



A Home for John Balz and Erica Simmons
25 North Prospect Avenue - Madison, Wisconsin
23 April 2012

Thomas Phifer and Partners

April 23, 2012

To the Members of the
Madison Landmarks Commission
City of Madison Planning Division
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room LL100
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2985

Dear Members of the Landmarks Commission,

On February 13, 2012, Erica Simmons and John Balz presented our initial design concept to you for 25 North Prospect Avenue in University Heights. The parcel at 25 North Prospect, currently vacant, is Lot 2 on the Certified Survey Map dated March 01, 2010 (Survey Map #12716). We were grateful for the opportunity to receive your feedback, as well as that of Erica and John's neighbors, at the February meeting. We continue to work with Erica and John to construct a home on this site and look forward to presenting a new design concept to you on May 14th.

Based on feedback from the Landmarks Commission meeting on February 13, as well as a joint letter and additional comments from neighbors, we decided to abandon our original designs for the site and develop an entirely new proposal.

This new design for John and Erica's home was developed with the concerns of the neighbors and the Commissioners in mind. The central inspiration for the home is a "serpentine" or "crinkle-crinkle" wall. With centuries old European roots, these walls framed gardens and farmland of homes built in many of the historic revival styles that are found in University Heights today. The core of the concept is to imagine a garden wall-turned-home. It will weave through the site as these low, moving walls wove through the landscape. The curved walls will create dimension and depth, making the home open and friendly, while the large windows facing the street and the yard will invite the neighborhood in.

The home will be built from materials found in the Visually Related Area (red brick) and will sit only 15 feet high, leaving neighbors' views unobstructed. The design includes windows facing the street and the red brick will give the home a warm, inviting tone. The home will be respectful and sensitive of the diverse Architecture of the University Heights neighborhood. The design is rooted in the historical tradition of the simplicity and originality of the Arts and Crafts style, while incorporating modern architectural aesthetics.

General Description and Scope: The proposed house has a footprint of approximately 2,900 SF. The building is composed of a single story, 15' high. The garage has been submerged and placed in the basement, allowing the wall concept to continue uninterrupted at street level. The driveway is designed to minimize the amount of paved area visible from the street; it will be only 11' wide. The impact of the driveway and the garage will be minimized further through a lattice design that will obscure views of the pavement and the garage door. The lattice work will stand on its own as an important architectural element of the design, but will also be covered by green vines during the warmer months.

Siting and Trees: The building is sited to relate the house directly to the context, rhythm, and proportion of the mid-block site. An arborist retained by John and Erica surveyed the existing trees to develop a Tree Preservation Plan, which is included in the application package. While some trees will be lost in this new proposal, additional new trees will be planted to compliment the placement of the building on the site and further connect the house to the surrounding landscape environment.

Materials: The exterior material palette will be reclaimed brick in various shades of red (see image Page 15). The varied brick will give the home an old feeling, as if it could have stood on the site hundreds of years ago. The brick is warm, humble, respectful, and thoughtfully connects to the University Heights community. The Landmarks Ordinance explicitly

allows for the use of brick in the construction of new homes in University Heights. The exterior materials used in the Visually Related Area include stucco, wood siding, brick, exposed timber, and glass without establishing a predominant material. A home directly across the street (2103 Van Hise) uses a similar brick.

Roof Shape: A flat roof was chosen for the home, as it is in keeping with the serpentine walls that are the design inspiration. The flat roof simplifies and calms the visual impact of the building, while clearly communicating the concept of a garden wall-turned-home. The proposed green roof will reinforce the relationship to the natural beauty of the site, literally lifting up the yard that might typically stand behind a garden wall. Like the First Unitarian Church in Madison, potential plantings for the roof include a variety of sedums and other water-holding plants like alliums, and sempervivums.

Analysis of the houses in the Visually Related Area shows the presence of eight distinguishable roof shapes, including flat roofs, gambrels, hip roofs, and steep and shallow gables. Many properties include flat roofed structures and building components, resulting in no prevalent roof shape within the Visually Related Area. It is our opinion that the proposed flat roof is meeting the intent of the Landmarks Ordinance section 33.19(5)(b) 4d., as it is one of the many roof forms found in the Visually Related Area and the neighborhood at large. We also believe that the proposed green roof further alleviates potential concerns about the compatibility of the flat roof with the roof shapes of the immediately adjacent homes. The low, flat roof respectfully leaves the existing street elevation intact and avoids direct aesthetic competition with its older neighbors.

Front Façade: Analysis of homes in the VRA shows an average gross front façade of 1006.25 SF. Erica and John's home will have a gross front façade area of 1,015 SF, well below the permitted maximum of 1,258 SF.

Neighborhood Feedback: After the February 13th meeting, Erica and John engaged neighbors in additional communications via email to ensure that they understood the nature of the neighbors' concerns. On April 4 we sent each interested neighbor a package that included design inspiration images, and four elevation images, almost identical to what is enclosed here. Erica and John met with interested neighbors on April 7 and 14 to discuss the new proposal. They shared one overhead image (again, almost identical to what is enclosed here), giving neighbors a complete sense of what the design would look like on all four sides and from directly above. The meetings included 18 neighbors representing 12 homes in the surrounding area. Support for the plans was widely shared. At these meetings, Erica and John received helpful suggestions about snow removal, insulation, and plantings for the lot and roof; there did not seem to be concerns about the overall design concept. Many neighbors were enthusiastic about the contribution the home would make to the architecture of the block. Erica and John were grateful for the chance to discuss the concept while getting to know their new neighbors better. Neighbors also expressed their gratitude for Erica and John's willingness to listen to their concerns and re-design their home as a result.

We believe that the proposed design would be a respectful and sensitive addition to the University Heights neighborhood. The home will be grounded in both the architectural history of the block and the natural history of the lot itself.

Sincerely,



Thomas Phifer

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Madison Landmarks Commission
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P.O. Box 2985
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2985

To the Members of the Landmarks Commission,

We are grateful for the time you spent with us discussing plans for the lot at 25 North Prospect in February. We look forward to the chance to meet with you again to share the new vision for the site and hope you will indulge us as we outline in the pages that follow the thought process behind the new design. This letter begins to explain the images contained in Tom's packet.

We left the February 13 Landmarks Commission meeting with much to think about. We appreciated the feedback we received from you as well as from our neighbors about the original design, all of which gave us new perspectives on the lot and our home. With many places to start, we needed to find a point to start from. We ended up circling back to three equally important questions.

1. What is unique about this site?
2. How does this site fit into the historic character of the block and of University Heights?
3. How can we address the central concerns raised by both the Commissioners and our neighbors in February?

