

CASE STUDY 2.0

REBUILDING LOS ANGELES

The Ben House



DUTTON
architects

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INTRODUCTION



COMPANY / FIRM SUMMARY

DUTTON ARCHITECTS

Based in Los Angeles, Dutton Architects has been designing high-quality homes and spaces for over twenty years. We are known for delivering thoughtful, well-detailed but cost-effective architecture. Each project is unique, and respects a client's particular needs, goals, and ways of living. Our practice is dedicated to creating inspiring places to live and work — from custom residences and creative office environments to multi-family housing and urban infill projects. At every scale, our work reflects a warm, inviting approach to modern architecture. We want people to experience the joy of being in a well-designed house, without the architecture upstaging their life.

Dutton Architects is committed to the best traditions of California modernism: contemporary living standards expressed through timeless, human-centered design. Every project is custom-tailored through a collaborative, creative process that ensures a rich dialogue between architect and client. We specialize in solving complex challenges — from difficult sites to demanding programs — with elegant, sustainable solutions.

Our designs are deeply connected to the landscape and climate of California, maximizing indoor-outdoor living and emphasizing natural light, open space, and a sense of ease. With a profound appreciation for the history of Southern California architecture, we approach every project with an understanding of — and respect for — this unique and inspiring context.

JOHN DUTTON

John is the founder of Dutton Architects, where he oversees the firm's highest design standards and ensures comprehensive, personalized service for every client. His passion for design spans all scales — from homes and workplaces to furniture and public parks — reflecting a belief that great design can enhance every part of daily life.

John brings a unique and distinguished background to his work. He trained at some of the world's most renowned architectural firms — including Morphosis, Richard Meier & Partners, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, and Santiago Calatrava — gaining experience in the creation of iconic, visionary buildings. At the same time, he has cultivated a deep expertise in urban and neighborhood design, giving him a rare ability to design not just individual spaces, but the broader environments that support vibrant, sustainable communities. His work is grounded in an understanding of how people live, work, and connect within inspiring, thoughtfully crafted places.

A longtime educator, John is an adjunct professor at the USC School of Architecture and a professor with the Mediterranean Global Studies program. He served as president of the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design and was a member of its Board of Directors for five years. In addition to practicing architecture, he has contributed writings to numerous publications, served as a guest critic at leading architecture schools, and lectured internationally on architecture and urbanism.

John holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts from Brown University.

PROJECT NARRATIVE



The Ben House begins with the familiar form of a traditional gabled roof, then reinterprets it by intersecting and duplicating the volumes to create a dynamic, playful design. The result is a compact, elegant three-bedroom home with a welcoming and well-scaled street presence in the neighborhood. Inside, the home features a clear and efficient floor plan. Downstairs, a spacious open-plan “great room” provides flexible space for living and dining, ready for the owner to furnish and personalize as they wish. Full-height white oak open shelving separates this area from the kitchen, stairwell, bathroom, and storage spaces, creating subtle divisions while maintaining a sense of openness. A large sky-light above the staircase brings natural light deep into the heart of the home, creating layers of light and enhancing the architectural textures.

The kitchen anchors the rear of the home, featuring a generous island with counter seating, and opens directly to the backyard, blending indoor and outdoor living. The ground floor also includes a street-facing garage with direct interior access to the entry area, designed so it could easily be adapted into a bonus room if desired.

Upstairs, two bedrooms share a thoughtfully designed bathroom, while the primary suite — facing the backyard — offers a large retreat with a luxurious bath, walk-in shower, freestanding tub, dual

vanities, and a private water closet. Sloped ceilings in the upstairs bedrooms add unique architectural character.

Exterior finishes combine high-quality, integral-colored stucco on one volume with cementitious, fire-resistant board-and-batten siding on the other — offering both durability and fire-resistance. (Alternative exterior finishes are also available.) Inside, the primary materials include Fleetwood aluminum windows, white oak flooring, walnut cabinetry, and low-VOC matte paints for a clean, healthy environment.

Large lots in Palisades and Altadena provide abundant space for terraces, gardens, grilling areas, pools, or future ADUs. The Ben House is a modern, comfortable family home designed to embrace the best of Southern California’s indoor-outdoor lifestyle while respecting and enhancing its neighborhood setting.

Total Gross Area:	2810 sf
Total Net Area:	2512 sf
First Floor:	1178 sf
Second Floor:	934 sf
Attached Garage:	400 sf
Bedrooms:	three
ADU option:	yes

DESIGN FEATURES



FIRE RESISTANCE

The house is designed to current fire resistant standards, from non-combustible materials on the roof and exterior walls, to dual-glazed windows, to defensible space surrounding the house. There are no eave overhangs, which have a tendency to catch embers.



