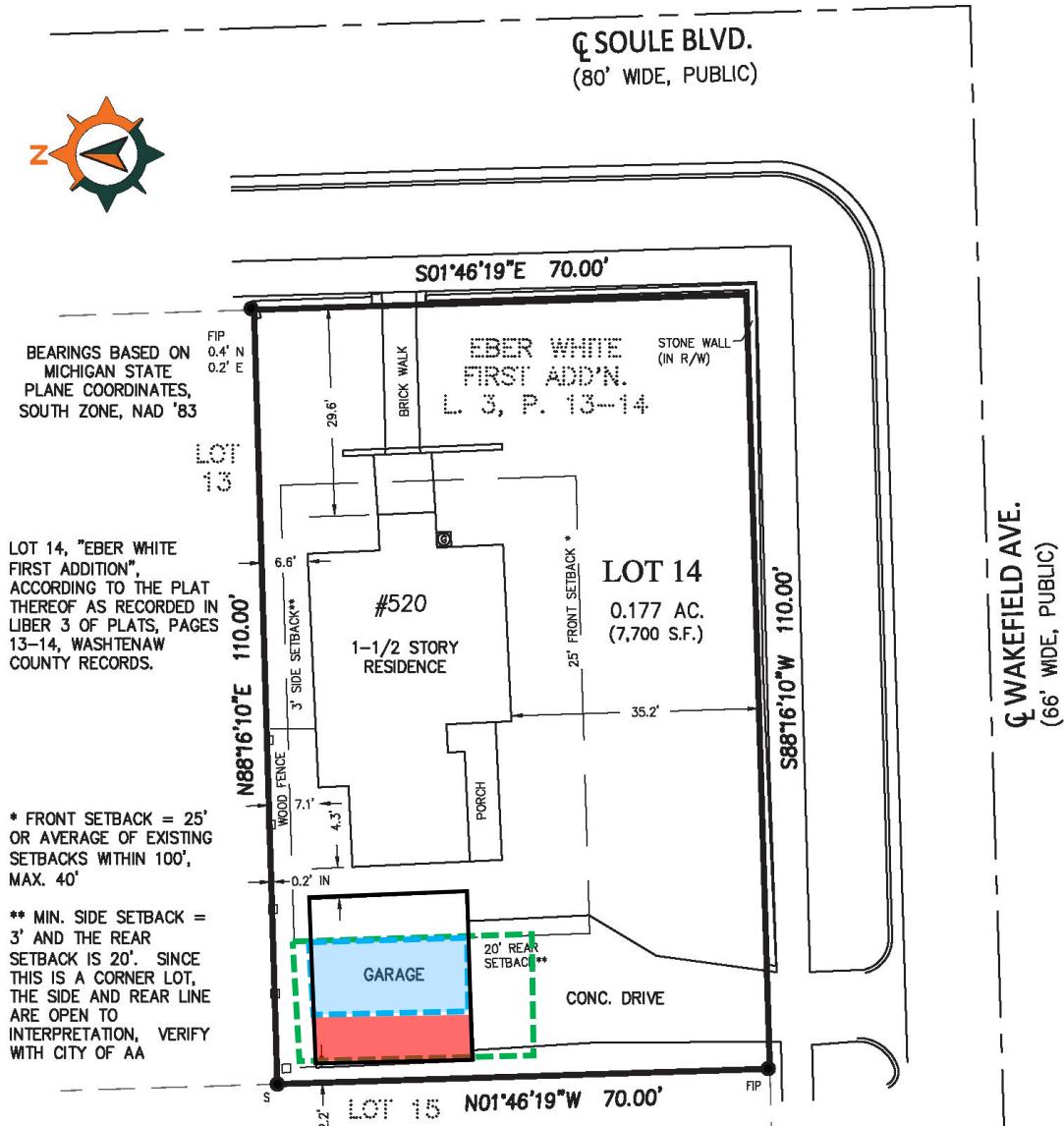


Existing Garage, 520 Soule Blvd. looking north

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing Garage Footprint

- The Existing Garage (536.1 sf) occupies 395.1 sf of the open rear yard (green outline).
 - This exceeds the 35% allowable threshold by 154.1 sf (shaded red)
 - 241 sf allowed in rear open yard (shaded blue)
- The existing garage lacks full-depth footings which limit the feasibility of constructing a second-level addition atop the existing structure.
- The Existing Garage encroaches the DTE prescriptive easement by 3'-10".
 - Renovations and new construction will need to conform to the 6'-0" DTE easement requirement.



Site Survey (Existing) - NTS

R1D ZONING REGULATIONS

Setback Requirements

5.17 Area, Height and Placement Regulations

TABLE 5.17-1: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Other use and development standards also apply and may supersede or effect the requirements in this table, such as Sections 5.16 Use Specific Standards, 5.18 Special Dimensional and Site Layout Standards, 5.19 Parking Standards and 5.20 Landscaping, Screening, and Buffering.

DISTRICT	MIN. LOT AREA PER DWELLING UNIT	MIN. BUILDING SPACING	REQUIRED SETBACK					LOT DIMENSIONS	
			MIN. FRONT	MIN. ONE SIDE	MIN. TOTAL OF TWO SIDES	MIN. REAR	MAX. HEIGHT	MIN. AREA	MIN. WIDTH
AG	100,000 sq. ft.		40 ft. [A][B]	10% of lot width	90% of lot width	50 ft.	80 ft.	100,000 sq. ft.	200 ft.
R1A	20,000 sq. ft.	[C]	40 ft. [A]	7 ft.	18 ft.	50 ft.	80 ft.	20,000 sq. ft.	90 ft.
R1B	10,000 sq. ft.	[C]	30 ft. [A]	5 ft.	14 ft.	40 ft.	80 ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	70 ft.
R1C	7,200 sq. ft.	[C]	25 ft. [A]	5 ft.	10 ft.	30 ft.	80 ft.	7,200 sq. ft.	60 ft.
R1D	5,000 sq. ft.	[C]	25 ft. [A]	3 ft.	6 ft.	20 ft.	80 ft.	5,000 sq. ft.	40 ft.
R1E	4,000 sq. ft.	[C]	15 ft. [A]	3 ft.	6 ft.	20 ft.	80 ft.	4,000 sq. ft.	34 ft.

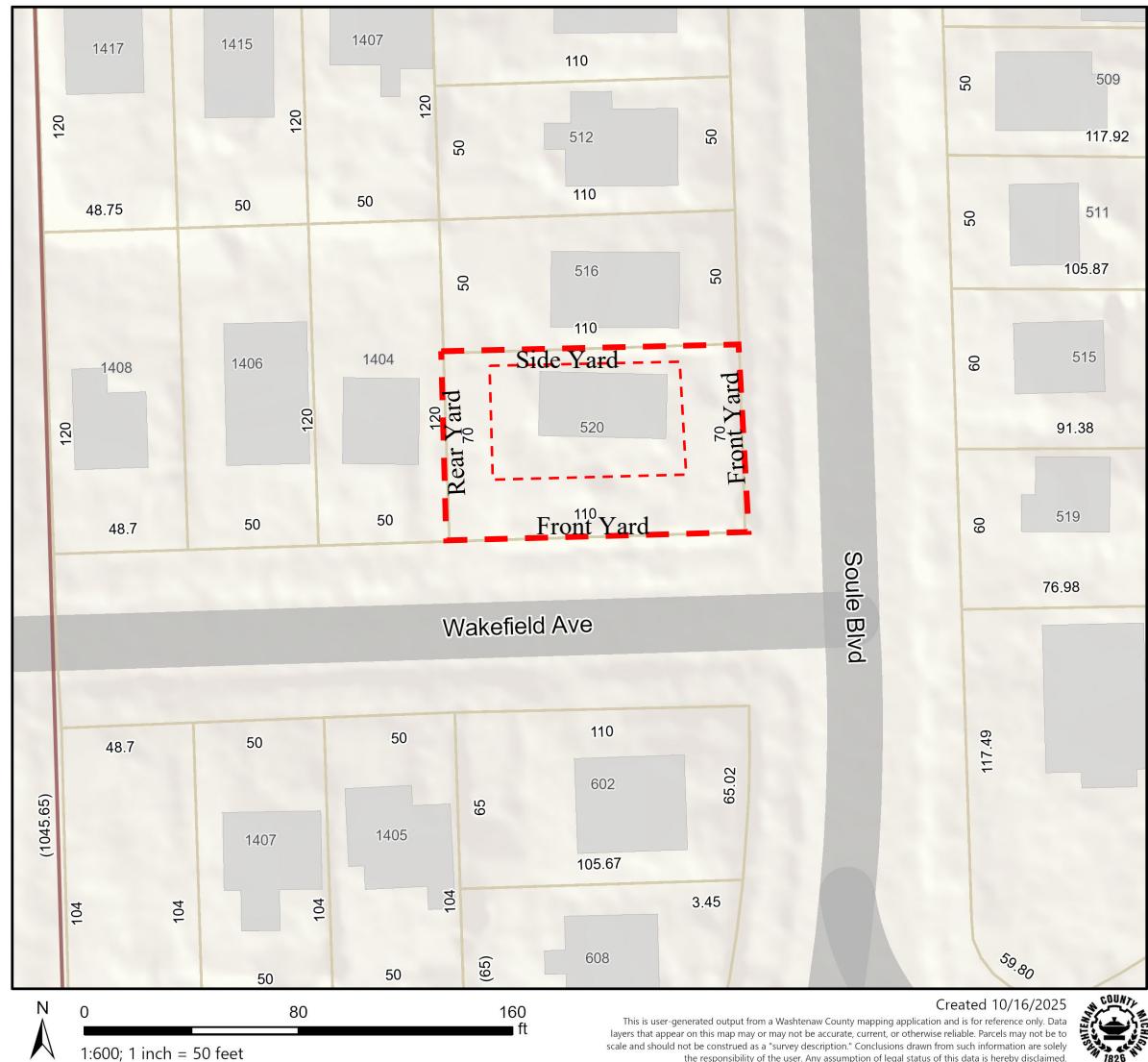
Footnotes:

[A] Also see additional regulations in Section 5.18.5 (Averaging an Established Front Building Line).

