

CASE STUDY 2.0
REBUILDING LOS ANGELES

A Visionary
Catalog for
Resilient and
Sustainable
Homes



DELIVERABLES

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INTRODUCTION

COMPANY / FIRM SUMMARY

ORTLAND BEISSEL is a boutique design firm in Los Angeles. We bring a wealth of experience with internationally acclaimed design into focus on small and mid-size projects. At this scale, many small firms lack the experience and reliability to deliver, and many large firms cannot afford to mobilize their most creative people. Ortland Beissel has the agility and creativity of a boutique firm with the maturity and experience of a large international company.

Bertram Beissel and Amanda Ortland founded Ortland Beissel, Inc. after a combined 30 years of experience in leading roles at Ateliers Jean Nouvel, a Pritzker Prize recipient and world renowned architecture practice in Paris, France.

Bertram was a partner and director at AJN for 20 years in Europe, Australia, and the US. During this time, he was the design lead and partner-in-charge of a dozen award winning projects and has realized designs across all scales, from small renovations, lobbies, and art installations to skyscrapers and performing arts buildings. Bertram received his Masters degree in Architecture from the ETH in Zürich, Switzerland. He is a licensed architect in France, Australia, as well as the US in the States of New York and California.

Amanda was a special projects lead at AJN for ten years, bringing her background in art and photography into the design of unique public spaces at the frontier of art and architecture. She further specialized in unique, bespoke residences for artists, collectors and visionary clients. Amanda received a Master of Architecture degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. She is currently an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the architecture school at the University of Southern California and in 2024 she won a prestigious national teaching award from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.



PROJECT NARRATIVE

In Praise of Restraint: 21st Century Living in LA

Los Angeles' Urban Legacy

Los Angeles developed as a unique American metropolis, shaped by early 20th-century ideals that continue to influence how we build today. Broad public enthusiasm for Garden City principles pushed an urban planning agenda that prioritized privacy, car ownership, and access to light, air, and garden space. As a result, LA was planned, zoned, and developed as a horizontal, polycentric city. This emphasis on private landownership and transportation transformed the city into a tapestry of privately owned small fragments of land - typically 40' by 120' or 50' by 100' parcels- that are occupied with single-family homes. 77% of Greater Los Angeles' land zoned for residential use is dedicated to this pattern. With such low density and an underperforming public transportation system, the car became an indispensable means of transportation from the outset. Even its place on private property began to be regulated.

Car Culture and McMansions

Zoning started mandating covered parking during the Depression Era, when the automobile became a valued investment that had to be protected from damage, theft, and excessive sunlight. Even on streets with 40' wide lots and no back lanes, garages were often planned in the rear yards of parcels, so that the entire street frontage could be dedicated to porches, gardens, and social life. Placing garages in the back reinforced the idea that the street façade should be civic and domestic. In keeping with Garden City movement ideals, rear garages maintained the vision of the single-family house in a garden. However, a garage in the back does require a driveway when the neighborhood lacks an alley. So, the house must then fit into a 28' footprint instead of a 32' wide one (40' minus two 4' side-yard setbacks), because the driveway takes up another 4' in addition to the side yard setbacks.

Most contemporary developments on 40' wide lots want to avoid this sacrifice of buildable space. They place the garage upfront, maximize the footprint, and add a second floor. These three design choices do achieve the largest amount of sellable floor area, but they also result in a loss of garden spaces and a streetscape dominated by two-car garage doors and driveways. Referred to as "McMansion" houses, these developments are foreign to the intended character of the neighborhoods of the 1920's to 1950's and signal disinterest in connecting with the community and place, whether that's intentional or not.