ROOFING

The roofs will rated Class A fire resistance: asphalt shingles, or an upgrade to metal.



BUILDING SIDING

The house will be finished in non-combustible portland cement based 3-coat stucco for the two story volume, and cementitious board and batten for the one story volume.



WINDOWS & DOORS

Exterior doors are fire-rated per code. Windows are dual-glazed with tempered glass. Window are thermally-broken aluminum frames with wood cladding on the interior.



DEFENSIBLE SPACE INTEGRATION

A 5' zone around the house will be have the most intensive defensible space per CalFire guidelines, with ember resistant planning. Fire resistant native plants and adequate tree location and spacing for the rest of the yard to reduce fuel and create landscape that can be easily managed.



VENTS

House will have ember-resistant vents with 1/8-inch mesh screens



EMBER-RESISTANT FEATURES

Fire-rated roof, no eaves, fire resistant materials, ember-screened vents



SUSTAINABILITY

The house will utilize sustainable materials (floors, low VOC paint, etc.), LED lighting, tankless water heaters, high quality and effective insulation. Not having large expanses of glass (especially south and west facing) will help minimize solar heat gain. Photovoltaic panel -ready. Net Zero options available as upgrade.



DESIGN QUALITIES

The house is a modern twist on the two story bungalow, with a discreet one and two story pieces each clad separately. The sloped roof is a traditional shape, but the details of the finishes and windows are more modern.



CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY

Standard Type V framing- no steel required, to keep costs down. Rooms are sized to require standard size affordable framing. Raised foundation for rear two-story portion, and slab on grade for front tall living room.



EFFICIENCY

The house is very spatially efficient, with three bedrooms in a little over 2,000 sf. It feels ample, yet it's modest size allows for effective use of the outside gardens. It is efficient in it's use of resources too, and is well-suited to endure in the increasingly hotter climate of the region.



STYLE FEATURES

A modern house that fits in perfectly in Altadena or Pacific Palisades, the house is finally crafted, rich in materials, and with a composition and massing that makes for a good neighbor. Sustainable, organic materials and rich interior design details like wood shelving as dividers, create a warm family home.



ADDITIONAL SPECIAL FEATURES

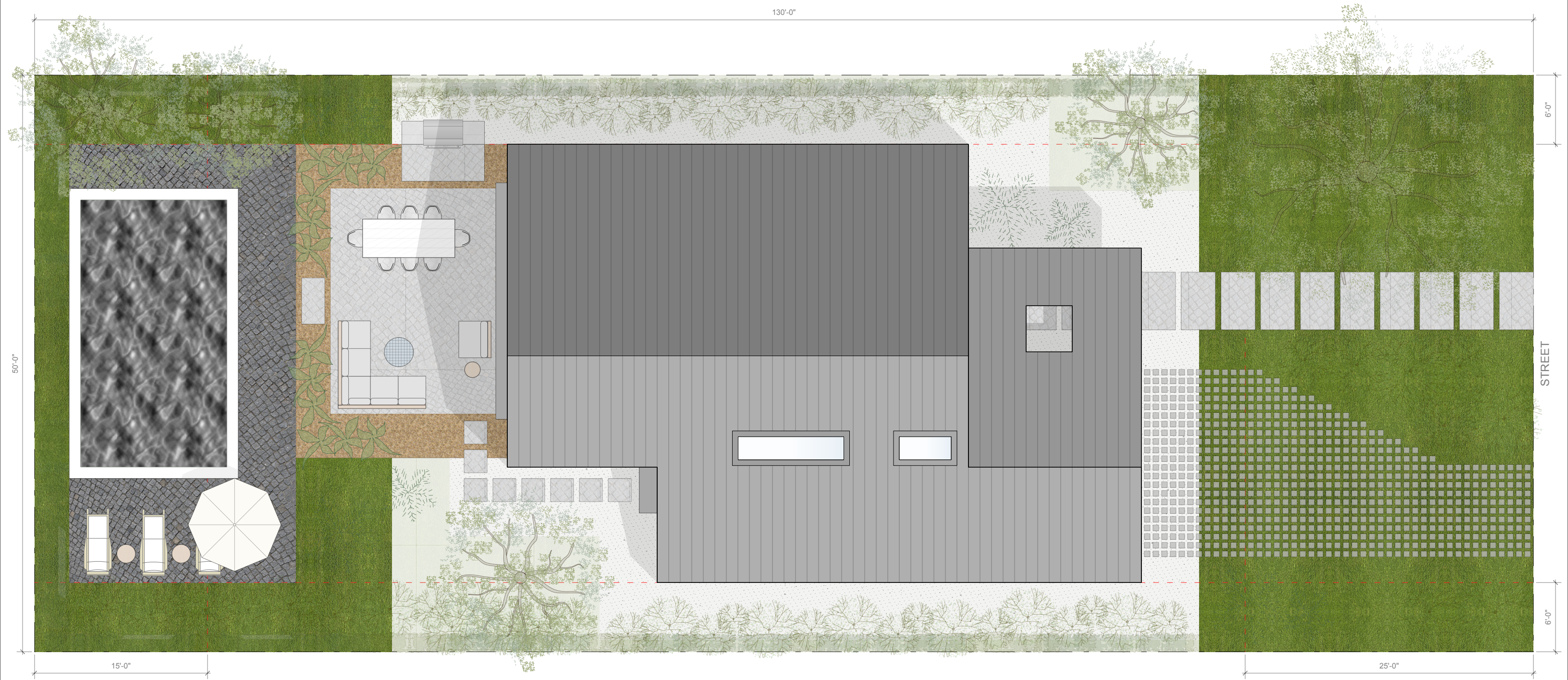
Large skylights on upper floor, sloped ceilings, natural light. garage with interior access easily converted to a bonus rec room. Yard has room for dining patio, pool and pool terrace, BBQ and gardens.