The Neighborhood and the Site

University Heights has a tradition of fine architecture in different historic and progressive styles, where Tudor and Colonial revivals sit next to Craftsman and Prairie Style homes. It is also a neighborhood whose history has aspired to innovative, progressive architecture of the current moment. Our block is a perfect example of this eclectic mix of innovative architecture. A Prairie home, a Colonial Revival, a Craftsman, an American Foursquare, Bungalows, and Tudor revivals, as well as a contemporary one-story home, all give our block the character for which University Heights is known.

Meanwhile, 25 N Prospect itself has served as a beautiful natural space, a yard that has belonged to different people throughout its history, while providing joy to those surrounding it.

The design we are proposing seeks to incorporate and balance the legacy of the site, the block, and the neighborhood, while remaining attentive to the concerns voiced in February.

We were encouraged that members of the Commission and our neighbors expressed an openness to a modernist design. We took careful note of concerns about height, materials, and interaction with the neighborhood. Ultimately, we did not think we could remain true to our original concept while also adequately incorporating feedback we received. We want very much to build a home that our neighbors can support and it was clear that this would be difficult to accomplish with the design we proposed in February.

As we began thinking about a new design, we wanted to pay particular attention to concerns about how a tall dark structure might not only block surrounding views, but also stand out as highly conspicuous. Concerns about materiality fell into this general category as well. We also wanted to respond to our neighbors' hopes that the home would interact more with the neighborhood and the surrounding houses. Finally, we noted comments about the importance of weighing tree preservation with other design and ordinance considerations. The feedback from the Commission and our neighbors, combined with our own thoughts, led us to the design concept enclosed. We hope you will see the intent behind the images.

New Design Concept

The core of our vision is simple: To imagine a garden wall that could have sat here at the neighborhood's creation, and how, after the neighborhood grew and filled in, it transformed into an open, friendly, and modern home.

To accomplish this, we came together around the idea of crinkle-crankle or serpentine walls. Three examples of these walls appear in the images we have sent to you, but they appear in many different shapes, sizes, and materials. One can gain a sense of them in the curving stone walls at the corner of Summit and Prospect in University Heights. Despite centuries-old roots, we think these winding walls share a design philosophy compatible with Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th century. Both encourage originality. Both follow a commitment to simple but elegant shapes, local, natural materials, and dedicated craftsmanship.

The concept of our home is thus rooted in the historical traditions of University Heights and our block while serving as a reflection of what we consider to be the very best of modern architecture. The home is one story tall, made of warm, red brick, and has large windows that face the street. The roof is covered in native grasses and plantings. We want to build a home that keeps the yard spirit of the lot by lifting it up.

Neighbor Meetings

Once we had fully developed the concept, we held two small meetings with our neighbors on two separate dates to ensure that everyone who wanted to participate could attend. We met with all eighteen of our neighbors—representing twelve of the homes closest to our lot—who expressed interest in engaging with us in the process. During these meetings, we explained the concept, the vision, and the plans for our home. We presented elevation images and one overhead drawing showing the footprint and the surrounding homes. We received overwhelming support for the new direction. Many of our neighbors, including those with direct views of the lot, were genuinely enthusiastic and appreciative of our efforts to respond to their concerns. We hope you will hear from our neighbors in the coming weeks.

The images in this package are by themselves, incomplete. We look forward to putting them into the full context of the process that informed them. The two pieces are meant to complement one another. We hope that you will develop your own thoughts about the project in conjunction with what we share on May 14th.

