

Grasshopper Courtyard Studio

Lot size: 4,500 sf

Building Size: 360 sf

Location: Seattle, WA

Project Type: Courtyard/Studio

Grasshopper Courtyard Studio

The Seattle housing shortage has increased pressure on single family neighborhoods to provide more usable space on limited single family lots. Normative new housing demolishes existing small buildings to build 'Seattle Modern Boxes' that maximize building size within zoning setbacks. Grasshopper Studio offers an alternative prototype of courtyard urbanism by maintaining the existing small footprint of a 1940s house and adding multifunctional studio along the rear yard alley. The newly carved courtyard allows both main house and studio to expand their functional space to the outer edges of the property boundary.

Courtyard urbanism allowed the residents to more than triple their usable square footage by creating a private interior courtyard open to the sky. The wide covered walkway on the north side serves as informal seating as well as being a stage for children's performances. Inspired by ancient Chinese south facing courtyard housing, the central paved terrace is a protected private area for dining, entertaining, lounging and year-round play space. A Silk tree in the center of the courtyard provides dappled shade in summer. The illusion of a much larger property is created through 'borrowed landscape' from adjacent trees and sky above.

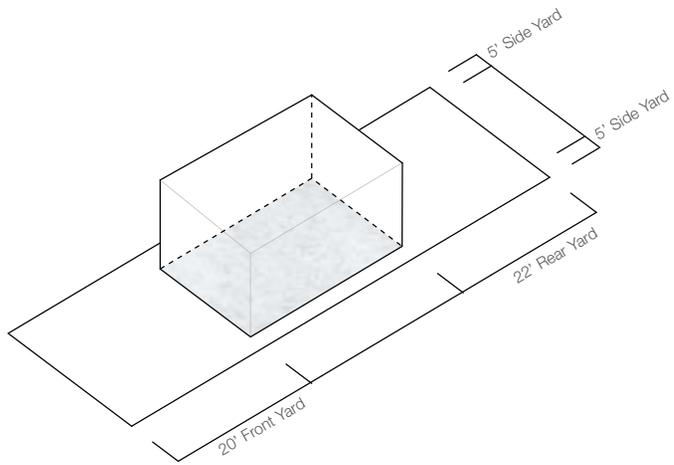
The open plan studio is programmatically indeterminate to encourage maximum flexibility. Future uses include visiting guests, short term rental space, utility/workshop space, and play space for the main house. An open pavilion has thickened edges for storage, bathroom, laundry, and future kitchen. The expansive roof extends to form a carport and outdoor workshop space. The interstitial zones between the studio and outdoors are defined by masonry walls, wood decks, and are protected from the weather by large pavilion roofs.

A boundary wall of constructed and landscape elements filter and screen the closely adjacent neighbors, creating a private urban oasis in a dense single family neighborhood. The concrete block wall retains the grade change as well as screening the alley from view while the studio is a boundary in itself, screening alley views, and allowing light through the clerestory.

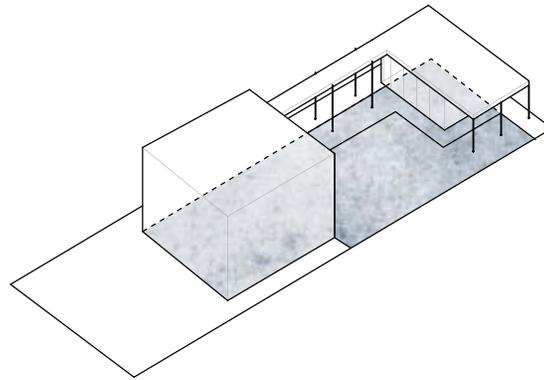
Grasshopper Studio Courtyard is adaptable to a multiplicity of uses and family arrangements. A small built footprint and large private outdoor space is more flexible and maximizes the use of the entire property. As a response to urban resource scarcity, it encourages rethinking the arrangement of the single family lot and offers Seattle an alternative urbanism for the future.