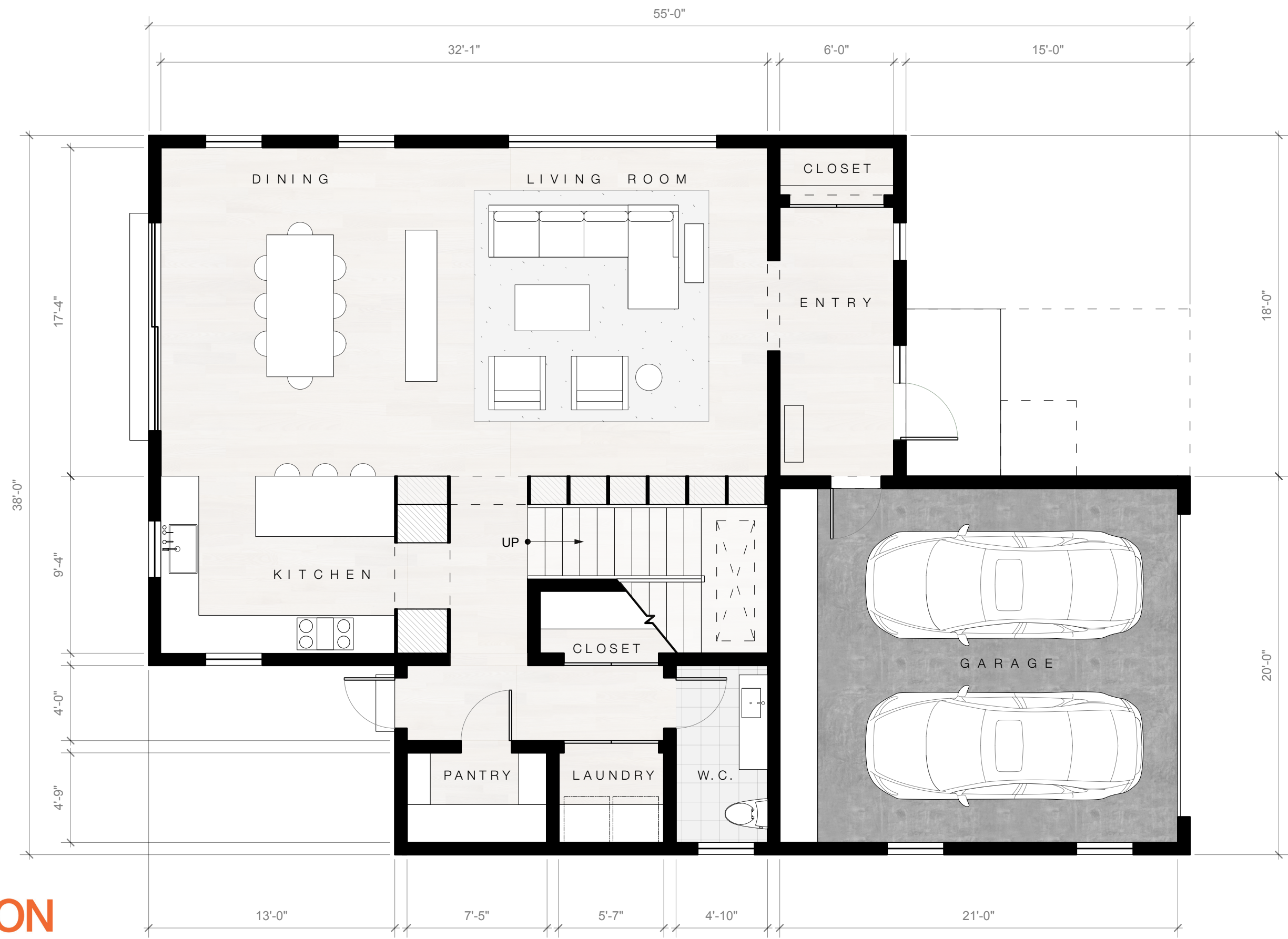
CUSTOMIZATION POTENTIAL

There are many options for finishes on the interior, and window colors, etc. All interior finishes can be upgraded. ADU can be added, or a pool.