[B] For roadside stands only, the minimum front required setback is 30 ft.

[C] Where more than 1 residential structure is to be constructed on a lot in the R1 districts, or where dwelling units are served by a private street under the provisions of Section 5.21 the following placement regulations shall also be applied:

- (a) The minimum spacing between buildings shall be twice the minimum front required setback dimension of the zoning district in which the lots is located;
- (b) A minimum rear required setback of 50 feet must be provided between the rear of a residential structure and the adjacent (nearest) lot line;
- (c) A minimum front required setback of ten feet must be provided between all structures and the private street pavement.



Existing Plot Plan - NTS



Created 10/16/2025

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R1D ZONING REGULATIONS

Relative Lot Lengths/Areas

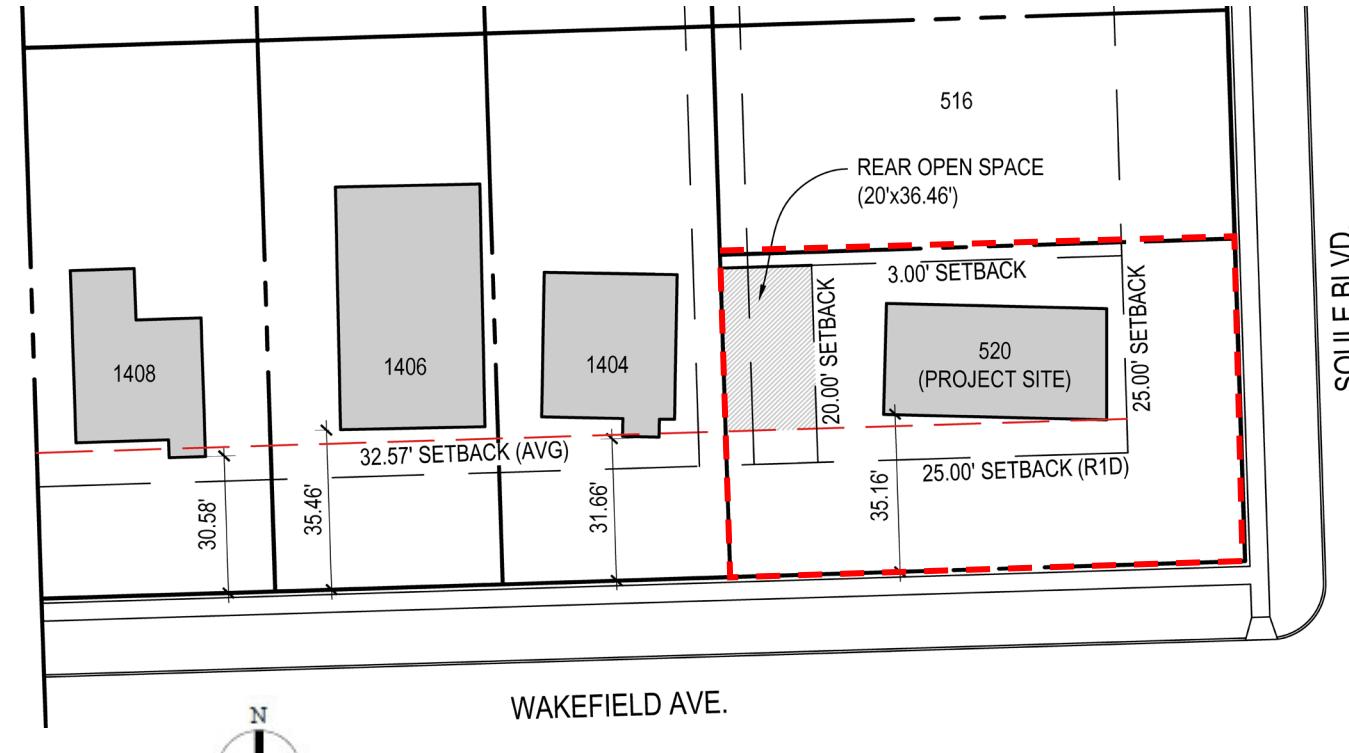
AVERAGE SETBACK CALCULATIONS	
PROPERTY ADDRESS*	MEASURED FRONT SETBACK
1408 Wakefield Ave.	30.58'
1406 Wakefield Ave.	35.46'
1404 Wakefield Ave.	31.66'
Combined Total:	97.71'
Average Setback:	$97.71' \div 3 = 32.57'$

*Properties sharing front setback within 100' of project site

Front Setback for R1D Zoning is 25.0' minimum

- The neighboring lots 100' within the project site are set back on average 32.57' from Wakefield Ave which supersedes the standard 25' front setback requirement**.

**Per Section 5.18.5 of the Unified Development Code

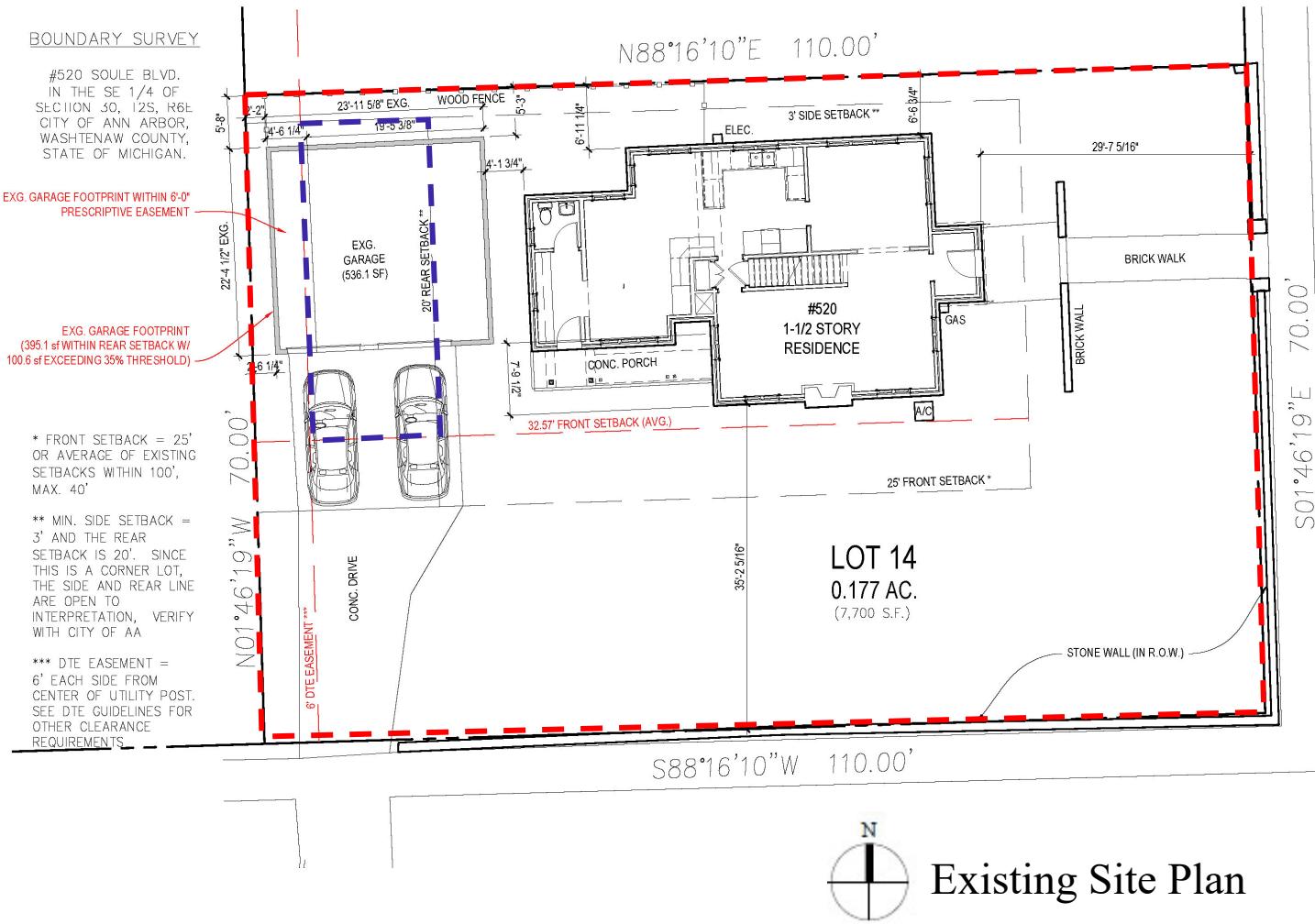


Measured Front Setbacks of Neighboring Lots

R1D ZONING REGULATIONS

Setback Requirements

- The neighborhood is zoned R1D and generally requires a 20' rear setback, 25' front setback, and minimum 3' side setback.
- The proposed project site is a corner lot yielding front yards along both Soule Blvd. and Wakefield Ave.
- A DTE prescriptive easement along the west boundary deems the existing garage non-compliant and prohibits new construction atop the existing garage footprint.
- The resulting setback requirements for the proposed project site is as follows:
 - 25' Front Setback (east)
 - 32.57' Front Average Setback (south)
 - 20' Rear Setback (west) with 6' DTE easement
 - 3' Side Setback (north)