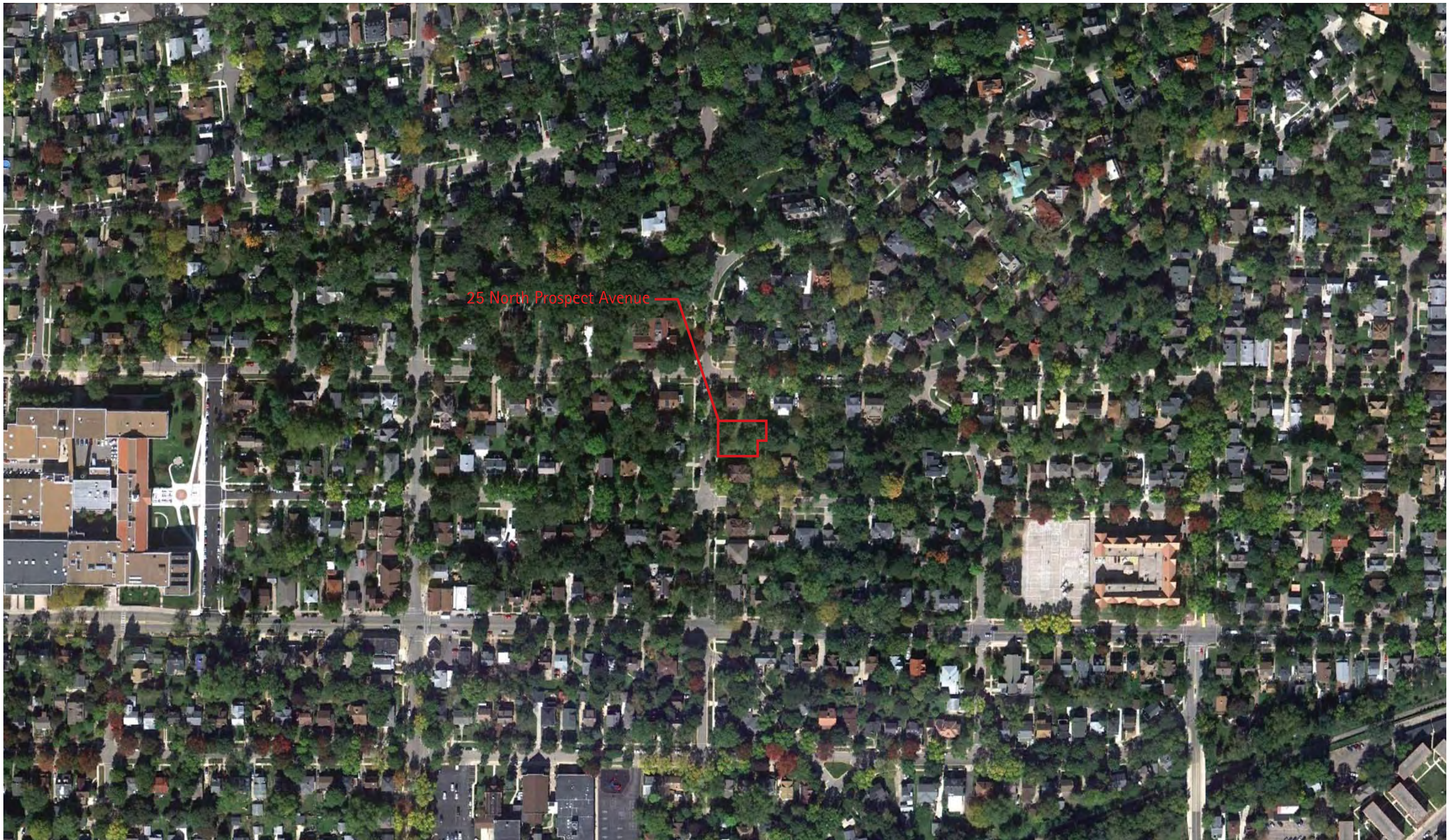
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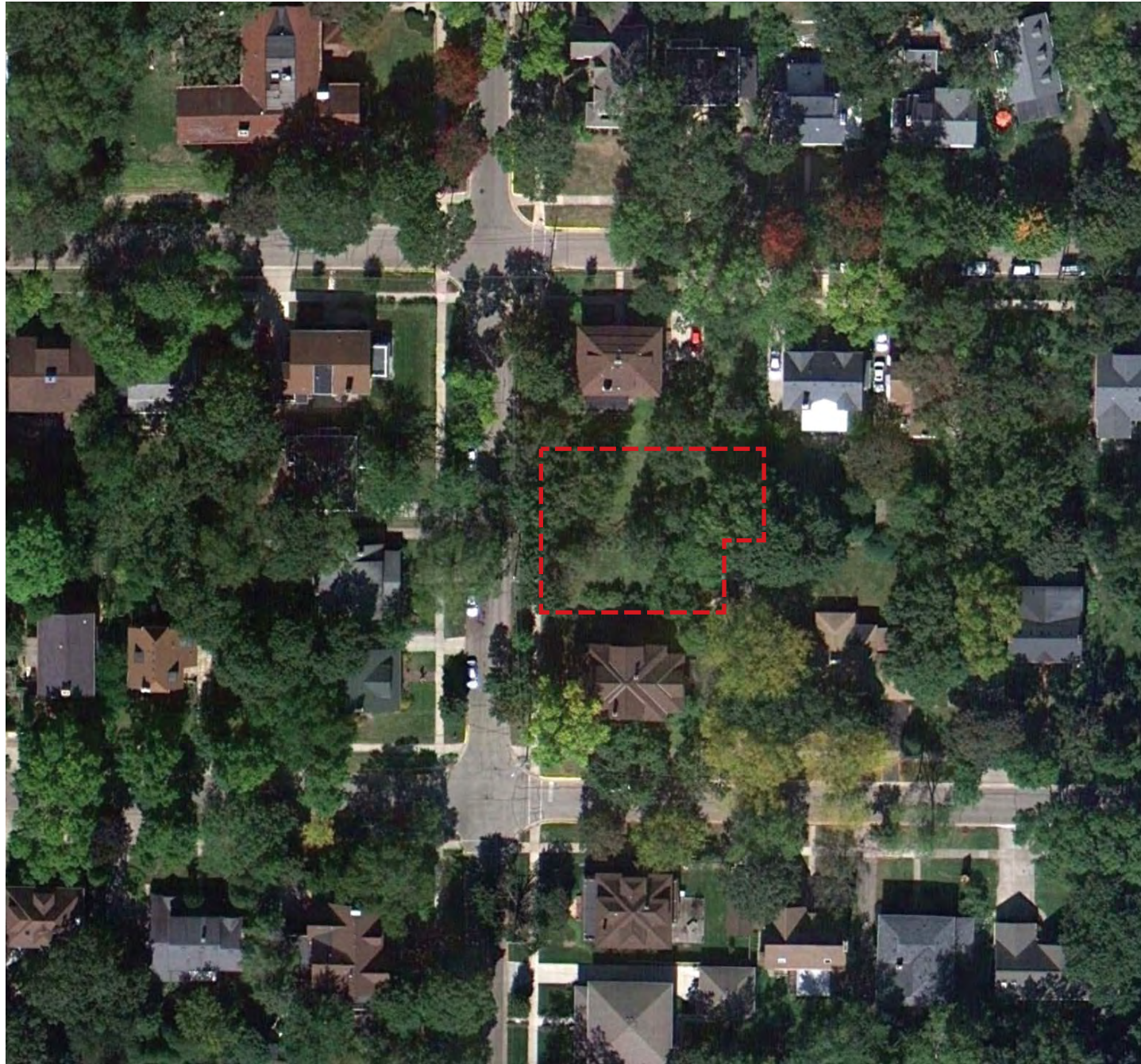