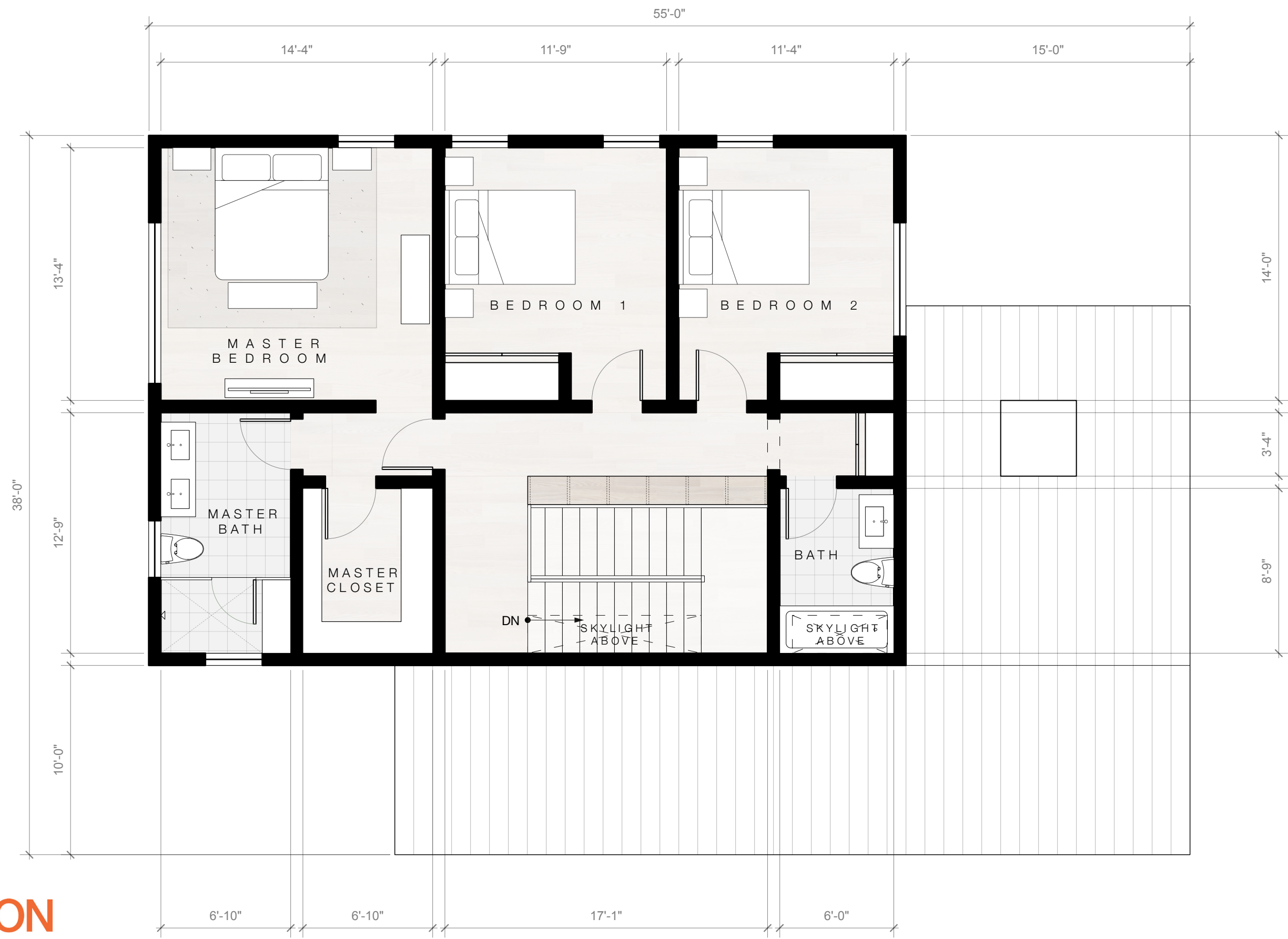
SITE PLAN



GROUND LEVEL



SECOND LEVEL



SECTIONS