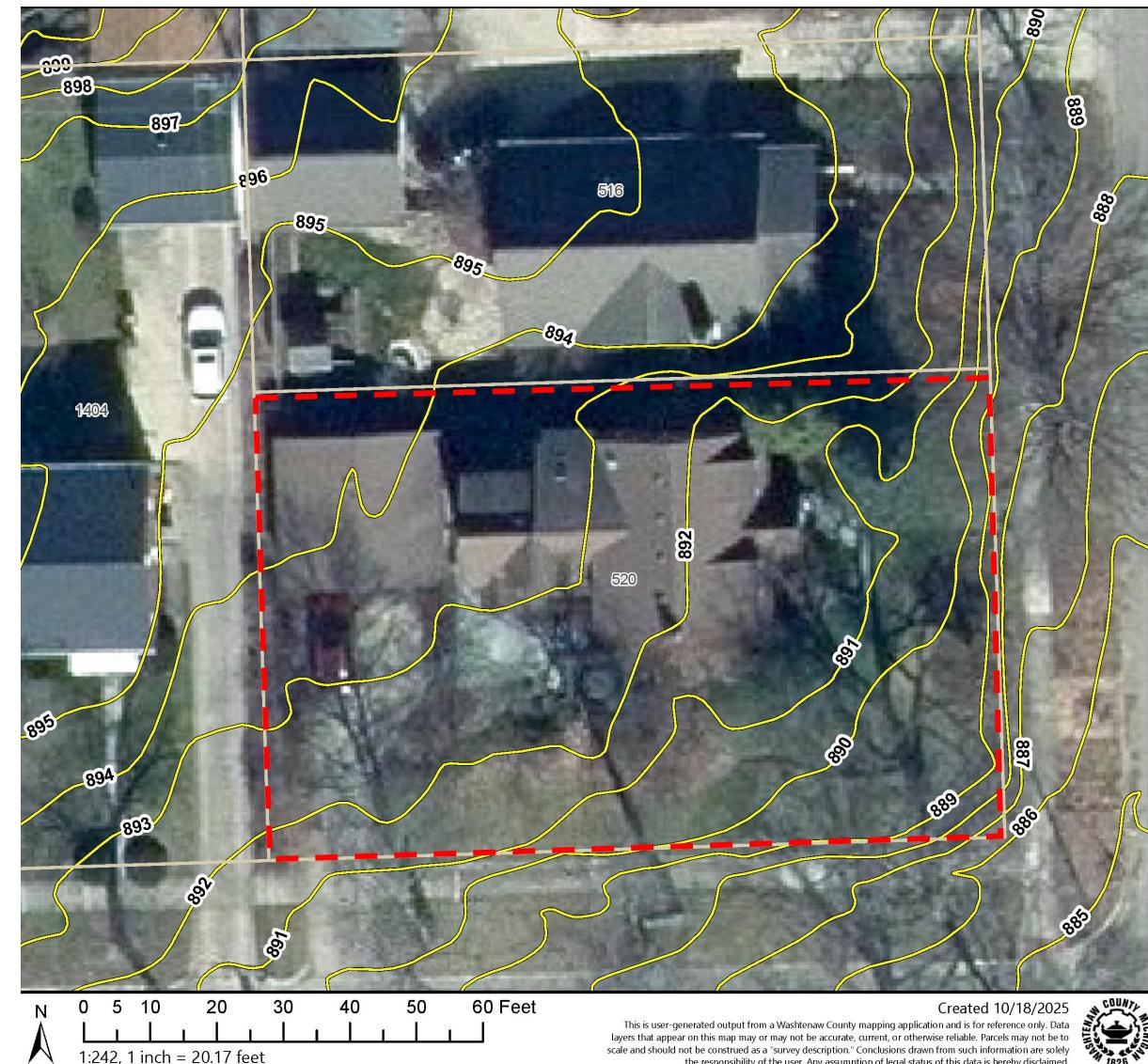
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Neighboring Sites

- The existing site naturally slopes west to east resulting in an elevation drop of 7' on the site.
- The existing garage sits 18"+/- below the next door property.



View looking north from sidewalk



Created 10/18/2025
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Site Contour Map

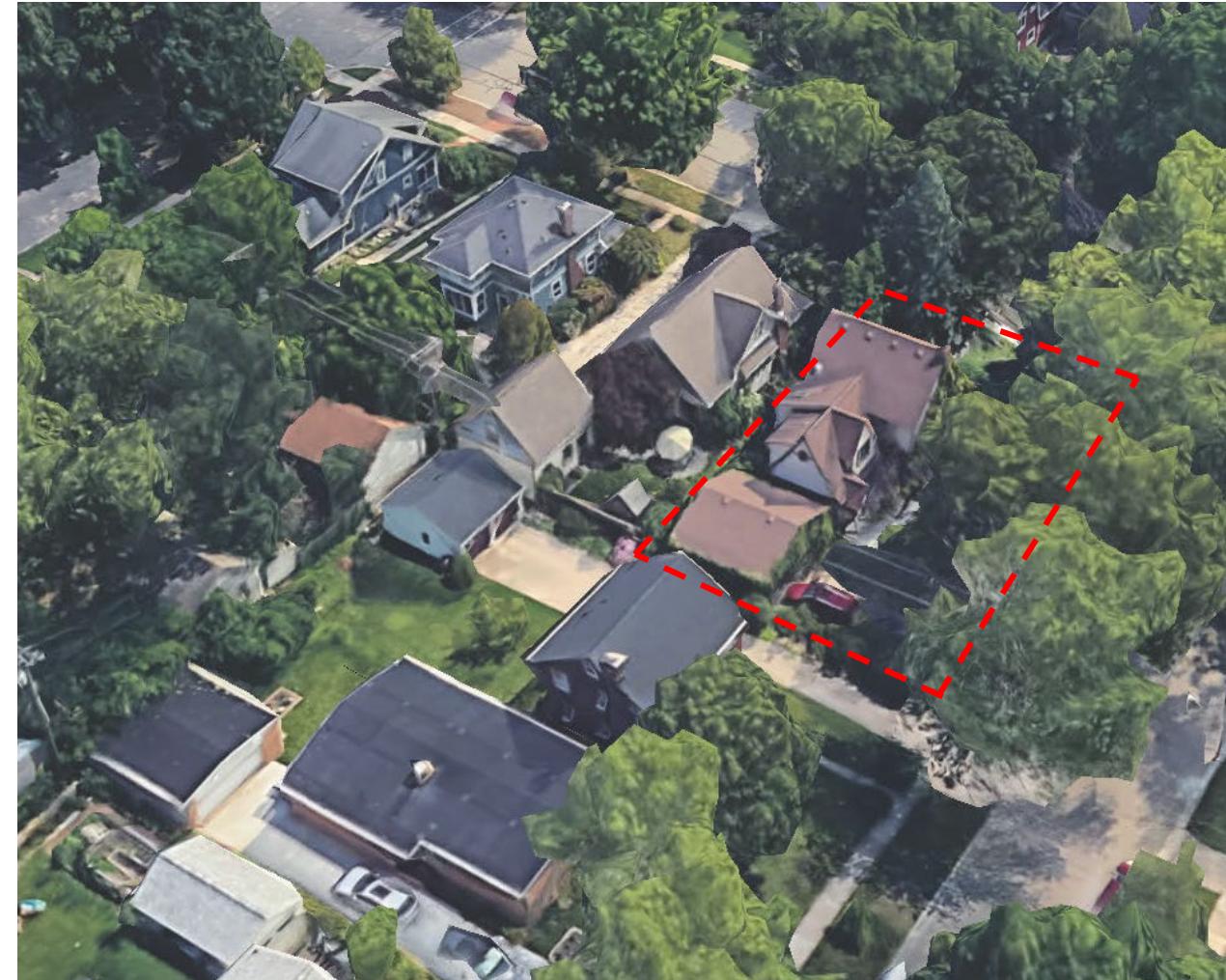
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Neighboring Sites

- Nearly all of the adjacent structures are 1½ stories or more, including the ADU directly north of the project site.
- The existing garage is currently the lowest/shortest structure on the block.



View looking north from across Wakefield Ave.



Aerial image of neighboring structures, looking northeast

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing Garage

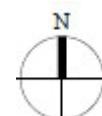
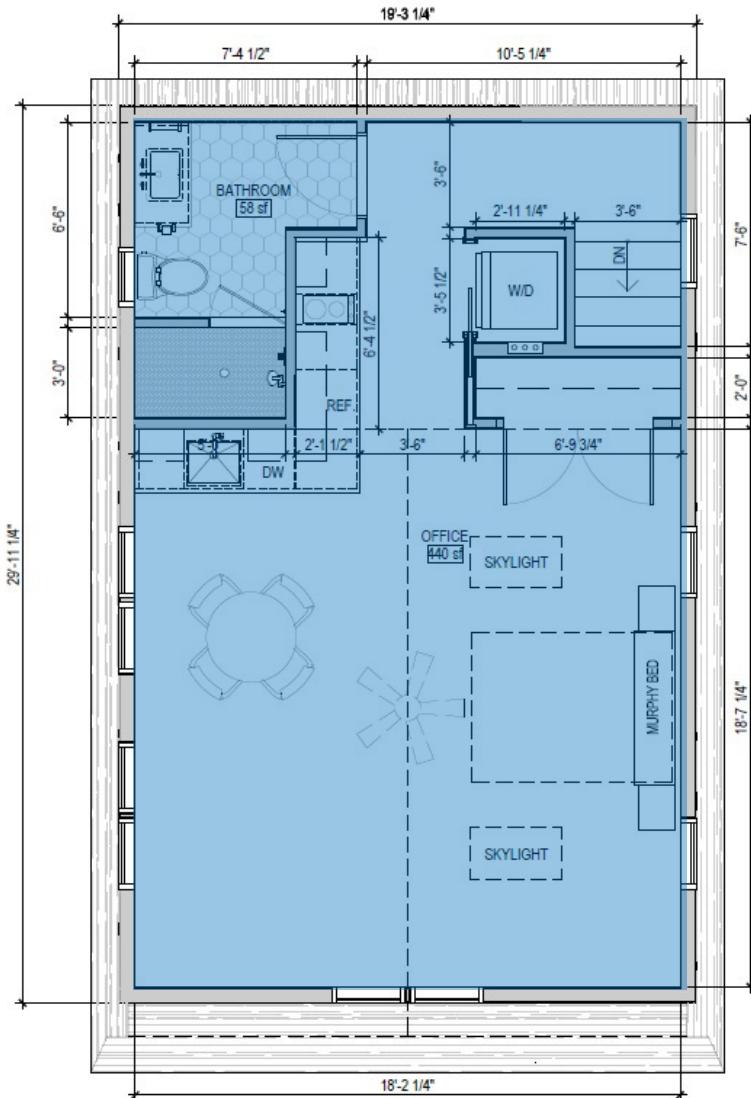
- Slab on grade without full-depth footings.
- Structure is in need of repair.
- Sits roughly 24" above the existing side porch of house.
- Non-conforming structure:
 - Sits 2'-2" from west boundary line
 - Encroaches 6' prescriptive easement
 - Exceeds open rear yard coverage by 154.1 sf