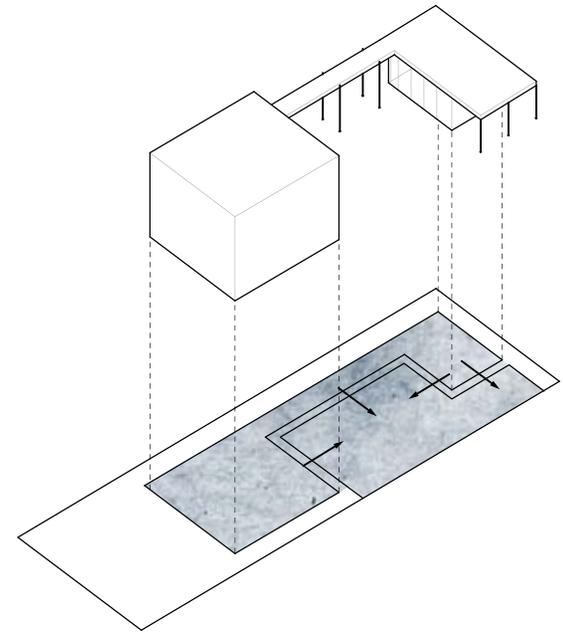
The studio was built along the rear property line and creates a courtyard between the house and new structure, made possible by Seattle zoning laws for properties with alleys.



Seattle Modern Box
Maximum Usable Footprint



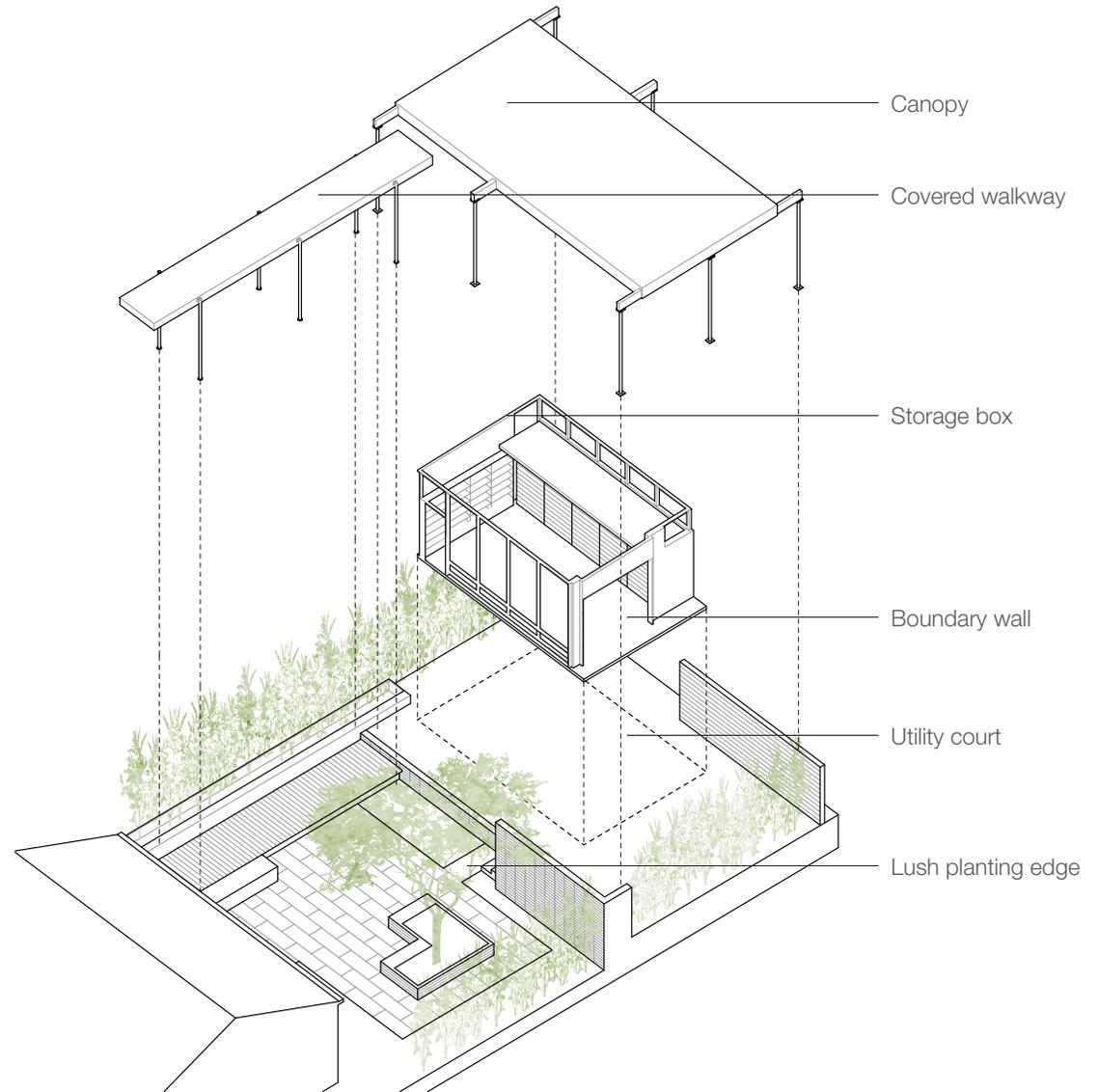
Courtyard Urbanism:
expanded usable space