Erica Simmons and John Balz

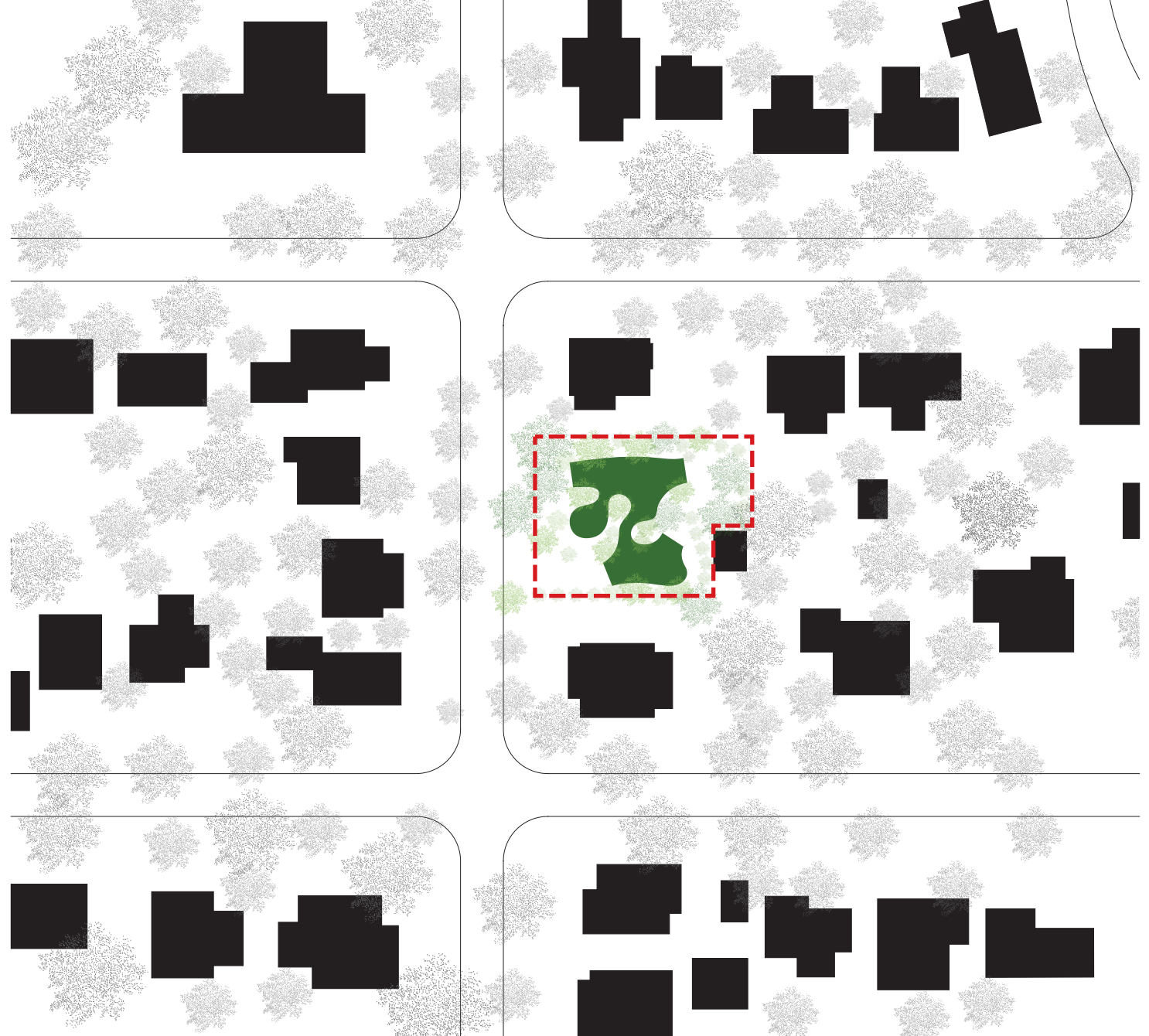




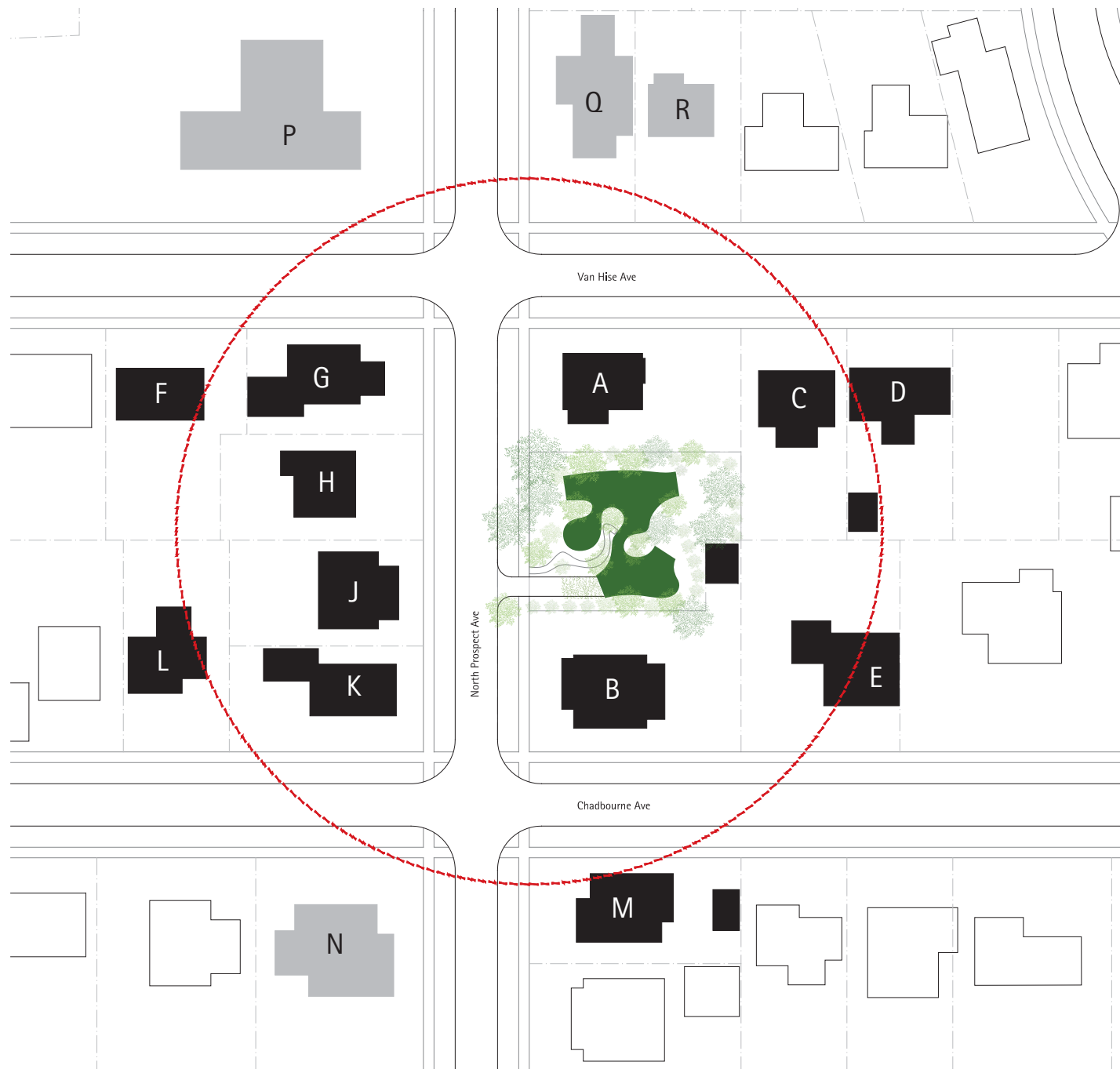




Aerial View of Vicinity



Figure/Ground Plan of Vicinity



- Building Structure Within Visually Related Area
- Building on Property Within Visually Related Area
- 200 Feet Diameter Visually Related Area



A: 2021 Van Hise Ave (adjacent to proposed structure)
 Roof: Hip, Deep Overhang + Flat Roof Porch
 Facade: Stucco



B: 21 North Prospect Ave (adjacent to proposed structure)
 Roof: Hip, Deep Overhang
 Facade: Stucco, Horizontal Wood Siding



C: 2015 Van Hise Ave
Roof: High Gable, Facing Side
Facade: Stucco



D: 2011 Van Hise Ave
Roof: Gambrel, Facing Side
Facade: Stucco, Stone



E: 2030 Chadbourne Ave
Roof: Low Hip
Facade: Wood Shingles



F: 2111 Van Hise Ave
Roof: High Gambrel, Facing Side + Garage Flat Roof
Facade: Stucco, Stone