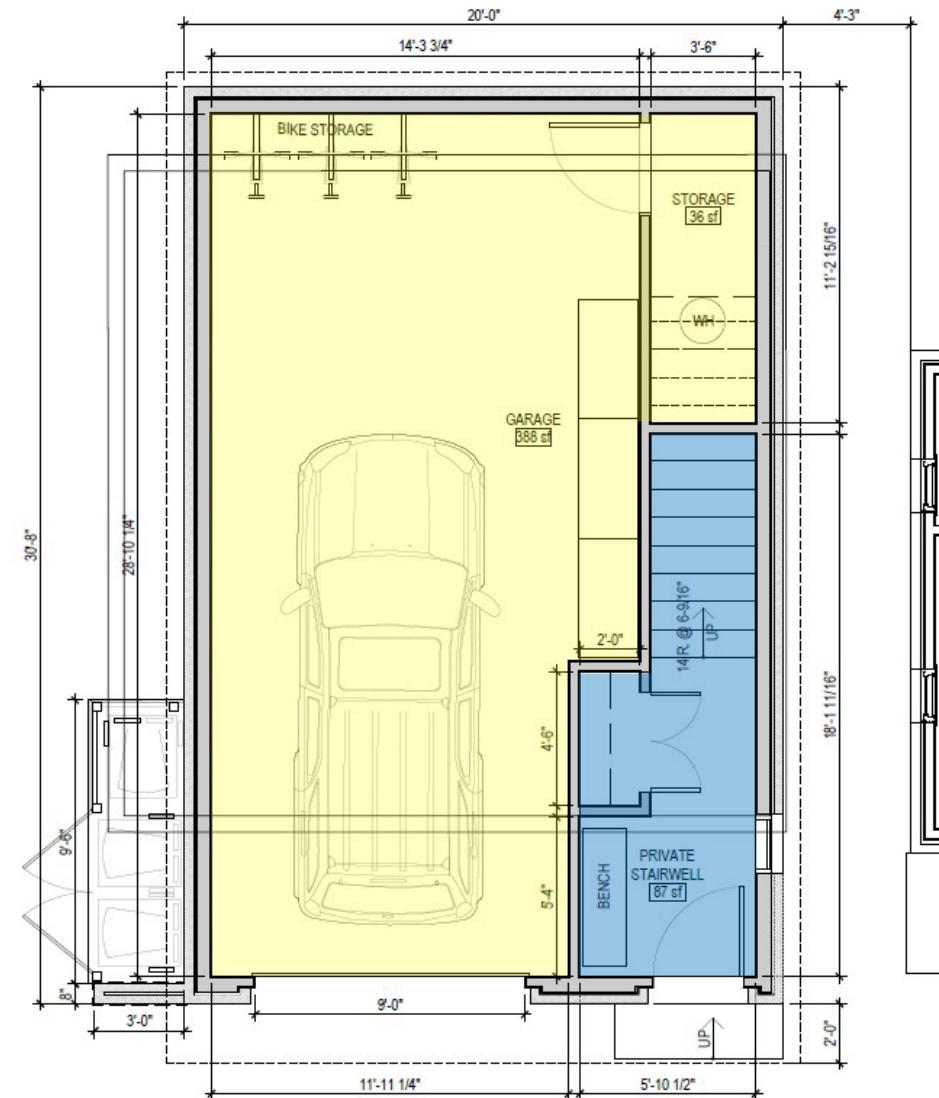
Existing 2-stall garage, looking north

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU

BUILDABLE AREA & SETBACK CALCULATIONS	
* PROPOSED GARAGE/STORAGE AREA (1ST FLR):	424 SF
PROPOSED ADU FLOOR PLAN (2ND FLR+STAIRWELL):	585 SF
ALLOWABLE ADU FLOOR PLAN:	800 SF
* AN ADU FLOOR AREA OF UP TO 800 SF IS ALLOWED ON LOT SIZES GREATER THAN 7,200 SF PER UDC CHAPTER 55, ARTICLE III, SECTION 05.16.6, SUBSECTION A.2.d.	

