

**City of Charlottesville
Board of Architectural Review
Staff Report
June 17, 2025**



Pre-Application Conference

HST25-0081

555 17th Street; TMP 050059000

Rugby Road-University Circle-Venable ADC District

Owner: Pipson Properties LLC

Applicant: Wolf Ackerman Architects/Fred Wolf

Project: Rear addition



Background

Year Built: circa 1920. (Existing house to remain.)

District: Rugby Road – University Circle - Venable ADC District

Status: Contributing

Two -story Craftsman house covered in textured stucco, with a half-timbered front gable above a linear porch.

Prior BAR Reviews

No previous BAR reviews.

Application

- Applicant submittals: 555 17th St. NW – *BAR Proposal*, Wolf Ackerman Design; May 27, 2025, 14 sheets.

Preliminary discussion of a pending CoA request for construction of a three-story residential building at rear of existing house, with minor alterations to existing, rear elevation. Note: Per code section 5.2.7. Major Historic Review, B. Application Requirement, a pre-application conference [a *preliminary discussion*] with the entire BAR is mandatory for a development having a projected construction cost of \$350,000.00 or more.

Discussion

Objectives of a preliminary discussion: Introduce the project to the BAR; and allow the applicant and the BAR to establish what is necessary for a successful final submittal. That is, a final submittal that is complete and provides the information necessary for the BAR to evaluate the project using the ADC District Design Guidelines and related review criteria.

During a preliminary discussion the BAR may, by consensus, express an opinion about the project as presented. (For example, the BAR might express consensus support for elements of the project, such as its scale and massing.) Such comments will not constitute a formal motion and the result will have no legal bearing, nor will it represent an incremental decision on the required CoA.

In response to any questions from the applicant and/or for any recommendations to the applicant, the BAR should rely on the germane sections of the ADC District Design Guidelines and related review criteria. While elements of other chapters may be relevant, staff recommends that the BAR refer to the criteria in Chapter II--*Site Design and Elements* and Chapter III--*New Construction and Additions*. Of particular assistance, as a checklist for the preliminary discussion, are the criteria for *Additions* in Chapter III:

- Function and Size
- Location
- Design
- Replication of Style
- Materials and Features
- Attachment to Existing Building

The BAR should also consider the building elements and details necessary to evaluate the project. Renderings and schematics communicate mass, scale, design and composition; however a complete application should include details and specific information about the projects materials and components. For example:

- Measured drawings: Elevations, wall details, etc.
- Roofing: Flat, hipped, etc. Metal, slate, asphalt. Flashing details.
- Gutters/downspouts: Types, color, locations, etc.
- Foundation.
- Walls: Masonry, siding, stucco, etc.
- Soffit, cornice, siding, and trim.
- Color palette.
- Doors and windows: Type, lite arrangement, glass spec, trim details, etc.
- Porches and decks: Materials, railing and stair design, etc.
- Landscaping/hardscaping: Grading, trees, low plants, paving materials, etc.
- Lighting. Fixture cut sheets, lamping, etc.

Suggested Motions

Pre-application conference. No action will be taken.

Criteria, Standards and Guidelines

Note re: BAR authority: Per Code, the BAR is charged only with the authority to approve or deny a design review CoA, following an evaluation applying the criteria under Code Sec. 34-5.2.7. *Major Historic Review*. The BAR does not evaluate a proposed use. Additionally, per Code Sec. 34-5.2.7.E.2., the issuance of a CoA “cannot, in and of itself, authorize any construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, demolition, or other improvements or activities requiring a building permit. Where a building permit is required, no activity authorized by a [CoA] is lawful unless conducted in accordance with the required building permit and all applicable building code requirements.”

Review Criteria Generally

Per Chapter 34, Div. 5.2.7. C.2:

- a. In considering a particular application the BAR will approve the application unless it finds:

- i. That the proposal does not meet specific standards set forth within this Section or applicable provisions of the City's design guidelines; and
- ii. The proposal is incompatible with the historic, cultural or architectural character of the district in which the property is located or the IPP that is the subject of the application.
- b. The BAR will approve, approve with conditions, or deny applications for Certificates of Appropriateness in accordance with the provisions of this Section.
- c. The BAR, or City Council on appeal, may require conditions of approval as are necessary or desirable to ensure that any new construction or addition is compatible with the scale and character of the Architecture Design Control District, Individually Protected Property, or Historic Conservation District. Prior to attaching conditions to an approval, due consideration will be given to the cost of compliance with the proposed conditions as well as the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Conditions may require a reduction in height or massing, consistent with the City's design guidelines and subject to the following limitations:
 - i. Along the Downtown Mall, the BAR may limit story height to within 2 stories of the prevailing story height of the block;
 - ii. In all other areas subject to review, the BAR may reduce the allowed height by no more than 2 stories; and
 - iii. The BAR may require upper story setbacks of up to 25'.