G: 2103 Van Hise Ave

Roof: Gable, Facing Street Corner + Flat Roof Garage and Porch
Facade: Brick



H: 26 North Prospect Ave

Roof: Hip
Facade: Stucco



J: 24 North Prospect Ave

Roof: Hip, Deep Overhang
Facade: Stucco, Wood Shingles



K: 22 North Prospect Ave

Roof: Gable, Facing Street Corner + Flat Roof Garage and Addition
Facade: Horizontal Wood Siding, Wood Shingles



L: 2110 Chadbourne Ave
Roof: Gambrel Hip Facing Front
Facade: Stucco, Vertical Exposed Timbers



M: 15 North Prospect Ave
Roof: Hip, Deep Overhang + Flat Roof Porch
Facade: Horizontal Wood Siding



N: 14 North Prospect
Roof: High Gable Facing Street and Side + Flat Roof Addition
Facade: Stucco, Vertical Exposed Timbers



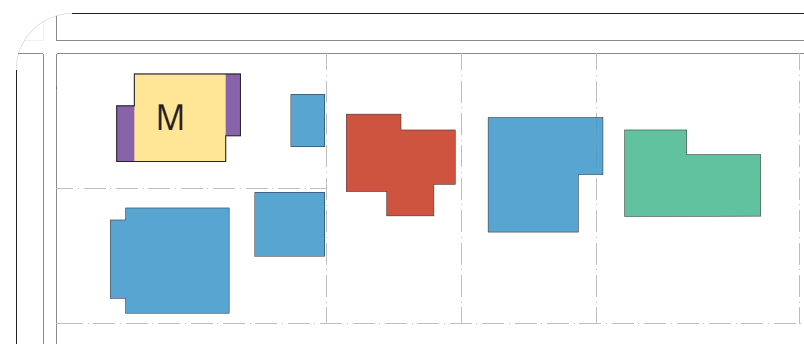
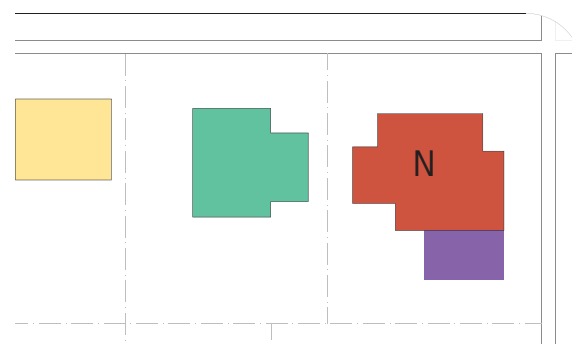
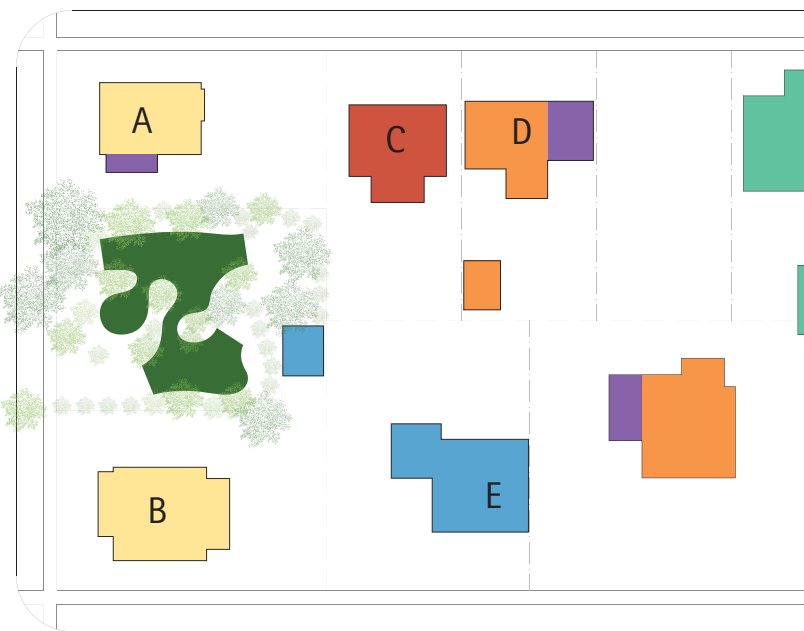
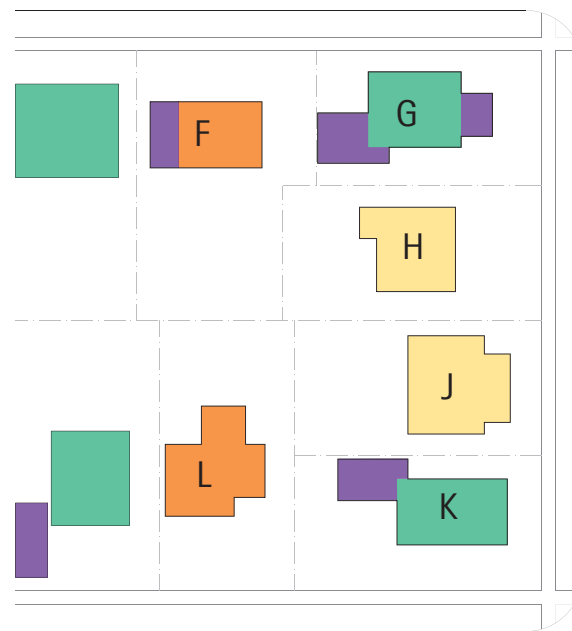
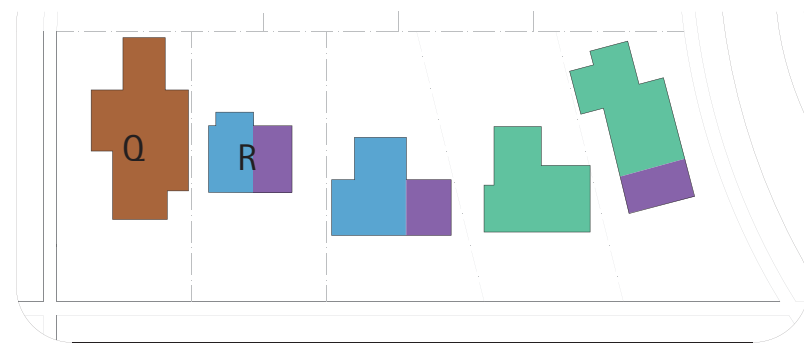
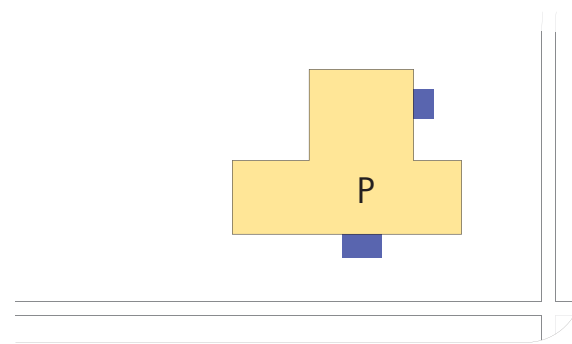
P: 106 North Prospect Ave
Roof: Hip, Deep Overhang + Components
Facade: Brick, Wide Horizontal Wood Siding