Main house adds studio to
create private interior court



South facing courtyard



BEFORE The previous owners used the rear yard as a car repair lot and junkyard.

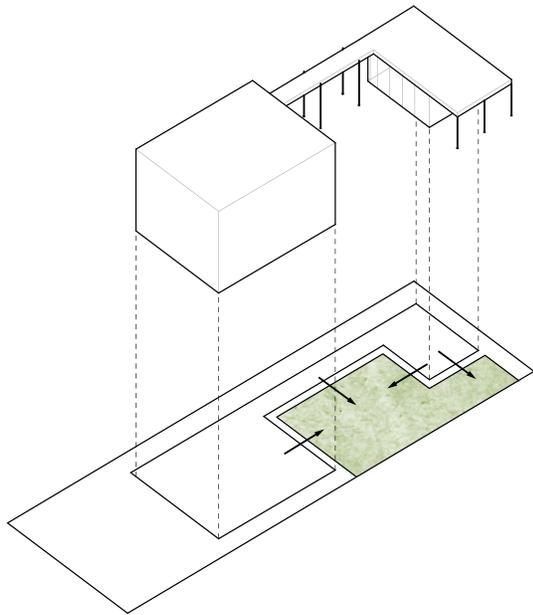


AFTER A studio built along the alley and walkway along the side yard created a private courtyard and multiple levels for entertaining and children's play.