Standards for Review and Decision

Per Chapter 34, Div. 5.2.7. D.1:

- a. Review of the proposed construction, reconstruction, alteration or restoration of a building or structure is limited to exterior architectural features, including signs, and the following features and factors:
 - i. Whether the material, texture, color, height, scale, mass, and placement of the proposed addition, modification or construction are visually and architecturally compatible with the site and the applicable District;
 - ii. The harmony of the proposed change in terms of overall proportion and the size and placement of entrances, windows, awnings, exterior stairs, and signs;
 - iii. The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation set forth within the Code of Federal Regulations (36 C.F.R. §67.7(b)), as may be relevant;
 - iv. The effect of the proposed change on the adjacent building or structures;
 - v. The impact of the proposed change on other protected features on the property, such as gardens, landscaping, fences, walls, and walks;
 - vi. Whether the proposed method of construction, renovation, or restoration could have an adverse impact on the structure or site, or adjacent buildings or structures;
 - vii. When reviewing any proposed sign as part of an application under consideration, the standards set forth within Div. 4.11. Signs will be applied; and
 - viii. Any applicable provisions of the City's design guidelines.

Links to ADC District Design Guidelines

[Chapter 1 Introduction \(Part 1\)](#)

[Chapter 1 Introduction \(Part 2\)](#)

[Chapter 2 Site Design and Elements](#)

[Chapter 3 New Construction and Additions](#)

[Chapter 4 Rehabilitation](#)

[Chapter 7 Demolition and Moving](#)

Chapter III – *New Construction and Additions*

Checklist from section P. Additions

- 1) Function and Size
 - a. Attempt to accommodate needed functions within the existing structure without building an addition.
 - b. Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.
- 2) Location
 - a. Attempt to locate the addition on rear or side elevations that are not visible from the street.
 - b. If additional floors are constructed on top of a building, set the addition back from the main façade so that its visual impact is minimized.
 - c. If the addition is located on a primary elevation facing the street or if a rear addition faces a street, parking area, or an important pedestrian route, the façade of the addition should be treated under the new construction guidelines.
- 3) Design
 - a. New additions should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.
 - b. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- 4) Replication of Style
 - a. A new addition should not be an exact copy of the design of the existing historic building. The design of new additions can be compatible with and respectful of existing buildings without being a mimicry of their original design.
 - b. If the new addition appears to be part of the existing building, the integrity of the original historic design is compromised and the viewer is confused over what is historic and what is new.
- 5) Materials and Features
 - a. Use materials, windows, doors, architectural detailing, roofs, and colors that are compatible with historic buildings in the district.
- 6) Attachment to Existing Building
 - a. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to existing buildings should be done in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the buildings would be unimpaired.
 - b. The new design should not use the same wall plane, roof line, or cornice line of the existing structure.

May 27, 2025

Jeff Werner
BAR Board Members:

555 17th Street NW – Preliminary Discussion
Original house is 3 stories (Stucco) and has a maximum height measured to its main ridge of 34’-0” on the rear of the house.

The property is zoned RX-5 under Charlottesville’s Code of Development adopted December 2023. Under the ‘Base Allowance’ up to 5 stories and 72’ building height are permitted with no maximum requirement and a 10% Outdoor amenity requirement. The property has a Front Yard Setback requirement of between 5’ minimum and 15’ maximum, Side and Rear Yard Setback requirements of 0’ minimum, and an Alley Setback requirement of 5’ minimum. There is not limit on the number of swelling units permitted.

We proposed to add 2 new dwelling units (attached single family) that would each be 3 stories over a partially exposed basement level with a maximum building height of 37’-6” measured to the parapet (code only requires measurement to the flat roof). The two usings would form an “L-Shaped” configuration that would frame and anchor a south-facing terrace and landscape courtyard that can be shared by the new dwelling units as well as the residents of the existing house. A private garage below the elevated terrace and courtyard provide shared parking & storage for the 3 units.

We have intentionally placed the new building on the north side property line that the subject property shares with a UVA fraternity house’s parking lot and we have maintained a 5’ setback from the gravel alley at the rear of the property where most other properties park vehicles. Our intention is to have the alley serve as access for the private garage, as is typically the case. We plan to develop a new entry walk along the southern side of the existing house and its south property line to connect the sidewalk on 17th street to the raised terrace / courtyard and the entry porches that serve the two new dwelling units.

We are presenting preliminary massing and 3D to illustrate the concept and to request feedback from the BAR on this approach.
We look forward to our discussion in person and your feedback on June 17th. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

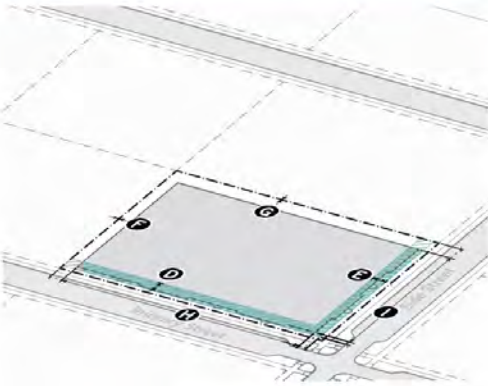
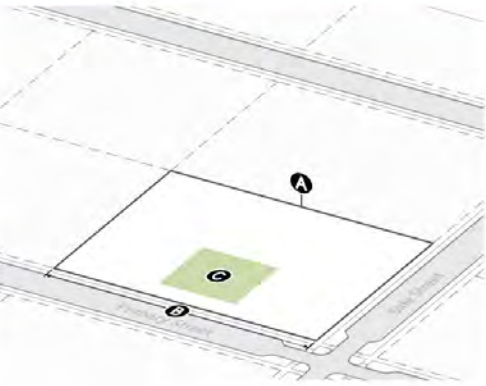
Frederick Wolf, AIA *Principal*