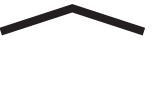






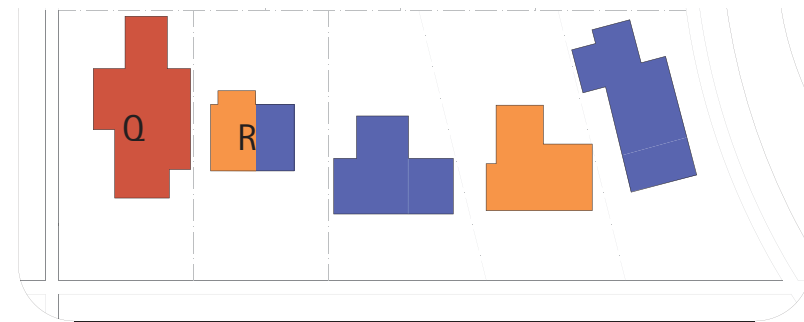
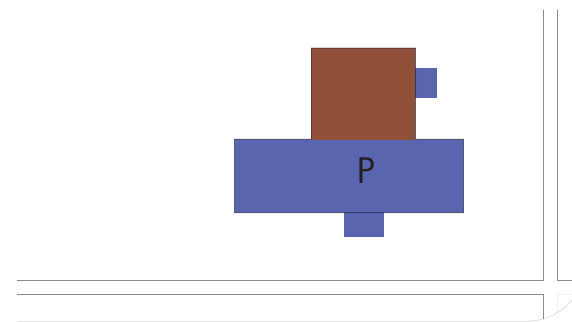
Q: 101 North Prospect Ave
Roof: High Hip, Shallow Overhang
Facade: Brick, Stucco, Exposed Timbers, Shingles



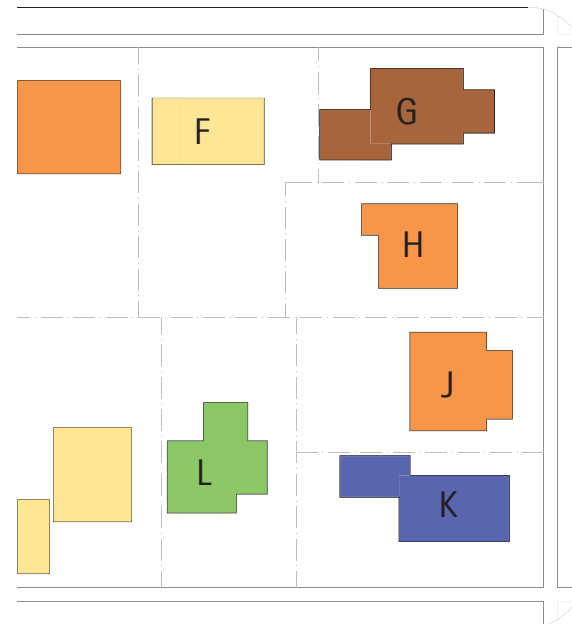
R: 2016 Van Hise Ave
Roof: Low Hip + Flat Roof Garage
Facade: Stucco



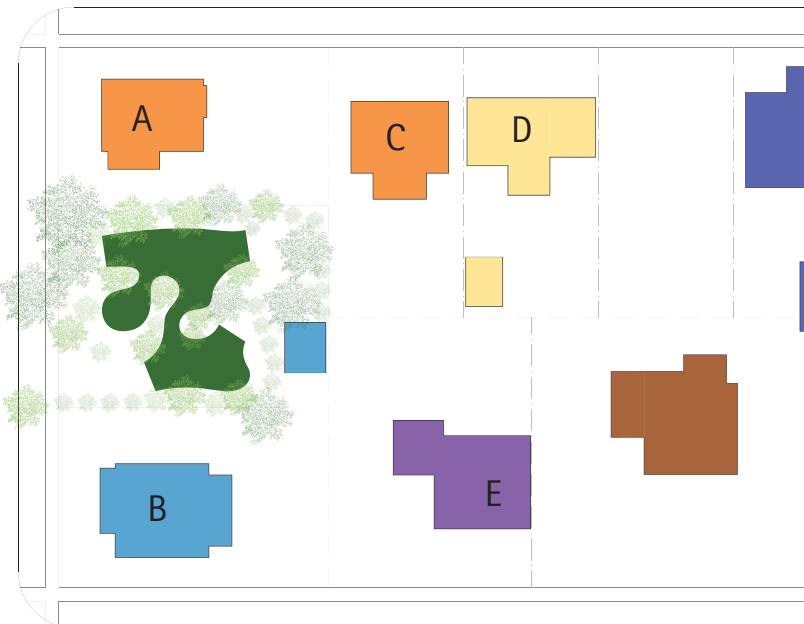
-  High Hip 
-  High Gable 
-  Gambrel 
-  Medium Hip 
-  Medium Gable 
-  Low Hip 
-  Low Gable 
-  Flat Roof 
-  Green Roof 



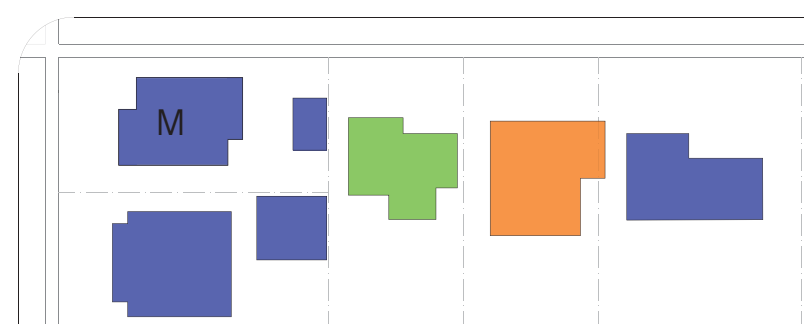
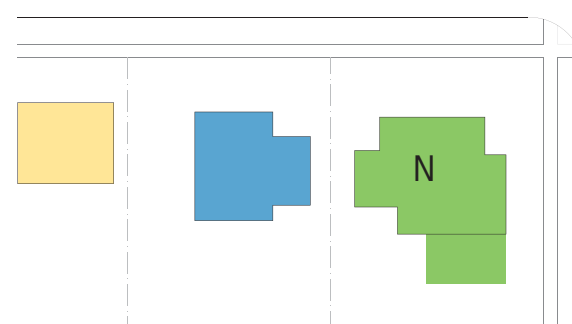
Van Hise Ave



