

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Cottage in the City project provides additional living space on a traditional Bellingham Lot. The design was driven by four pillars, design aesthetics, creative spatial organization, sustainability, and pragmatic functionality for a resident to age in place.

Design Aesthetics

The design aesthetic was influenced by the historic building styles that have risen to prominence in Bellingham over the last century. The team felt that it was important to showcase a design that would blend in seamlessly with the vernacular of the early core neighborhoods that are generally composed of high craft renaissance styles as well as Sears catalog homes. The design in this instance cannot perfectly replicate a style of the past but can carefully reflect the design sensibilities of the bygone era.

Careful decisions were made in the design to approach the character with a holistic consideration. Standard modern construction methods are implied on the project as this reduces issues during construction but can also generate a more feasible and cost effective plan for development. Although it may vary from project to project based on preferences, high end finishes are included in locations that reinforce the cottage feel. In this instance, the use of stone and a round picture window contribute significantly to the character and curb appeal, resulting in a space that will feel timeless and charming for decades to come.

Spatial Organization

One of the first conversations we had during this project was to considerate site organization. It was the intention to provide the necessary building functions as well as private outdoor space. When considering real world applications it became important to not crowd the existing building on site. Providing exterior space for both buildings was paramount. It made sense to us to show a street facing door, although this would likely be the secondary entrance. This door is welcoming but the entry pathway does not eat into the space designated for the original building on the site.

It became apparent in the early planning and design meetings that all of the primary indoor needs of the space should be provided for on the main floor of the project. What is then given are three reasonable sized spaces that can accommodate the residents and guests comfortably. Support and storage spaces become part of the space dividers and hidden from sight. Living spaces feel more open and ample.

A loft is provided as a benefit of adding volume in the primary gathering space. Initially this space can serve as an office or art studio. If mobility issues arise, this space can function as either storage or for use by more able bodied persons such as children and grandchildren. The proper clearance was given at doorways and in tighter quarters to allow for access even in a situation of becoming wheelchair bound. Backing is provided for future grab bars.

Functionality

To improve functionality of the space, an effort was made to provide utilitarian functions without creating clutter or wasting space on rarely used tools. This resulted in developing the core of the home. The stair provides loft access but also hides several wet functions, with a fully accessible bath, laundry, and utility sink. In addition, built-in cabinetry lines one wall of the living space, doubling back and providing a simple closet. Together, these elements serve as a space divider, storage, and a focal wall that adds to the charm of the space without overpowering it. To help invite the outdoors in, we included a sliding glass door to flow seamlessly between indoors and out. This provides flexibility and a large amount of additional space for entertaining and hosting events.

Sustainability & Affordability

With the exterior clad in stone & wood stamped cement siding the exterior will be free from maintenance, yet still contain all the warmth and charm of an old-world aesthetic. The roof will be a standing seam metal roof for longevity, negating the need for regular maintenance. All lighting will be LED, faucets will be low-flow, on-demand hot water heaters at the faucets & a highly insulated home, all these elements will contribute to keeping monthly utility costs down.

Chuckanut Sandstone was once widely used in this area for home construction, this home would make use of salvaged sandstone for the siding as well as for patios and foot paths lending to a more sustainable site and allowing for on-site storm-water infiltration. All building materials will be locally sourced with the more decorative non-structural elements being salvaged from building sites and resellers such as the ReStore.