WOLF ACKERMAN LLC
wolfackerman.com | 434 296 4848
110-B Second Street NE; Suite 201
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

2.3.3. **RX-5** RESIDENTIAL MIXED USE 5

A. LOT



1. LOT SIZE	Sec. 2.10.2.
A Area (min)	None
B Width (min)	
Front access	40'
Side / rear access	15'
2. DENSITY	Sec. 2.10.3.
Dwellings per lot (max)	Unlimited
3. COVERAGE	Sec. 2.10.4.
Building coverage (max)	None
C Outdoor amenity space (min)	10%

4. BUILDING SETBACKS	Sec. 2.10.5.
D Primary street lot line (min/max)	5' / 15'
E Side street lot line (min/max)	5' / 15'
F Side lot line (min)	0'
G Rear lot line (min)	0'
Alley lot line (min)	5'
5. BUILD-TO	Sec. 2.10.6.
Build-to width (min)	
H Primary street	75%
I Side street	45%
6. TRANSITION	Sec. 2.10.7.
Transition type	Type B, C
7. PARKING LOCATION	Sec. 2.10.8.
Front yard	Not allowed
Side street yard	Not allowed
Side yard	Allowed
Rear yard	Allowed

B. BUILDING



1. HEIGHT	Sec. 2.10.9.
Building height (max stories/feet)	
A Base	5 / 72'
B With bonus	7 / 100'
2. MASSING	Sec. 2.10.10.
C Building width (max)	275'
D Active depth (min)	9'
3. GROUND STORY	Sec. 2.10.11.
E Ground story height (min)	10'
F Finished floor elevation (min/max)	0' / 6'

4. TRANSPARENCY	Sec. 2.10.12.
G Ground story (min)	35% 30%
H Upper story (min)	20% 20%
I Blank wall width (max)	15' 25'
5. ENTRANCES	Sec. 2.10.13.
J Street-facing entry spacing (max)	40' 60'
Entry feature	Yes Yes
6. FENCES AND WALLS	Sec. 2.10.14.
Front yard height (max)	4'
Side street yard height (max)	6'







This drawing represents a current field run topographic survey.

The datum used for this survey was assumed.

Contour Interval = 1'

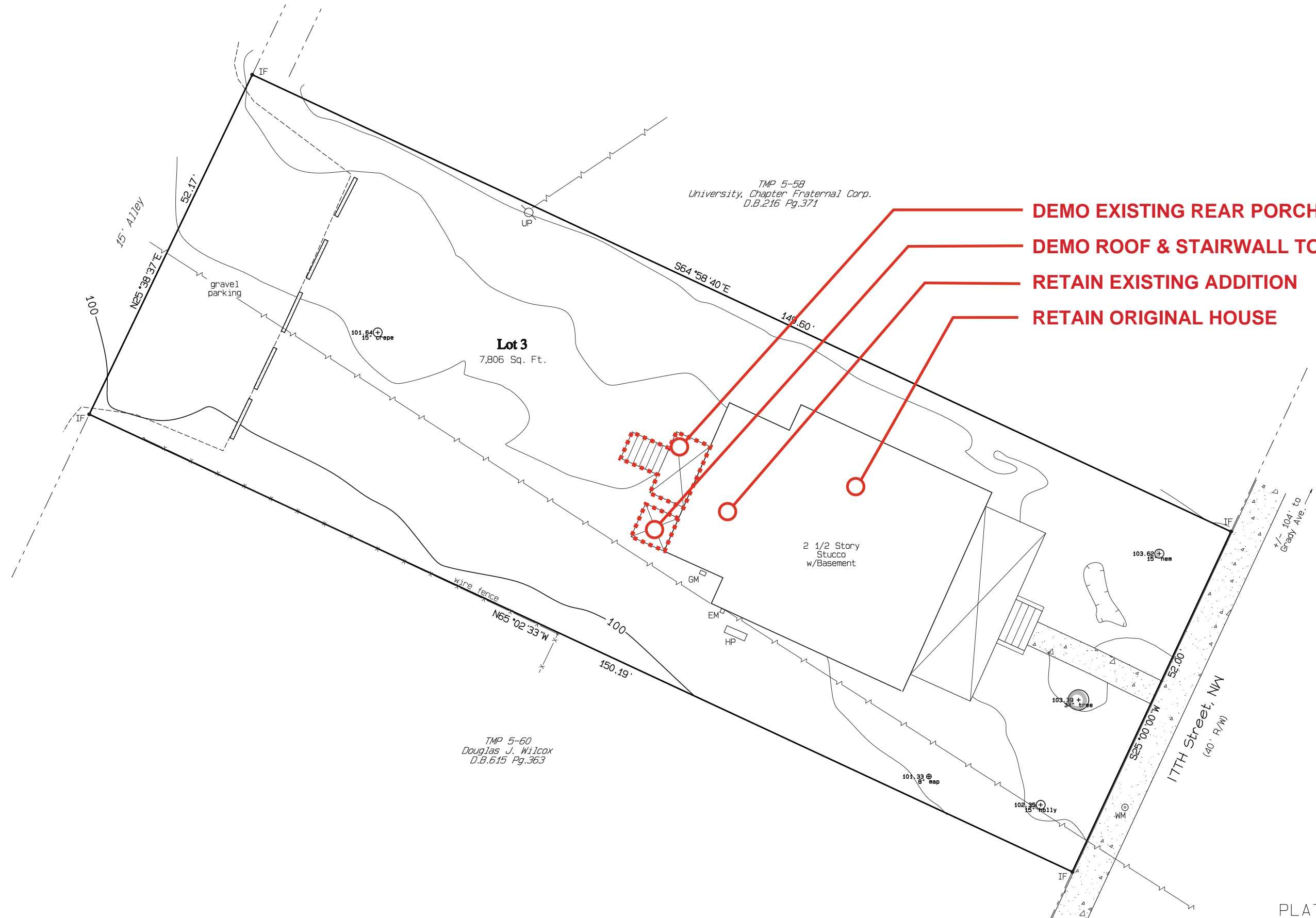
Survey performed without the benefit of a title report and may not indicate all encumbrances on the property.