North Prospect Ave



Chadbourne Ave



- Brick
- Brick + Exposed Timber
- Stucco
- Stucco + Stone
- Stucco + Exposed Timber
- Stucco + Horizontal Wood Siding
- Horizontal Wood Siding
- Wood Shingles

Survey of Facade Area of Homes in Visually Related Area:

A:	960sf
B:	885sf
C:	925sf
D:	925sf
E:	1,020sf
F:	1,125sf
G:	1,250sf
H:	705sf
J:	565sf
K:	700sf
L:	520sf
M:	920sf
N:	1,115sf
P:	1,800sf
Q:	1,650sf
R:	980sf
<hr/>	
16,045sf (Total Area for 16 Homes)	



A (Adjacent Home):
960sf Facade Area



Proposed Home, 25 North Prospect Avenue:
1,015sf Facade Size



B (Adjacent Home):
885sf Facade Area

Average Visual Size within Visually Related Area: **1,002sf**
Allowable Front Facade Gross Area: 1,252sf (125% of Average)



C:
925sf Facade Area



D:
925sf Facade Area



E:
1,020sf Facade Area



F:
1,125sf Facade Area



G:
1,250sf Facade Area



H:
705sf Facade Area



J:
565sf Facade Area



K:
700sf Facade Area



L:
520sf Facade Area



M:
920sf Facade Area



N:
1,115sf Facade Area



P:
1,800sf Facade Area



Q:
1,650sf Facade Area



R:
980sf Facade Area



Looking East Towards Rear of Property



Looking West Towards South of Property



Looking East Towards Rear of Property



Looking West Towards North of Property



Property Street Frontage





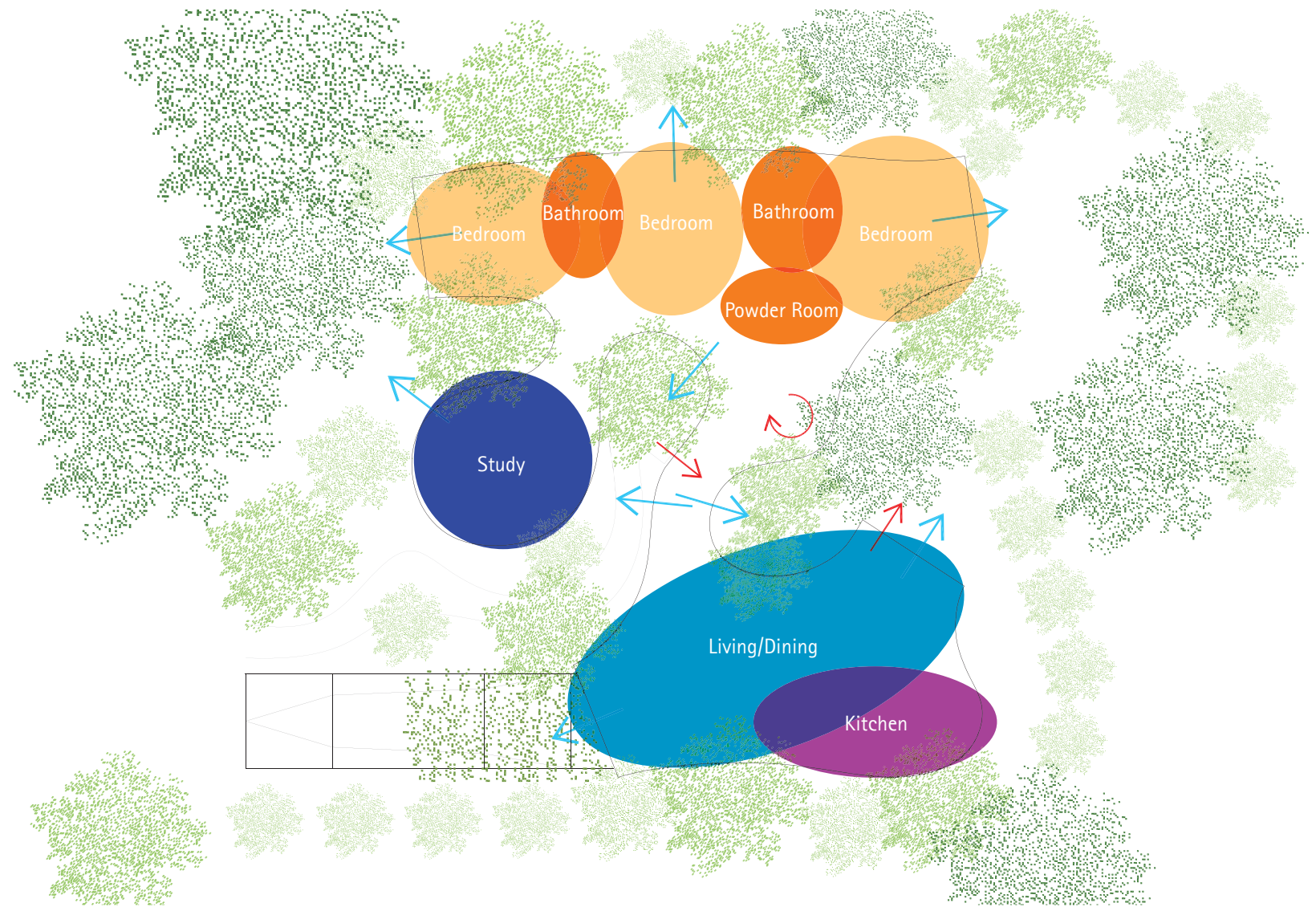
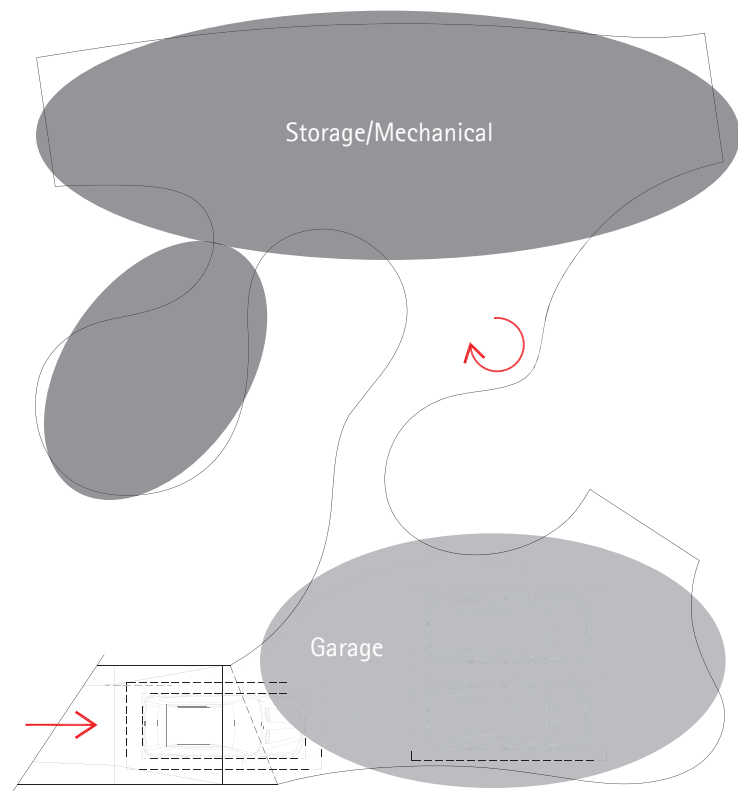