A House for Southern California

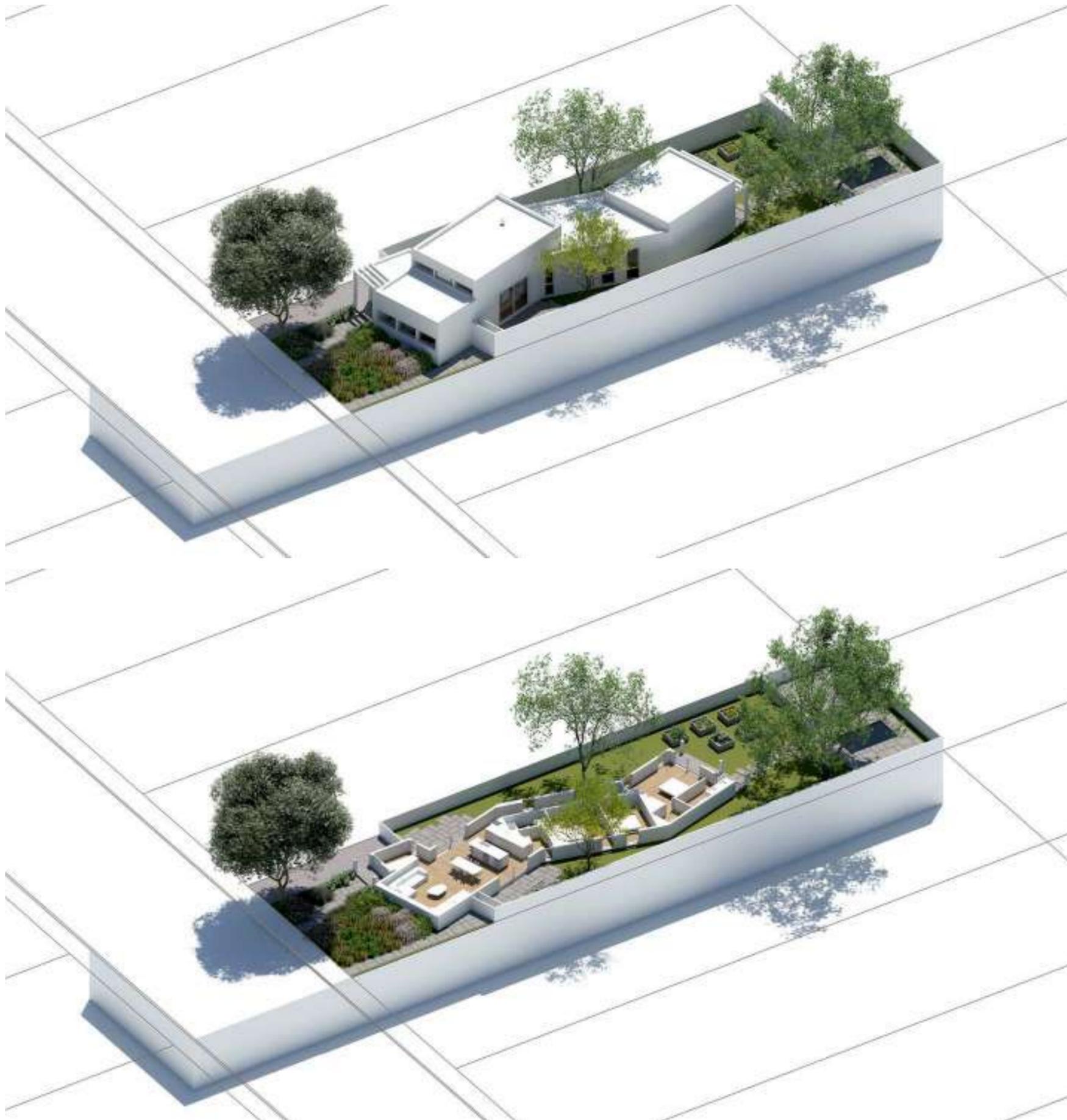
As opposed to the McMansion principles, a narrower plan with no garage in the front becomes appealing when the priority shifts from maximizing square footage to saving the garden around the house. Maintaining the footprint of the original 1940's residence that was lost in the fire allows achieving brighter interiors, leaving more room for vegetation and outdoor space, and supporting the historic character of the neighborhood.

Typologically, the Haverford House is a modified shotgun house. The appeal of this vernacular type is that it addresses the hot Southern California climate and responds elegantly to the narrow, linear parcel geometry. The typical shotgun house originated in the Caribbean and was built very closely to neighbors with no side yards in between. It consists of a series of rooms, maximum 12' wide, with aligned doors for cross-ventilation, since there often were no lateral windows.