The property lines shown are according to field evidence and plats of record.

Owners:
Pipson Properties LLC

Legal References:
Inst.# 2013:5751

IF = Iron Found
HP = Heat Pump
GM = Gas Meter
WM = Water Meter
UP = Utility Pole
EM = Electric Meter



DEMO EXISTING REAR PORCH

DEMO ROOF & STAIRWALL TO BASEMENT

RETAIN EXISTING ADDITION

RETAIN ORIGINAL HOUSE

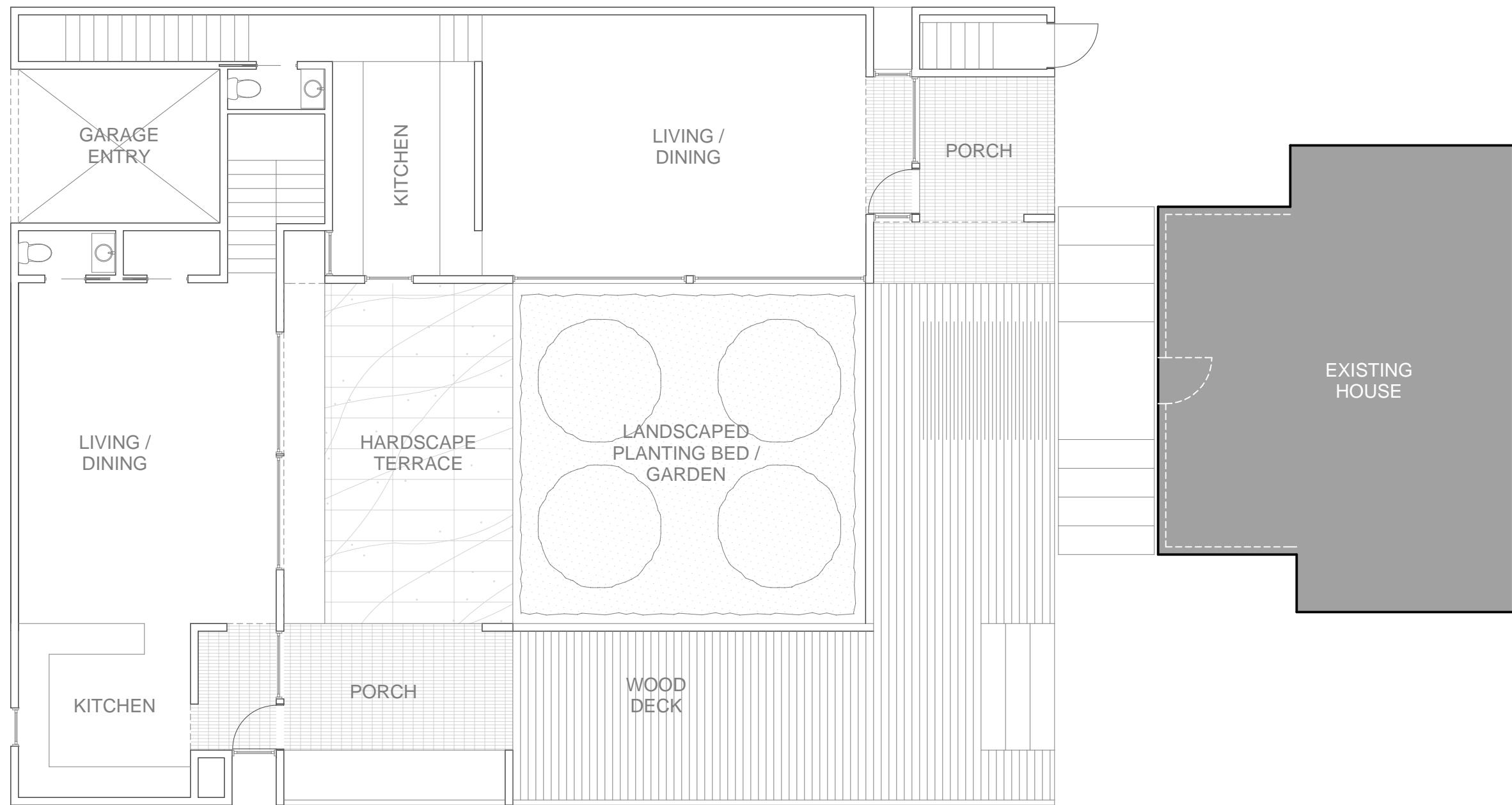
PLAT



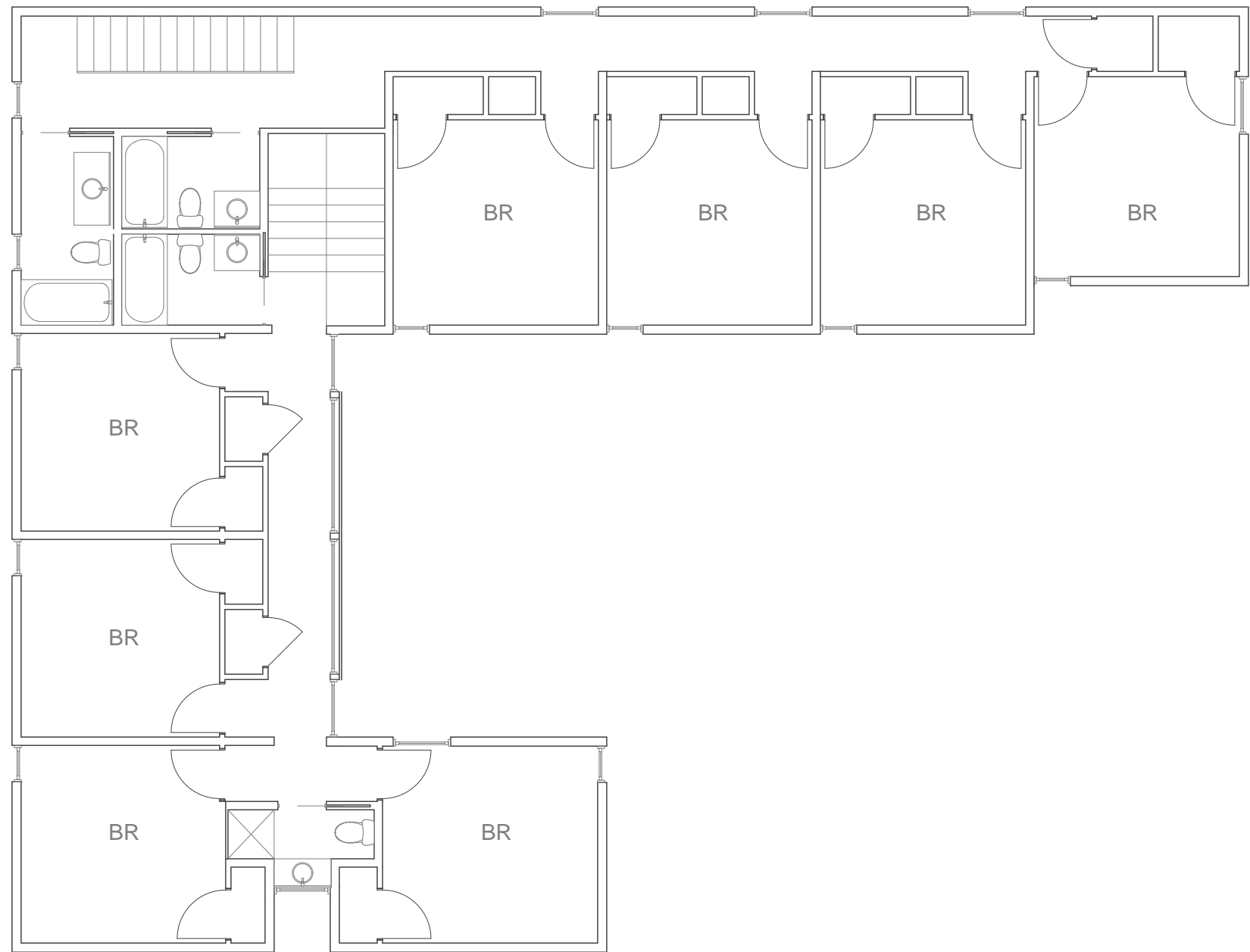




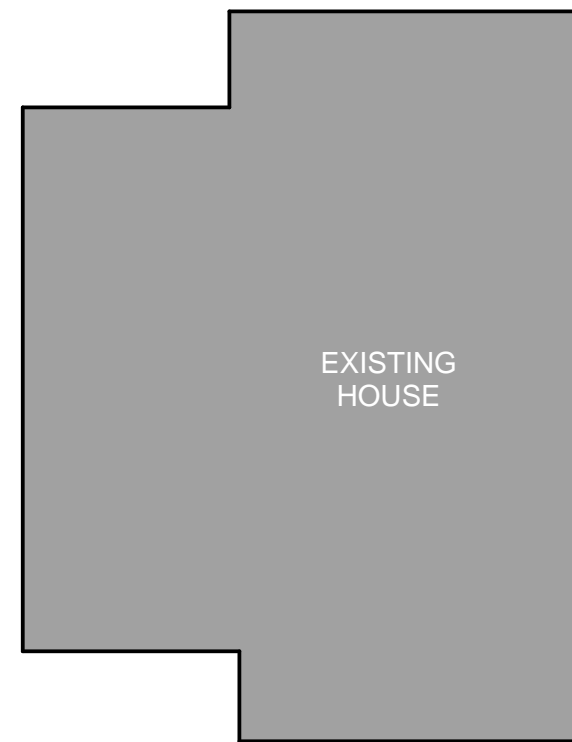