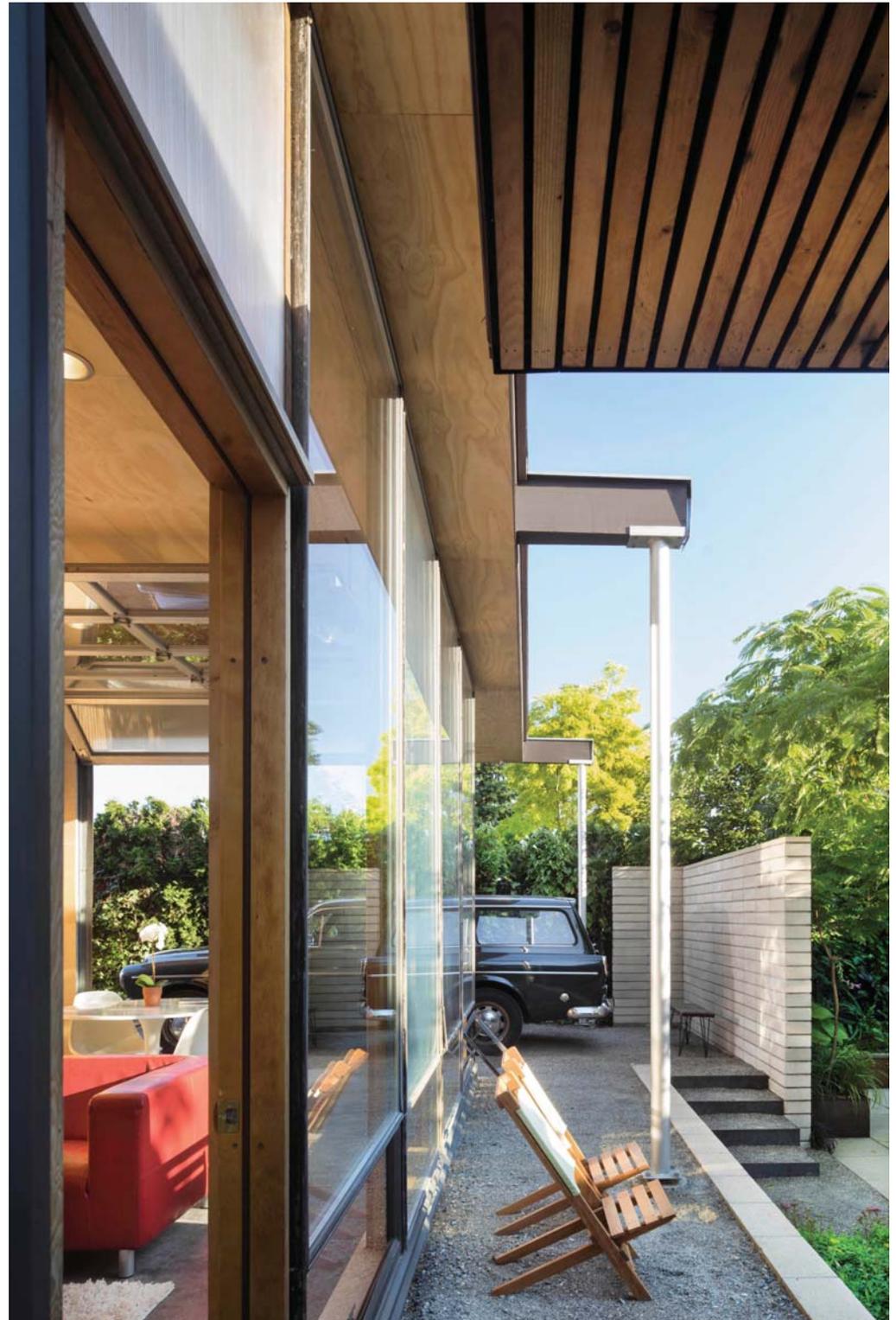




The courtyard is the focus of the property, created by the addition of the new studio along the alley, and the covered walkway along the side yard.



Interstitial Zones: edges of Studio and Main house transition to Courtyard





The new studio is elevated above the courtyard. A covered wood deck provides connection to the main house and functions as an outdoor stage for the children.



The south side yard is planted in green to screen the neighbors and create a feeling of a lush green oasis in an urban setting.



The north side of the studio is a library and lounge, with shelving built of repurposed MDF tabletops and plywood.



The bathroom is built with outdoor materials of cedar and ipe that can get wet and weather naturally. The open slat wood floor drains below, and clerestory windows allow natural light through the studio and into the courtyard.



The pavilion roof provides a covered carport and work area for indoor/outdoor projects and opens onto the alley.



The carport off the back alley has gates built of reclaimed fir that match the interior wood screens. Steel columns, long wood beams and rafters were repurposed from a nearby 1960s church carport.



With the wood screens closed, the studio is a retreat from the evening activity of the main house.