The Haverford design follows a seven-step roadmap that begins with the constraints of the original shotgun plan and upgrades it progressively. First, we start with a windowless series of connected rooms as in the traditional shotgun layout. Second, we give the rooms lateral windows for direct access to light and air. Third, we add a hallway for privacy with additional windows for cross-ventilation. Fourth, we offset the entrance to the side to make room for a proper vestibule. Fifth, we angle the linear massing for more privacy and better light. Sixth, we raise parts of the roof for adequate ceiling heights in proportion to the room sizes. Seventh, we add clerestories to frame unexpected sky views and allow more direct sunlight to enter.

The smaller footprint of the house offers opportunities for a variety of outdoor spaces. The main living volume opens up on opposite sides to two outdoor dining and lounge areas. Outside of the bedrooms and master suite, there are two viewing gardens. At the rear of the house is a patio with a small exercise pool under a live oak tree.

On the outside, the meandering zig zag volume of the house allows for wider outdoor spaces in both side yards. On the inside, its geometry was calculated to keep the hot summer sun out and invite the winter sun in. On the interior walls, the sunlight follows a different seasonal path throughout the hours of each day.



PARCEL INFO & DIAGRAMS

ADDRESS: 715 HAVERFORD AVENUE



BUILDING AREAS

1-STORY HOUSE: 1,444 SF

GARAGE: 360 SF

LOT COVERAGE: 33% of 50% MAX

BUILDING ENVELOPE AND SETBACK DIAGRAM



PROJECT DATA

SITE ADDRESS: 715 HAVERFORD AVENUE

LOT AREA: 6,000 SF

ZONED: R1-V1

MAXIMUM ENVELOPE HEIGHT: 28' MAX

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS:

FRONT YARD: 20'

REAR YARD: 15'

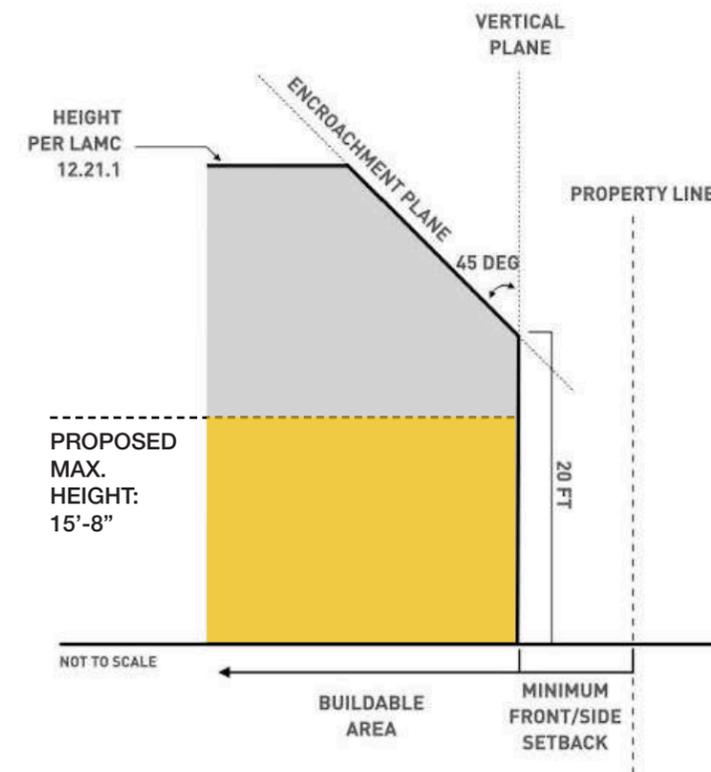
SIDE YARDS: 10% OF LOT WIDTH (4')