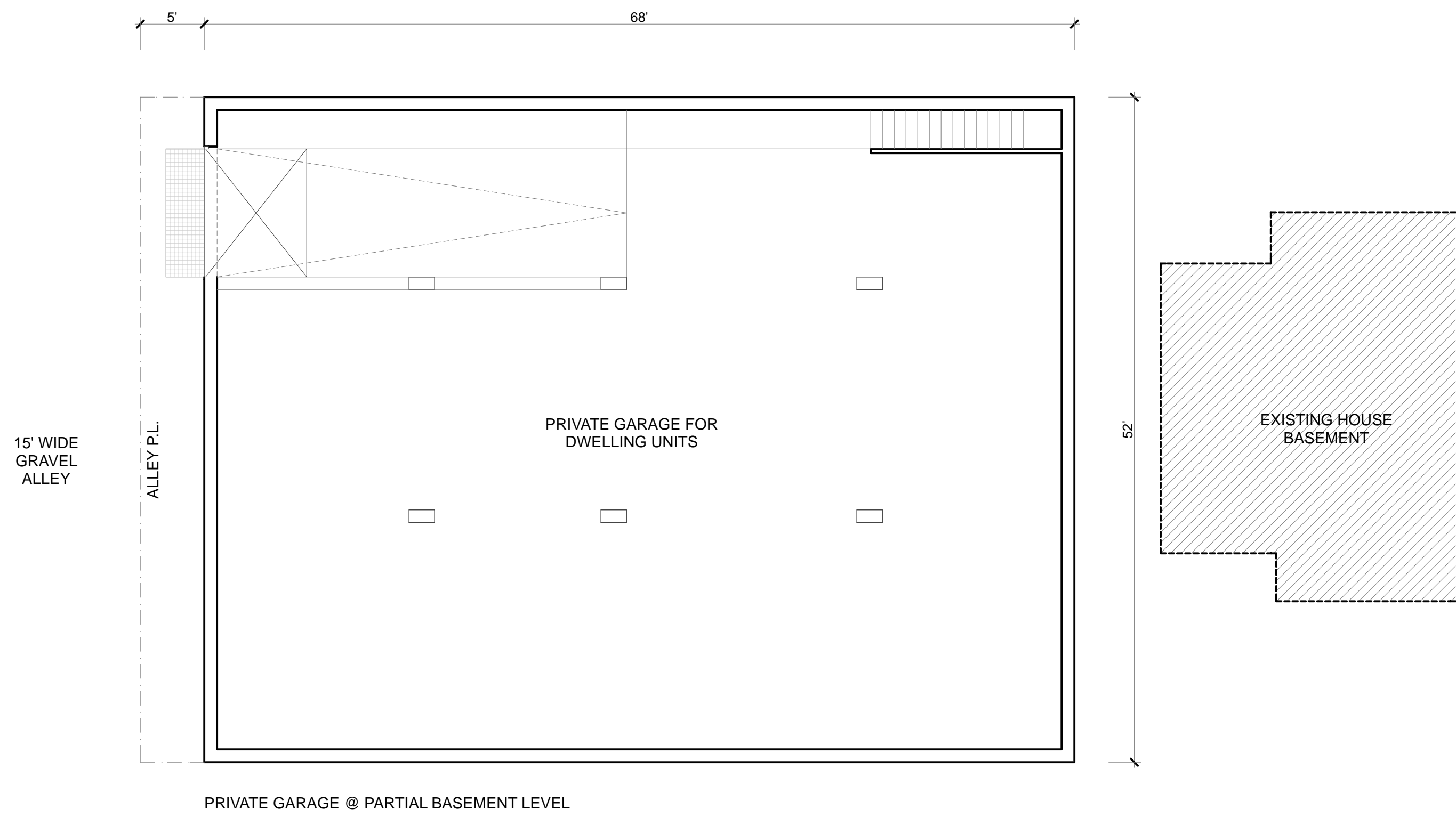
MAIN LIVING LEVEL W/ TERRACE & LANDSCAPED COUTYARD

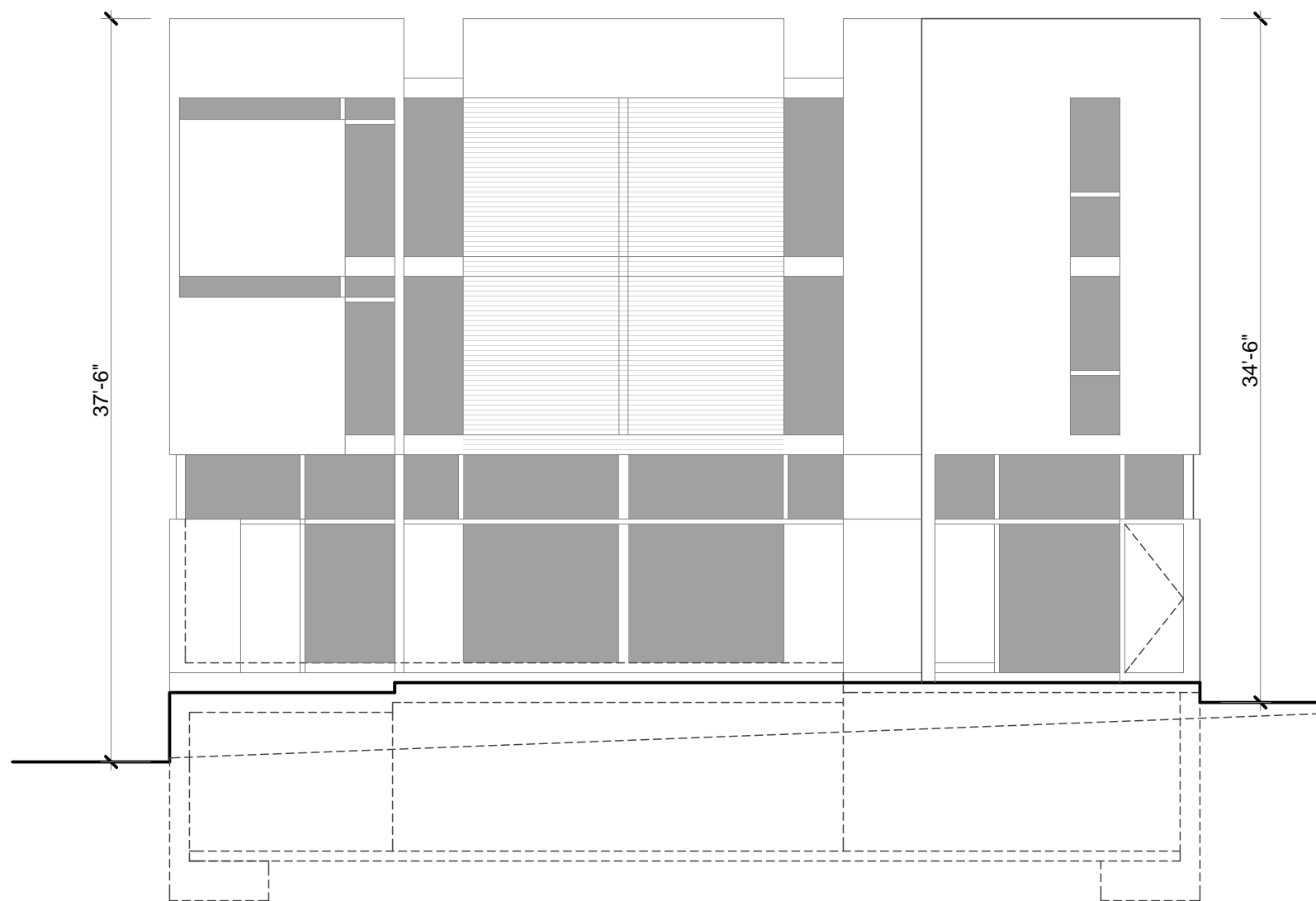


TYPICAL SLEEPING LEVELS