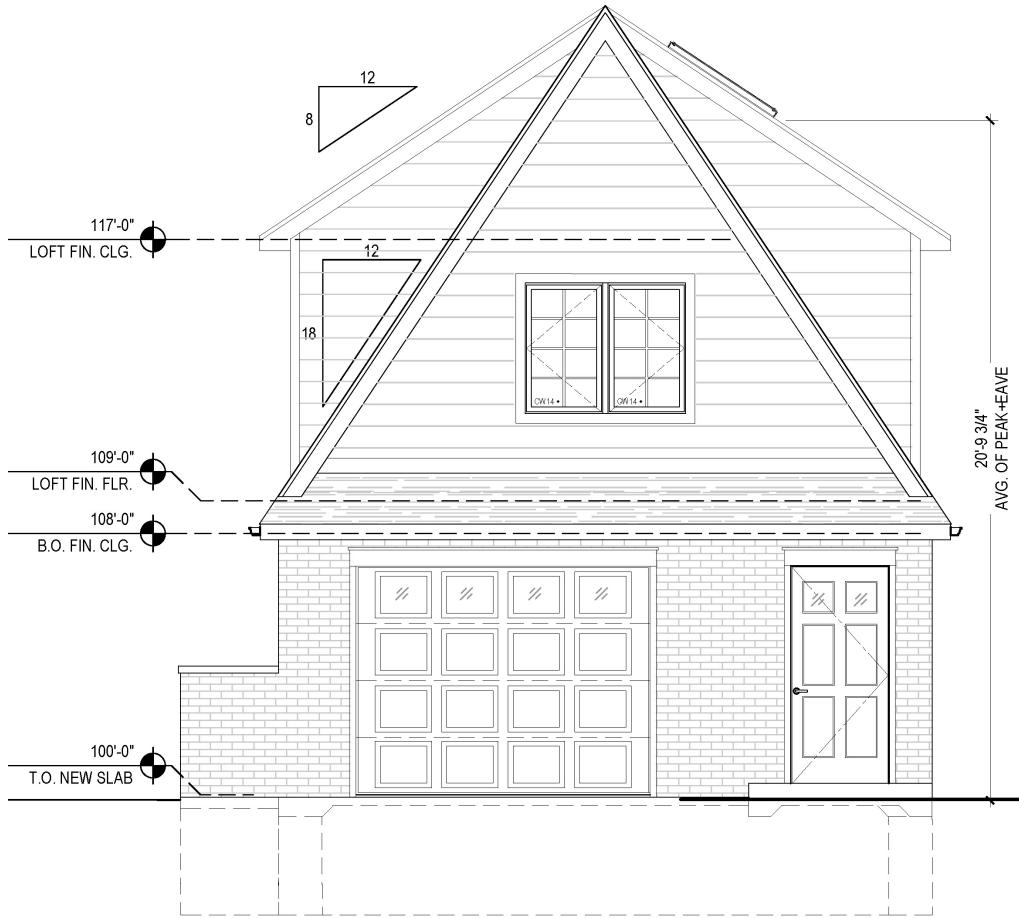


Proposed Second Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU

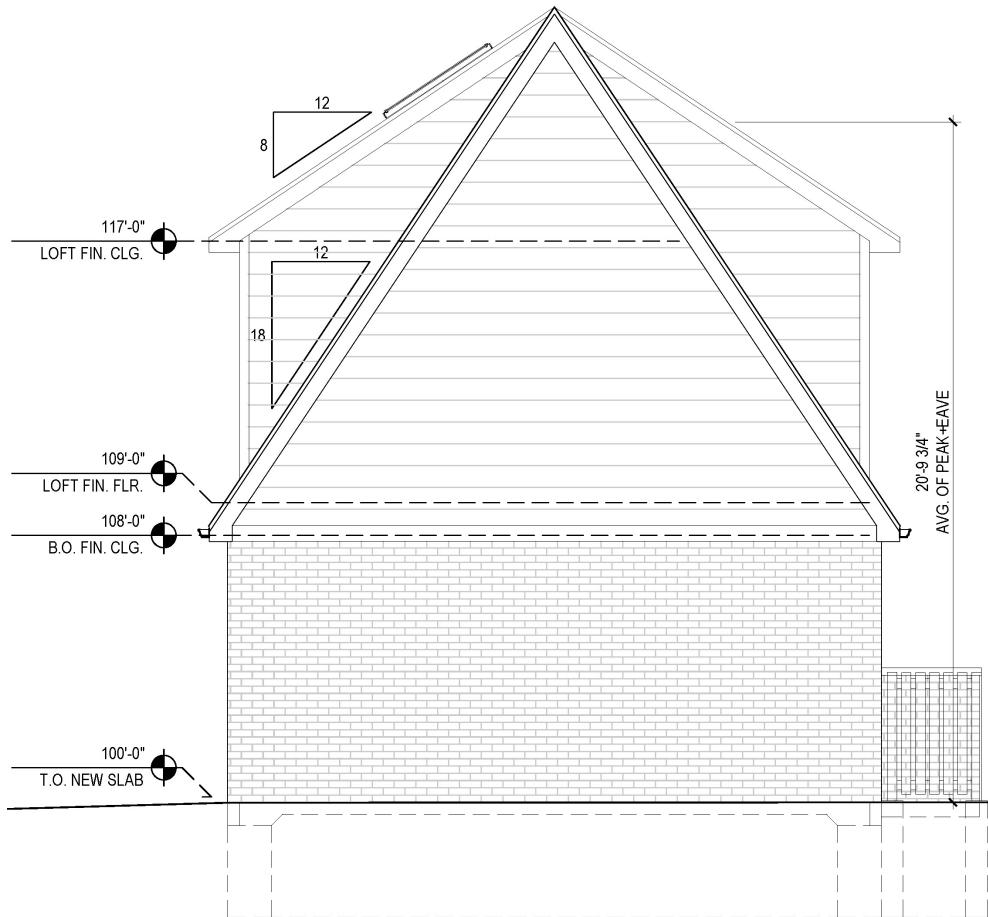


Proposed South Exterior Elevation

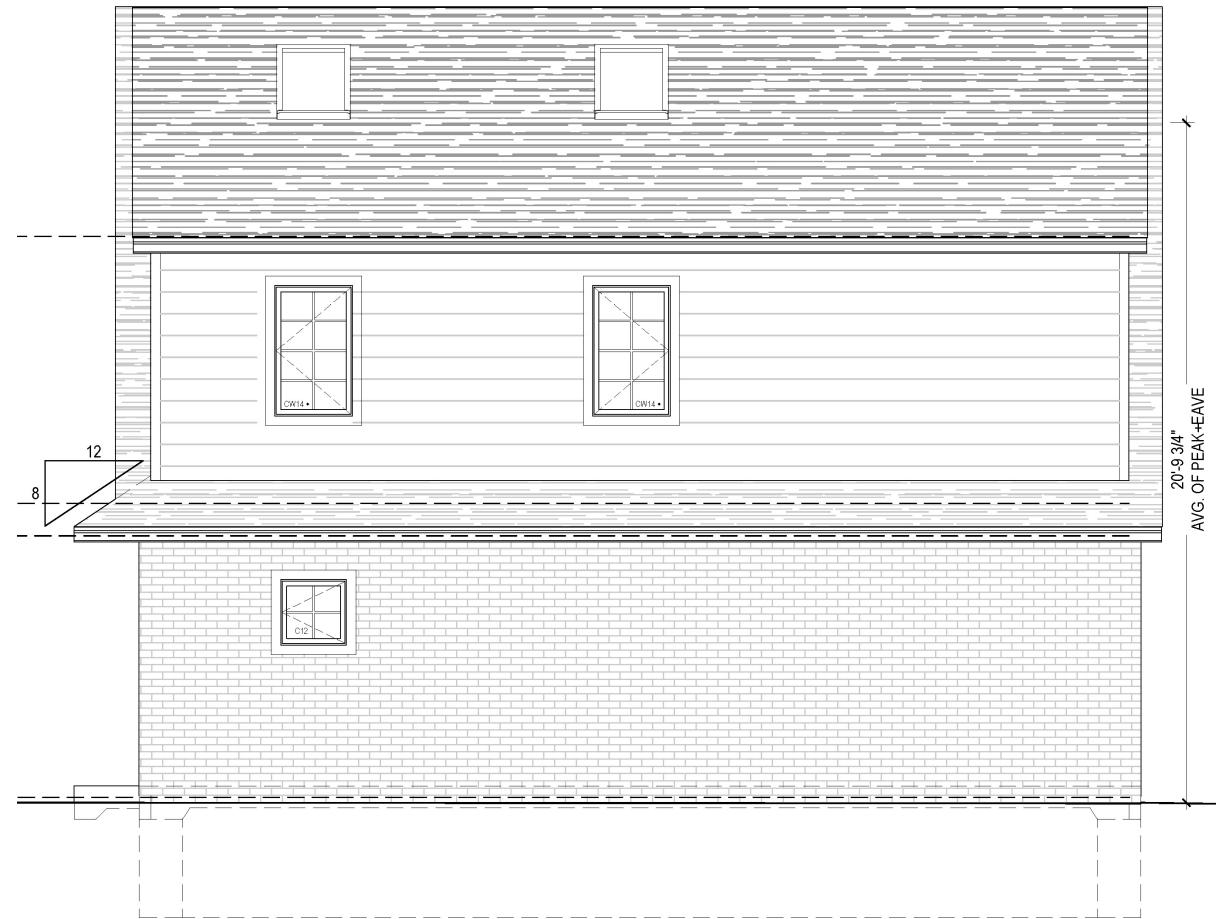


Proposed West Exterior Elevation

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU

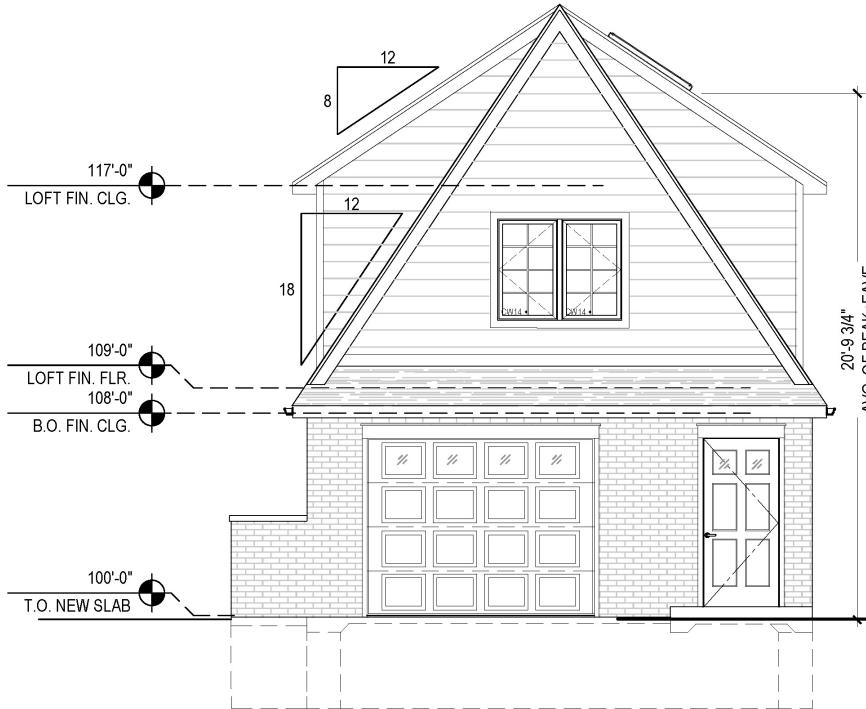


Proposed North Exterior Elevation
(no windows allowed per Fire Code)