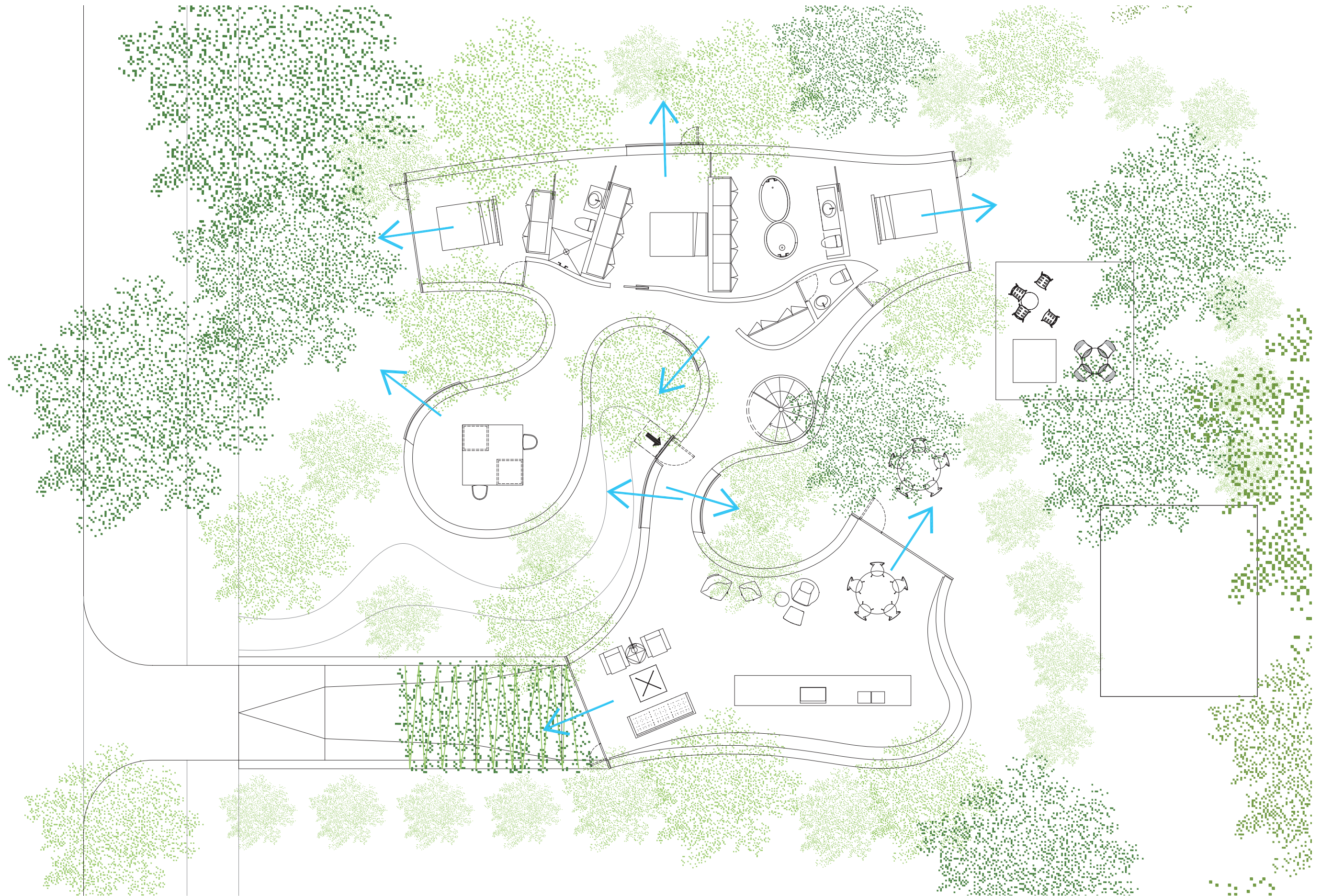






- Living/Dining
- Study/Flex Space
- Kitchen
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms/
Powder Room
- Storage
- Garage
- Circulation
- Fenestration
- Tree - Existing
- Tree - Proposed





(A) 15" (dbh) White Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health .

(B) 15" (dbh) White Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health.

(C) 11" (dbh) Red Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health. Although trees foliage is on one side of tree and tree is leaning towards power line.

(D) 13" (dbh) Red Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health.

(E) 8" (dbh) White Paper Birch. Tree is susceptible to failure has low connecting crotches.

(F) 12" (dbh) White Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health.

(G) 18" (dbh) White Oak. Tree on property line appears to be in overall good health

(H) 7" (dbh) White Oak. Tree appears to be in overall good health.

(I) 6" (dbh) Apple. Tree is overgrown area. I would consider removing tree.

(J) 7" (dbh) Magnolia. Tree appears to be in overall good health.

(K) 8" (dbh) Magnolia. Tree is in poor condition has collar rot and included bark. Removing tree is recommended.

(L) Buckthorn. Buckthorn is a invasive species and all Buckthorn should be removed.

(M) 25" (dbh) Hackberry. Tree has a couple concerns has some trunk damage, and could use a trim. Overall tree is OK.

(N) 9" (dbh) Crabapple. Tree appears to be in overall good health. Could use a trim and thin out.

(dbh) = diameter at breast height

Only trees located within property lines are surveyed.

○ Tree - Existing to Remain

○ Tree - Proposed to Remove

● Tree - New