PARKING REQUIREMENTS: 2 COVERED SPACES

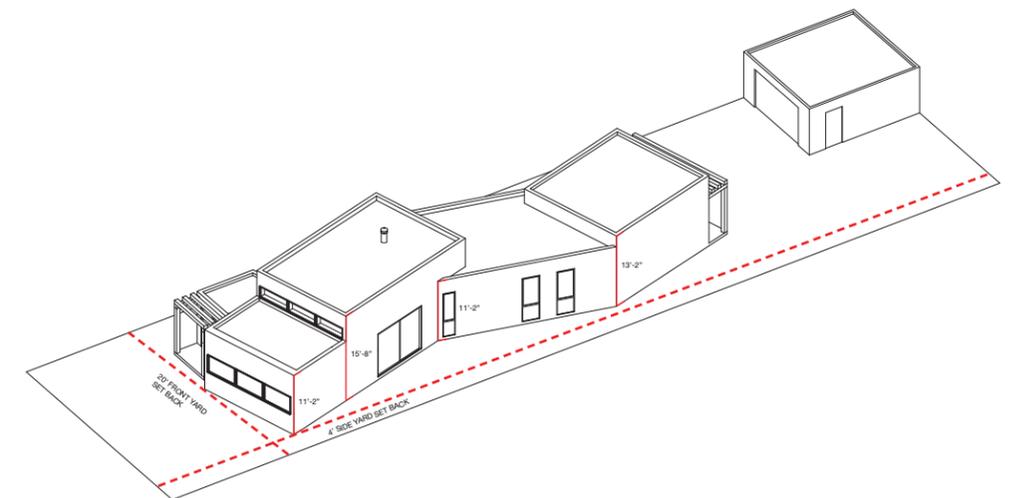
LOT COVERAGE: 50% MAX

RFAR: 0.65, 3,900 SF

BUILDING HEIGHT DIAGRAM



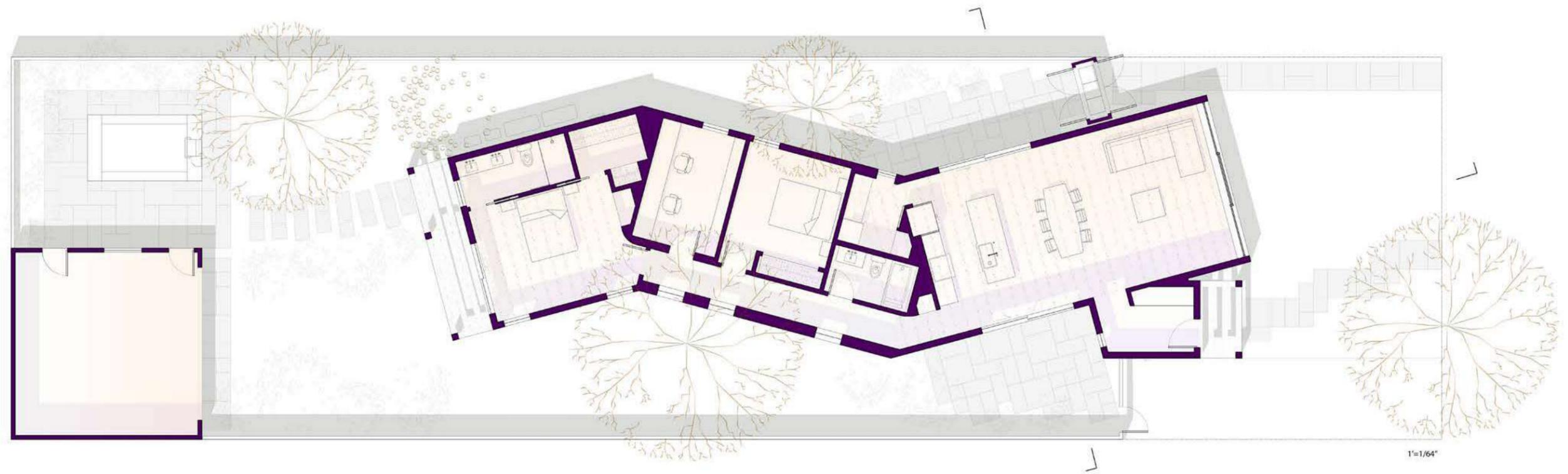
BUILDING ENVELOPE AND SETBACK DIAGRAM



SITE PLAN



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SECTIONS

LONGITUDE



LATITUDE



MORNING SUN



EVENING SUN



ELEVATIONS





RENDERINGS









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