Proposed East Exterior Elevation

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU



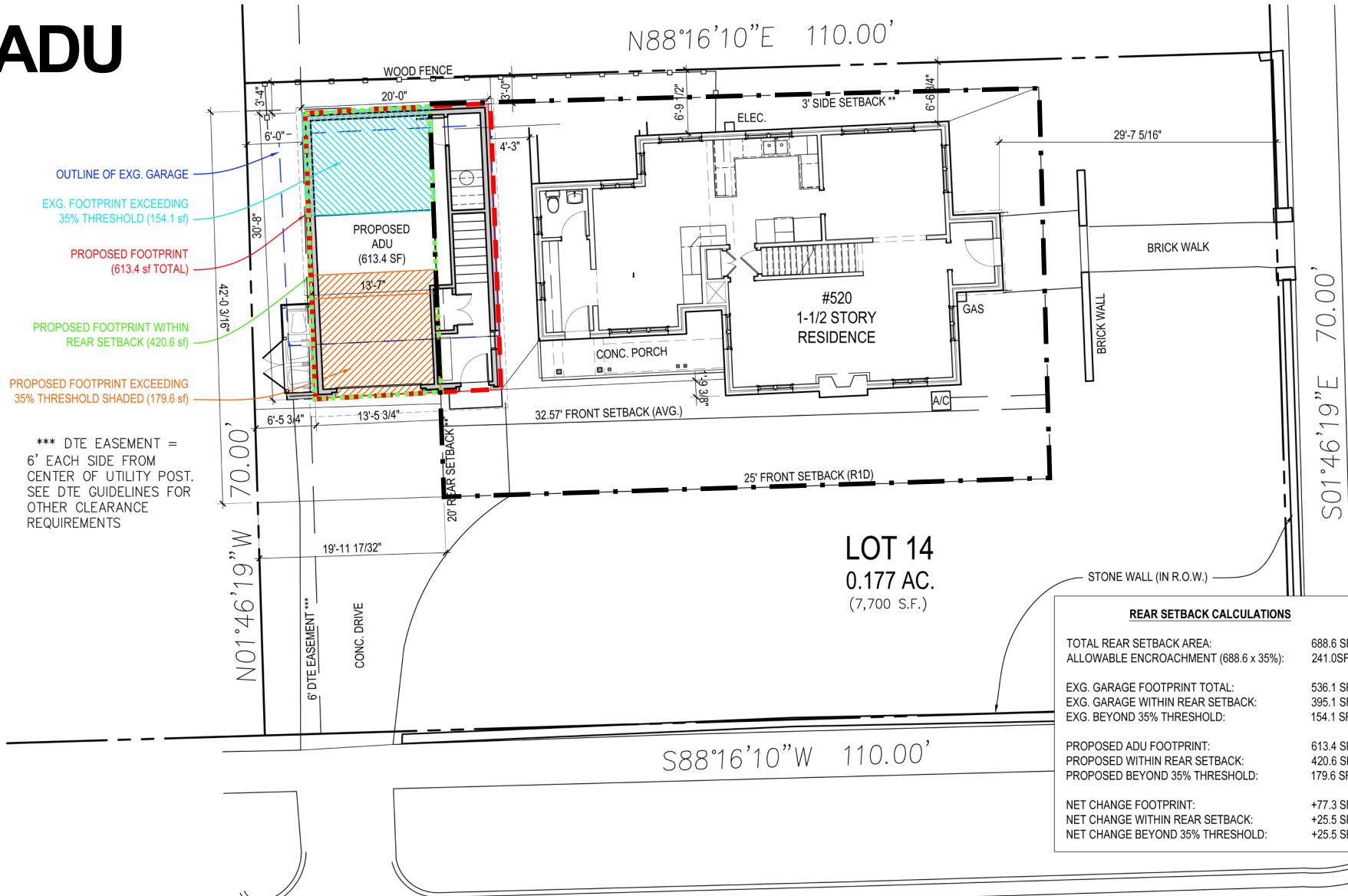
Proposed Garage & ADU



Existing House

Proposed South Exterior Elevation

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU



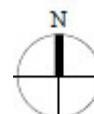
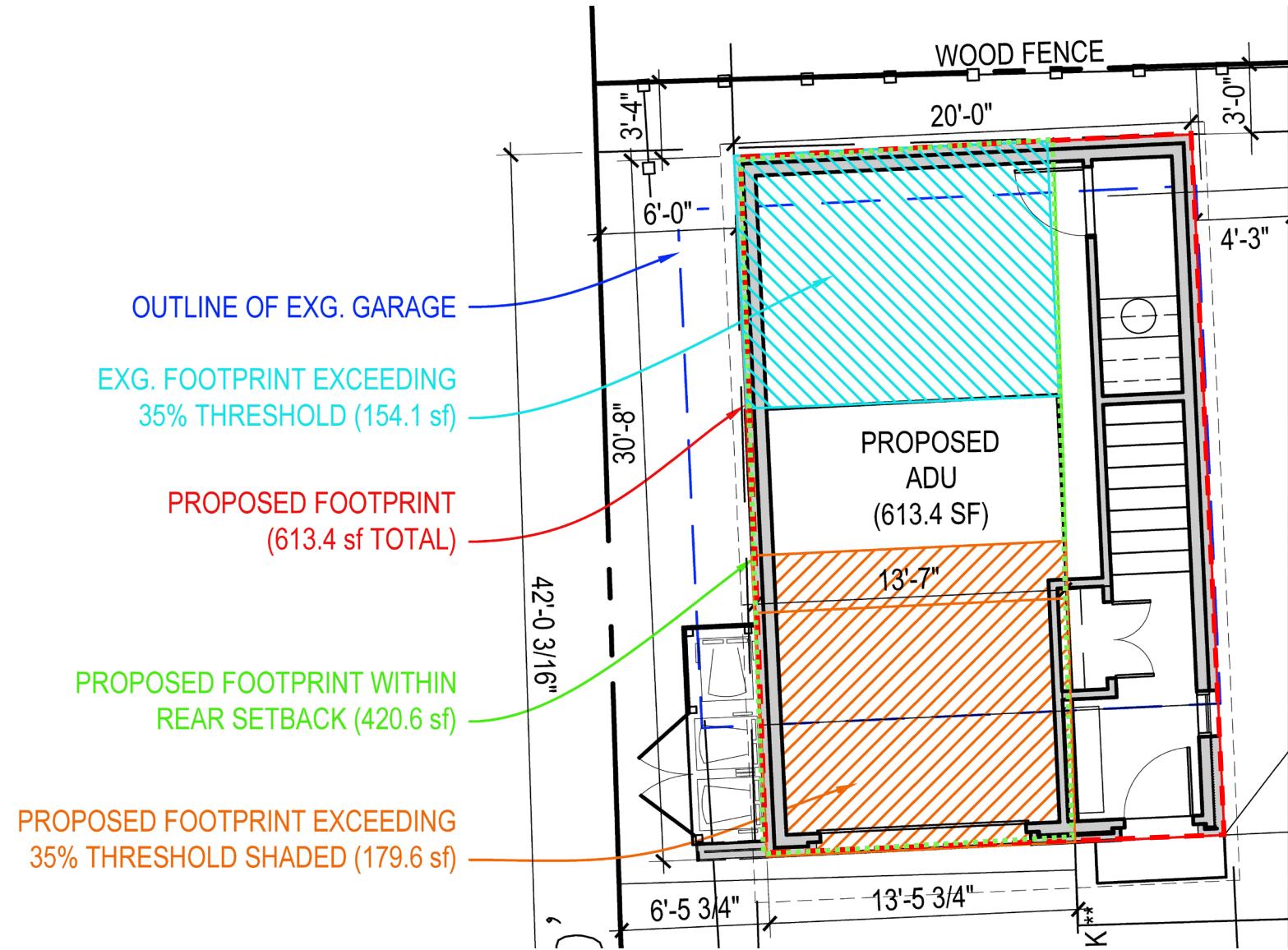
SOULE BLVD. (80' WIDE, PUBLIC)

PROPOSED GARAGE & ADU

REAR SETBACK CALCULATIONS

TOTAL REAR SETBACK AREA:	688.6 SF
ALLOWABLE ENCROACHMENT (688.6 x 35%):	241.0SF*
EXG. GARAGE FOOTPRINT TOTAL:	536.1 SF
EXG. GARAGE WITHIN REAR SETBACK:	395.1 SF
EXG. BEYOND 35% THRESHOLD:	154.1 SF
PROPOSED ADU FOOTPRINT:	613.4 SF
PROPOSED WITHIN REAR SETBACK:	420.6 SF
PROPOSED BEYOND 35% THRESHOLD:	179.6 SF
NET CHANGE FOOTPRINT:	+77.3 SF
NET CHANGE WITHIN REAR SETBACK:	+25.5 SF
NET CHANGE BEYOND 35% THRESHOLD:	+25.5 SF

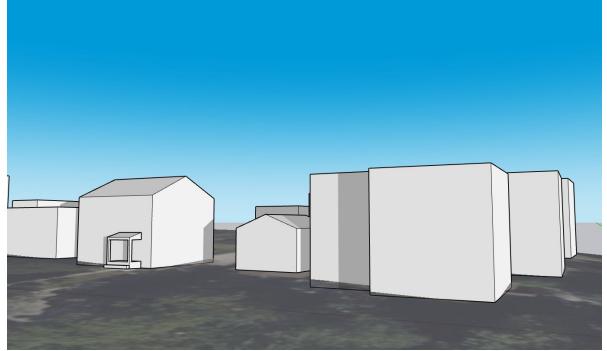
*Average front setback of 32.57' reduces the allowable buildable area by 52.99 SF



Enlarged Site Plan

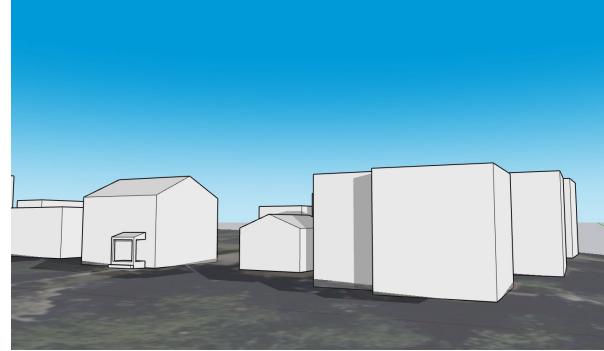
SOLAR-SHADE STUDY

EXISTING GARAGE

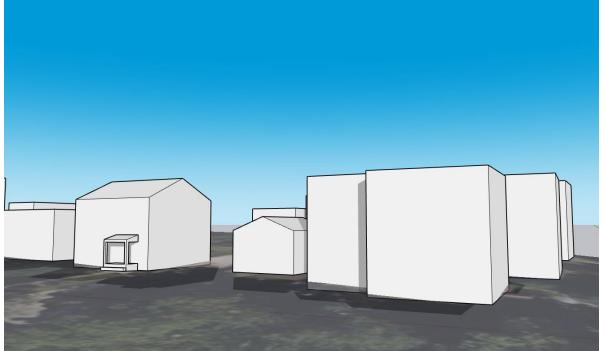


Sunrise

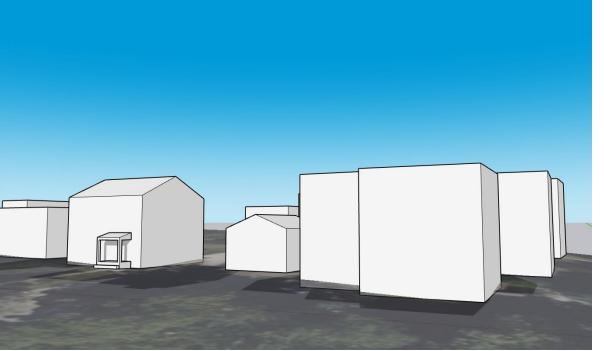
9am



10am



11am



12pm

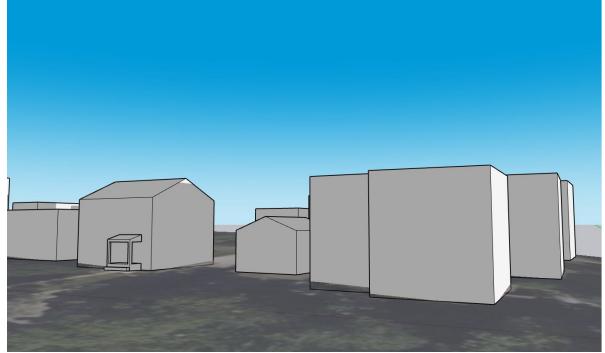
PROPOSED ADU



Shade Cast on Neighboring Residence
December 21 (Winter Solstice)