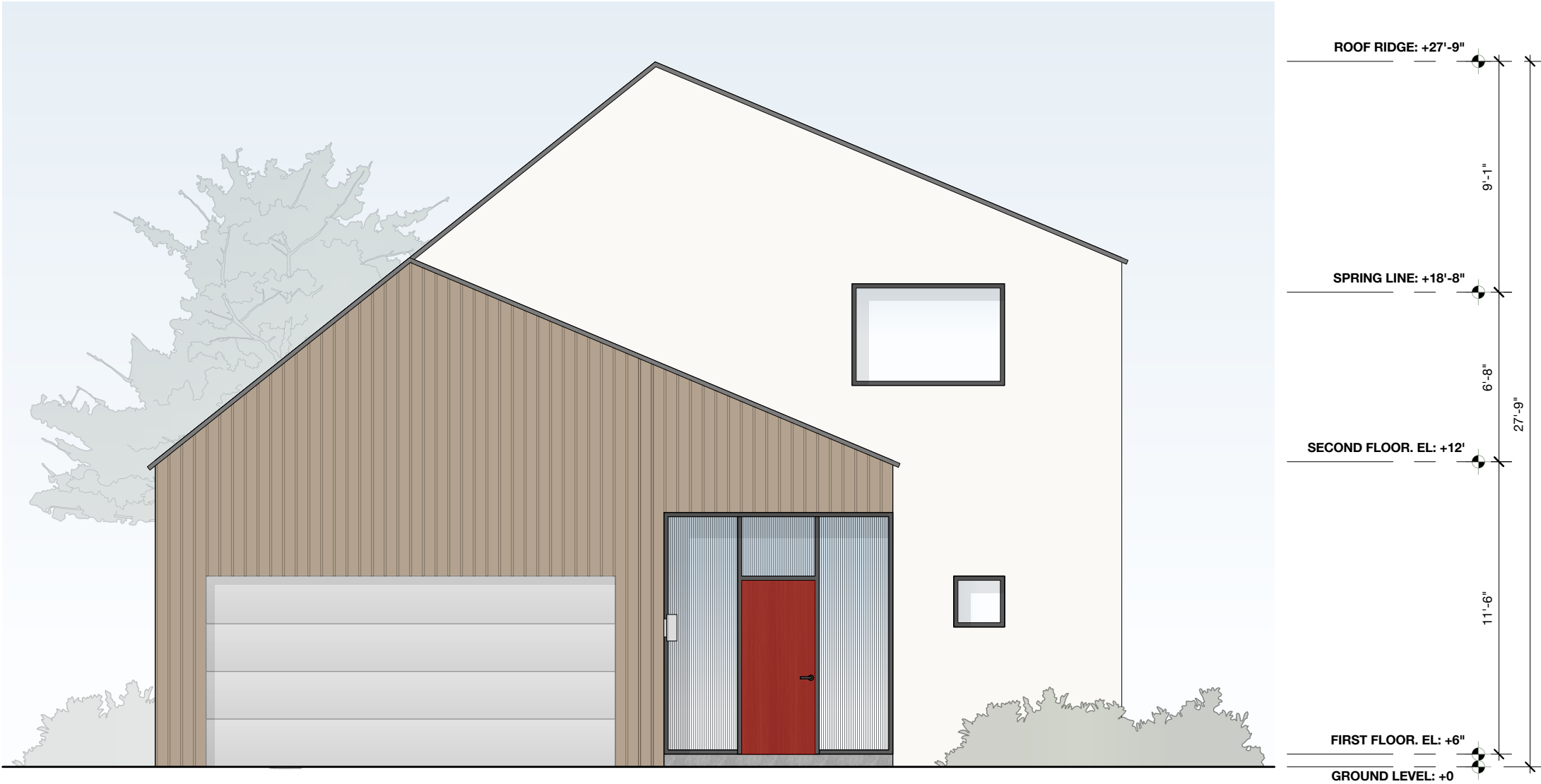
SECTION A



SECTION B



FRONT



REAR



RIGHT SIDE



LEFT SIDE



RENDERINGS







