



architectural site analysis checklist

everything you need to know!!

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What Is A Site Analysis?

A site analysis is a research activity that looks at existing and possible future conditions of a site. It considers physical patterns, activities, qualities, characteristics, relationships, opportunities, constraints, givens, assumptions within the immediate site and broader context.

Types Of Data

- **Mega, Macro, Micro** - The very large, the large site and the small aspects of the site.
- **Objective or Hard Data** - Conditions that exist, regardless of human interaction.
- **Subjective or Soft Data** - Conditions or situations that exist because of human interaction with the site.

Step 01 - Desktop Analysis

Before you go to site, you can collect any existing drawings, reports, legal documents, or photographs for the following areas:

- 01 | Location - Site survey, aerial photographs, site maps and plans.
- 02 | Legal - Title, easements, mortgages etc.
- 03 | Authorities - Zoning documents, overlays, development controls, development application requirements.
- 04 | Utilities and infrastructure - Plans and drawings from service providers.
- 06 | Adjacent structures and conditions - Titles, architectural and services drawings, surveys, consultant reports.
- 07 | Natural physical features - Geology, soil, arborist and other reports.
- 08 | Artificial physical features - Existing condition, building, dilapidation reports.
- 09 | Climate - Sun path studies, research precipitation, temperature and wind roses.
- 11 | Site history and significance - Research, historical and current photographs, reports, other documents.
- 12 | Neighbourhood context - Research, historical and current photographs, reports, other documents.

Step 02 - Verify/ Site Visit

A site visit is about verifying existing data and gathering additional information. To prepare for a successful site visit, you will need :

- Camera and/ or smart phone
- Clipboard
- Existing documents - Printed out
- Notebook
- Pens and pencils
- Tape measure or laser measurer
- Backpack and pockets
- Food, water, supplies
- Good weather

Step 03 - Gather On-Site Data

Ways to gather and summarize data include:

- Bullet point key findings.
- Use tracing overlay on plans and maps to analyse and identify key elements through diagrams and annotations.
- Record on-site observations through sketches, photographs, and annotated existing drawings, plans and maps.
- Develop diagrams, annotated drawings, sketches, photographs, maps or plans.

Step 04 - Analyse The Data

So what? What does this existing site information mean for the design?

- **The site** - Analyse existing hierarchies, typologies, relationships, patterns, and temporal changes on the site.
- **Strengths and weaknesses** - Evaluate the site's positive attributes and limitations to inform design considerations.
- **Opportunities and constraints** - Identify opportunities to enhance the site's potential and constraints that may restrict design options.
- **Impact on design elements** - Consider how site characteristics influence decisions about building placement, spatial organization, and integration with the surrounding environment.

Step 05 - Present The Analysis

A site analysis presentation could range from a single site plan to a whole report. For longer reports, set up mock storyboard to sort out what information will be presented where.

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Mega, Macro, Micro Data

The strategic approach of a site analysis is to consider the objective and subjective data at three different scales:

- **Mega** | The very large, or huge context of the site including the suburb and even the larger city conditions and relationships.
- **Macro** | The large in scale including the full site and immediate surround on all sides.
- **Micro** | The very small within the site including the qualities and characteristics of individual objects and elements.

Criteria	Criteria Description	Desktop	Site visit	Mega	Macro	Micro
Objective						
01	Location	X	Verify	X	X	
02	Legal	X	Verify		X	
03	Authorities	X	Verify		X	
04	Utilities and infrastructure	X	Verify	X	X	
05	Adjacent structures and conditions	X	Verify		X	
06	Streetscape, elevations and sections				X	
07	Natural and physical features	X	Verify	X	X	X
08	Artificial physical features	X	Verify	X	X	X
09	Climate	X		X	X	X
10	Hazards and risks	X	Verify	X	X	X
11	Site history and significance	X		X	X	X
12	Neighbourhood context	X	Verify	X	X	X
	Other?			X	X	X
Subjective						
13	Access + circulation	X	Verify	X	X	X
14	Views	X	Verify	X	X	X
15	Privacy	X	Verify		X	X
16	Security, protection and safety	X	Verify		X	X
17	Sound and noise	X	Verify		X	X
18	Smells	x	Verify		X	X
	Other?	X	Verify	X	X	X

Objective Data

Objective or hard data are the conditions that exist regardless of human interaction with the site. These things exist without humans observing or experiencing them.