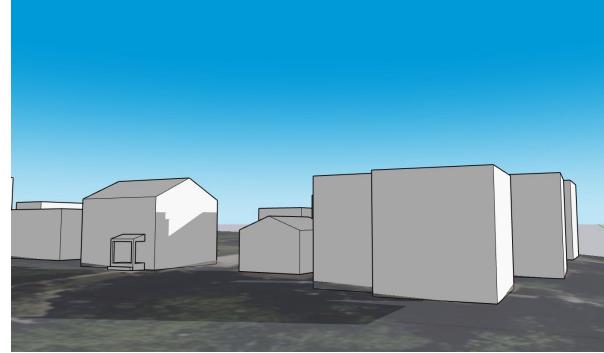
SOLAR-SHADE STUDY

EXISTING GARAGE

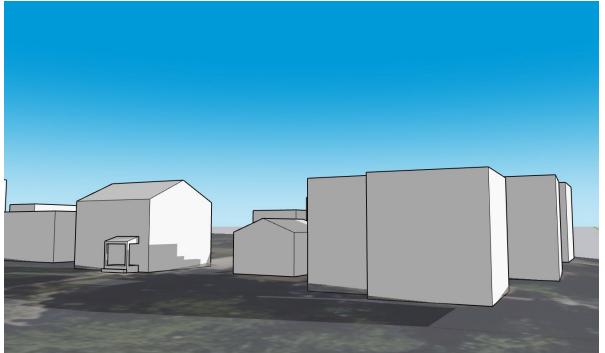


Sunrise

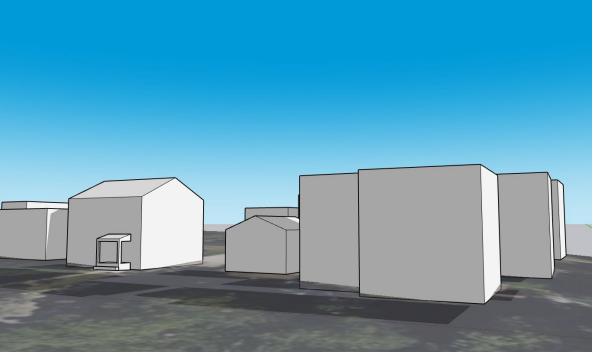
6am



7am



8am



9am

PROPOSED ADU



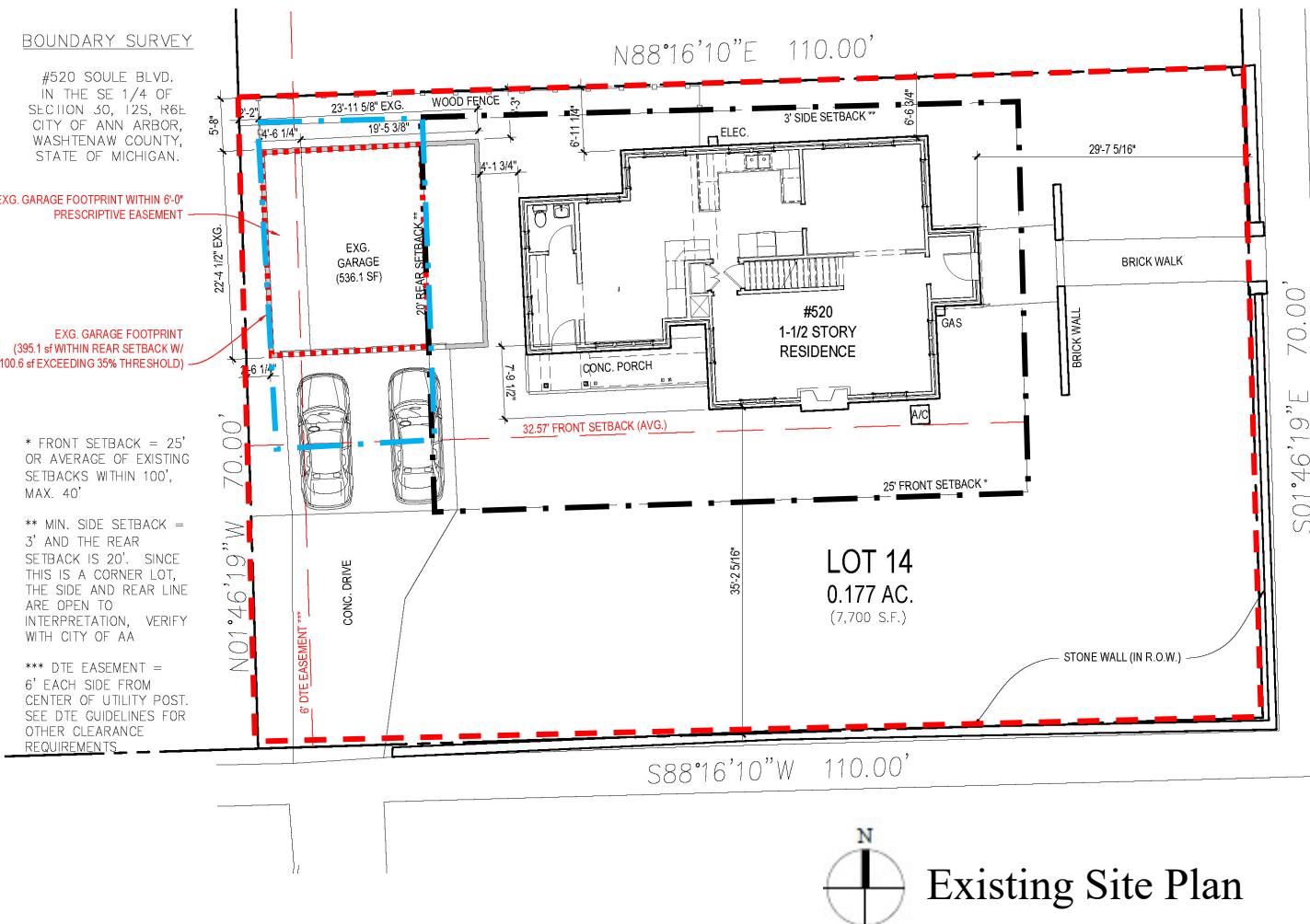
Shade Cast on Neighboring Residence
June 21 (Summer Solstice)

STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

a. That the practical difficulties are exceptional and peculiar to the property of the person requesting the variance and result from conditions which do not exist generally throughout the city.

- The site is a corner lot resulting in (2) Front Yard Setback requirements.
- The average front yard setback of the existing residences along the south boundary is 32.57' which significantly exceeds the standard setback for R1D zoning (25').
- DTE has established a 6' prescriptive easement along the west boundary prohibiting new construction atop the existing non-conforming garage structure.

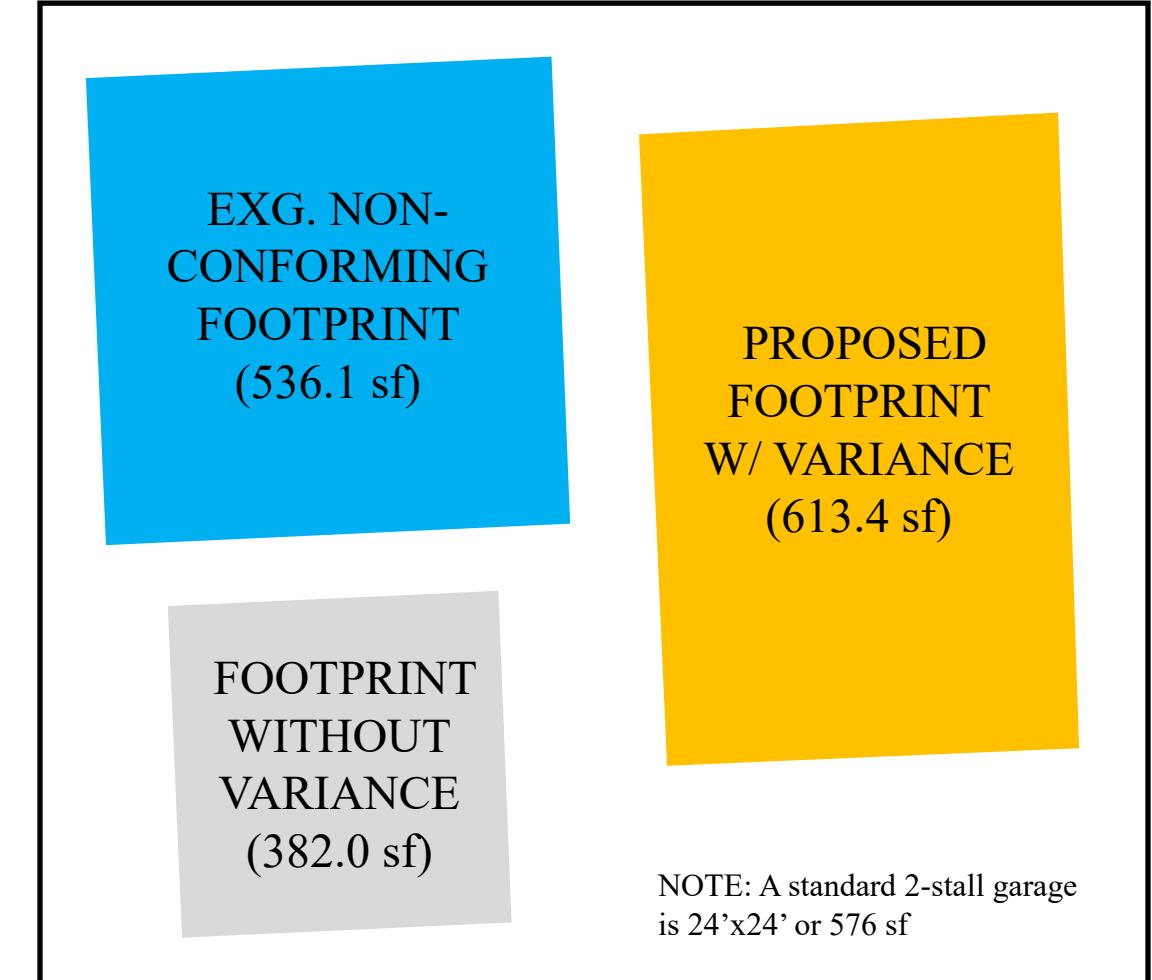


STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

b. That the practical difficulties that result from a failure to grant the variance include substantially more than mere inconvenience, inability to attain a higher financial return, or both.