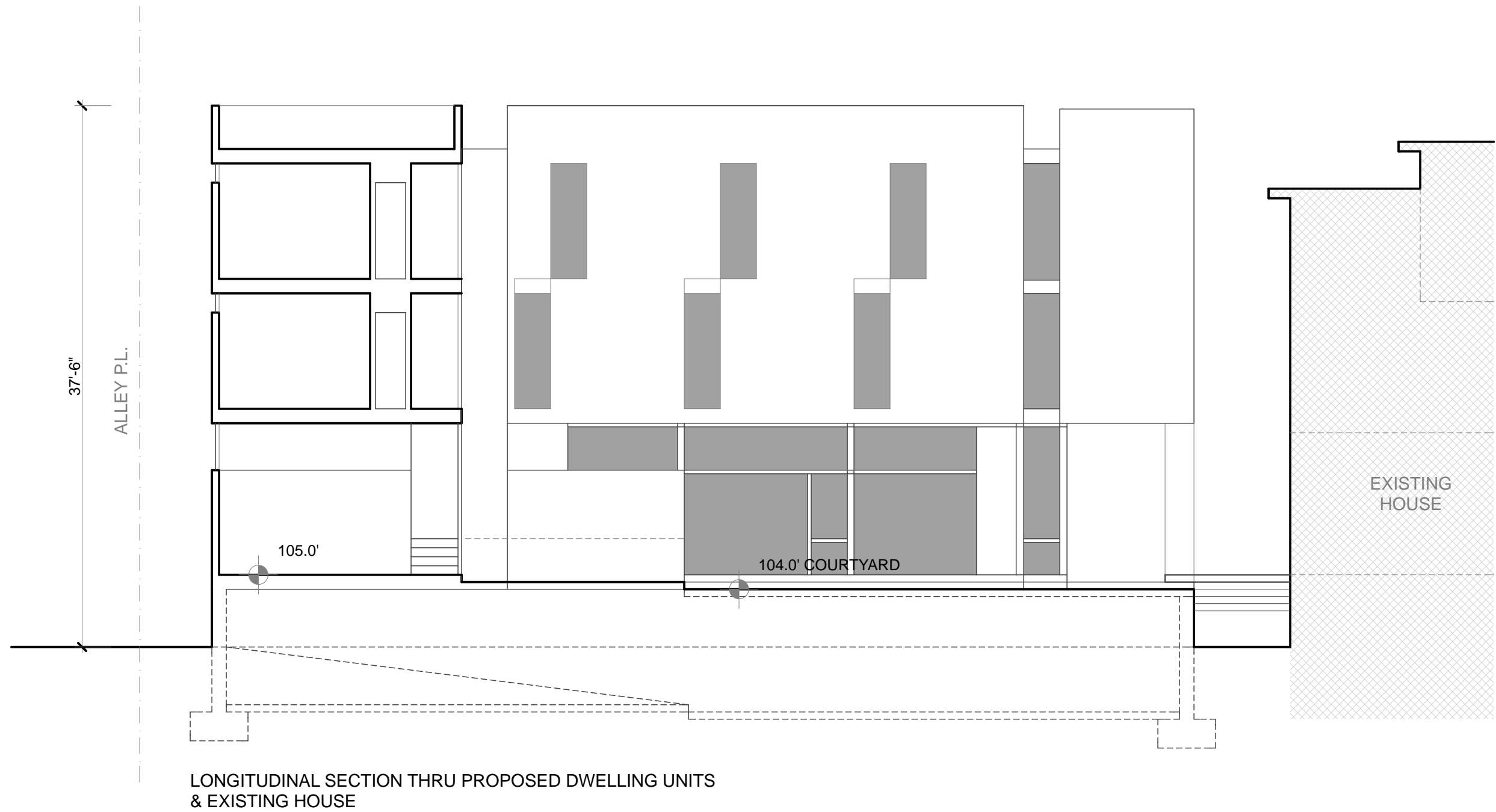


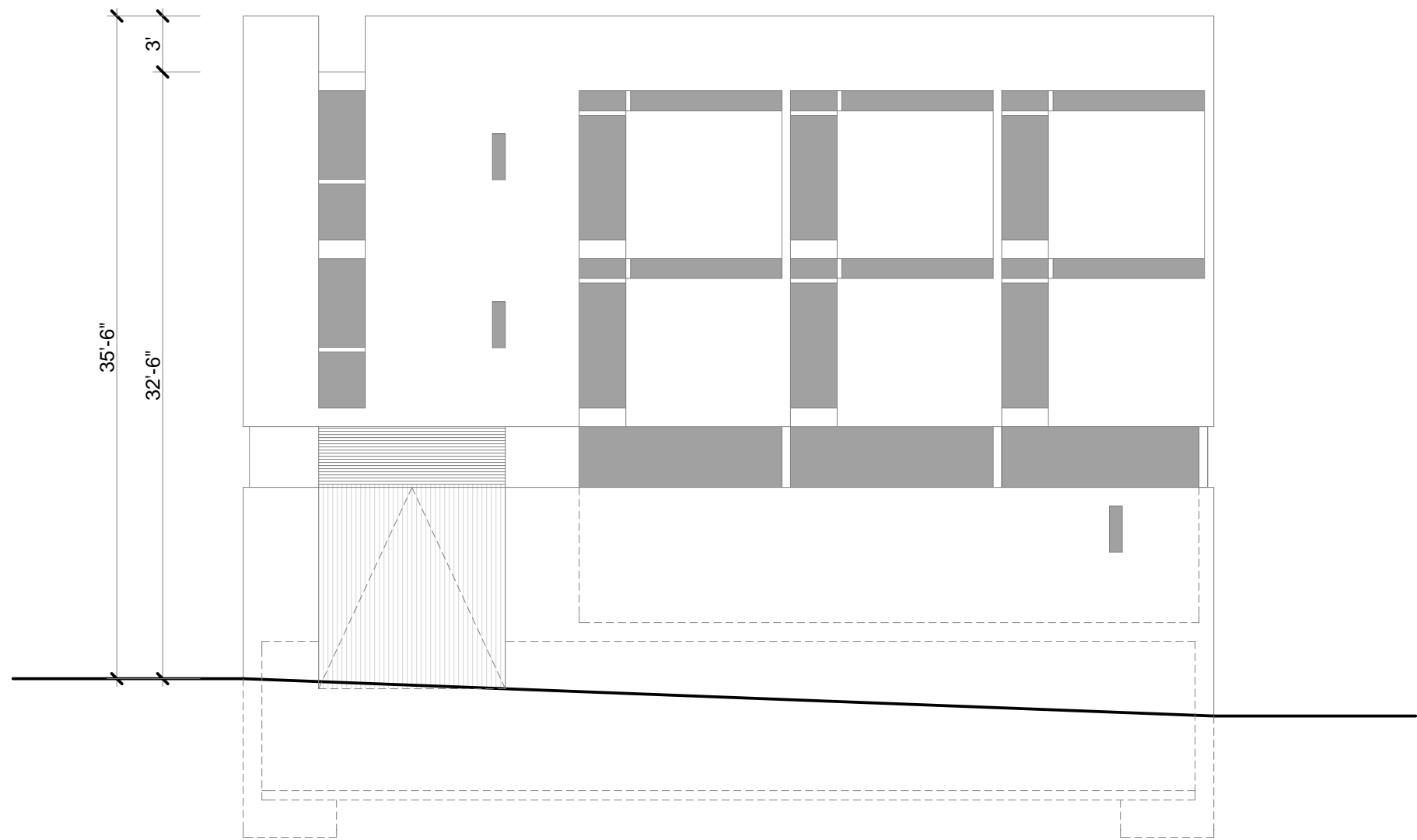
EXISTING
HOUSE





VIEW FROM EXISTING HOUSE





VIEW FROM ALLEY