01 | Location

- Geographic location
- Site survey, boundaries and dimensions
- Aerial photographs and maps

02 | Legal

- Site identification - Address, lot number, reference
- Title, ownership
- Caveats
- Easements and rights of way

03 | Authorities

- Zoning
- Overlays (eg. heritage, environment, conservation, green belt etc.)
- Previous planning applications
- Flood levels
- Protected species
- Other development controls
- Development application requirements

04 | Utilities + infrastructure

Consider underground and above ground services and infrastructure, connections and access requirements.

- Sewer
- Water
- Gas
- Electricity
- Communications - Telephone, television, cable and internet
- Fire

05 | Adjacent structures + conditions

(including private and public)

- Land use
- Adjacent natural conditions (see 07)
- Adjacent artificial conditions (see 08)
- Distance
- Heights
- Vernacular

06 | Streetscape, elevations + sections

- Streetscape panoramas of the site
- Street and site elevations
- Site sections (showing levels, boundaries and adjacent conditions)

07 | Natural physical features

- Typography (contours, levels)
- Vegetation
- Geology, soil type and state
- Animal species
- Natural qualities and characteristics - Materials, textures, colours and patterns
- Natural features or highlights
- Items to retain
- Items to remove
- Items to improve

08 | Artificial physical features

- Buildings and structures
- Roads and kerbs
- Footpaths
- Ground surfaces and materials
- Street furniture
- Artificial qualities and characteristics - Materials, textures, colours and patterns
- Artificial features or highlights
- Items to retain
- Items to remove
- Items to improve

Objective Data cont'd

09 | Climate

- Sun path, solar gain and shadows
 - At least 3 times of day (eg. 9am, 12pm and 3pm)
 - Summer Solstice, Winter Solstice and Equinox.
- Precipitation - High, low, median and average rain, snow, hail and humidity for 4 seasons.
- Temperature - High, low, median and average for 4 seasons.
- Wind - Use wind roses.
 - Prevailing direction and intensity for each of the 4 seasons.
 - Shelter, providing existing wind shelter.
 - Exposure, requiring wind shelter.

10 | Hazards + risks

- Exposed services (electricity, telephone, sewage, water, gas)
- Machinery
- Drainage
- Natural events - Flooding, landslides, volcanoes, cyclones
- Derelict buildings
- Unfinished building works
- Contamination

11 | Site history and significance

- Previous use/s
- Archaeological significance
- Historical significance
- Cultural significance
- Demographic significance

12 | Neighbourhood context

- Significant buildings, structures, spaces, landmarks
- Architectural style/s, character and qualities
- Common materials

Subjective Data

Subjective or soft data are conditions that change over time due to human interaction with the site. Most are sensory and based on what humans experience through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

13 | Access + circulation

- People - Entry, exit and circulation paths.
- Vehicles - Entry, exit and circulation paths.
- Animals - Entry, exit and circulation paths.
- Public transport links - Bus, train, taxi, tram, cycle, other

14 | Views

- Views in - From adjacent buildings and spaces into the site
- Views out - From the site to adjacent environment

15 | Privacy

- Privacy in
- Privacy out

16 | Security

- Security, protection and safety in
- Security, protection and safety out

17 | Sound + noise

- Noise in - The site requires protection from adjacent buildings
- Noise out - Requires protection from the site

18 | Smells

- Smells In - The site requires protection from external smell
- Smells Out - Requires protection from the site.