- The variance will allow the Owners to age in place and live out their days in their forever home.
- The variance will allow for the Owners to better accommodate client meeting sessions outside of their private residence.
- The existing 2-stall garage lacks full-depth footings and is in need of repair.
 - Without the variance, a replacement garage would be 154.1 sf less than the existing and would impose a significant loss in utility.



Relative Garage Footprint Diagram

NOTE: A standard 2-stall garage is 24'x24' or 576 sf

STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

c. That granting the variance will result in substantial justice being done, considering the public benefits, individual hardships, and the rights of others.

- The variance is consistent with the city of Ann Arbor's goal to increase density within R1 districts.
- The variance for the proposed Garage and ADU will have limited impact on the neighboring properties and be of size & scale consistent with all surrounding structures.
- The proposed footprint will predominately occupy the area of the existing garage.



Aerial view of surrounding structures looking southwest

STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

d. That the conditions and circumstances on which the variance request is based shall not be a self-imposed hardship or practical difficulty.

- The conditions are unusual and specific to the property being a corner lot with (2) front yard setbacks.
- The average front setback (32.57') exceeds the standard setback requirements for R1D Zoning (25'-0").
- The existing non-conforming garage lacks full-depth footings and any repairs and modifications will be subject to the 6'-0" prescriptive utility easement.
- Growing older is natural and the challenges of aging in place are not wilfully sought



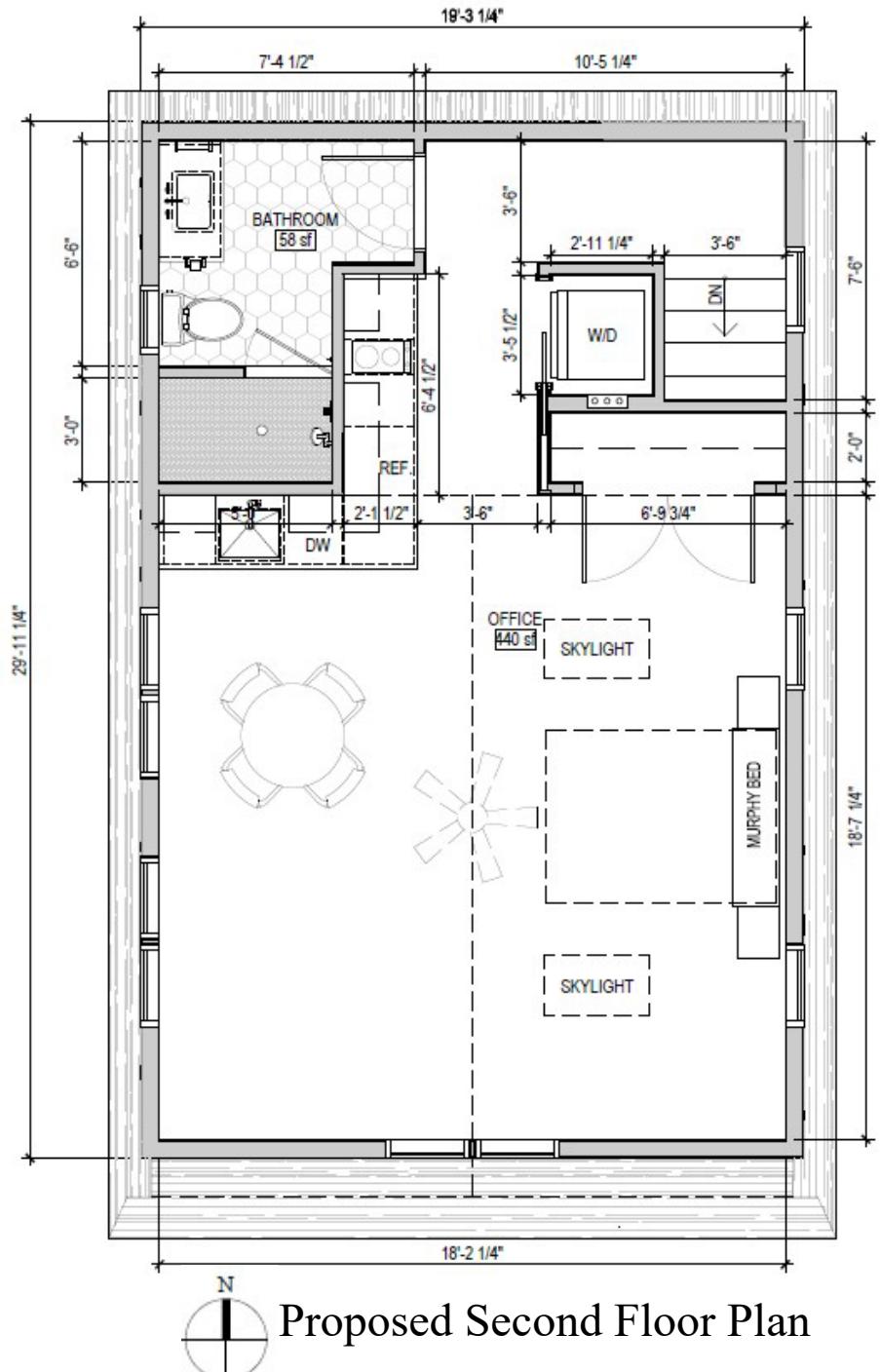
Existing garage, looking northwest

STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

e. A variance approved shall be the minimum variance that will make possible a reasonable use of the land or structure.

- The variance requested is minimal to allow for the stairwell to access the second floor living space without sacrificing the utility of the first floor garage and storage area.
- The proposed ADU space is not exorbitant and only includes the minimum necessities for a studio apartment:
 - Full Bathroom
 - Kitchenette with undercabinet refrigerator and small cooktop
 - Office/Sleeping area
 - Laundry Closet
 - Clothes Closet

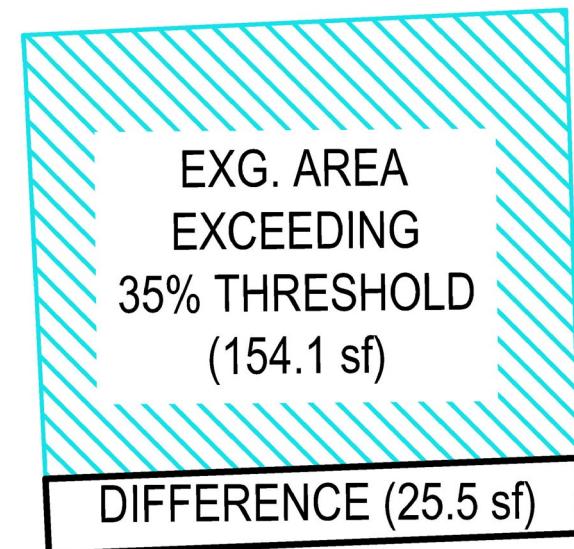
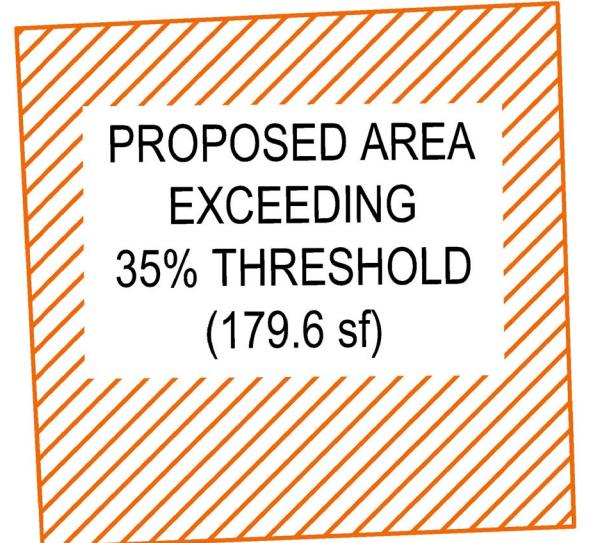


STANDARDS OF REVIEW

520 Soule Boulevard

f. The requested variance is the minimum necessary to permit reasonable use of the land.

- The modest increase in coverage of rear open yard area (25.5 sf more than existing) will preserve the utility of the garage & storage spaces while also affording the flexibility to house future caregivers on-site.
- The existing green spaces will be preserved.
- The proposed Garage & ADU will comply with height limitations and all minimum setback distances including the DTE prescriptive easement.



Rear Yard Coverage Comparison Diagram