

# VARIANCE APPLICATION

## Planning & Zoning

2635 Talley Street  
Decatur, GA 30030  
Phone 404-377-6198  
Fax 404-378-5054



Attach a survey of the property drawn to scale and showing the following information. Please provide one full-size copy of all plans, as well as one copy of all plans in an 8½" x 11" format. It is helpful to show floor plans and elevations of proposed building improvements, as well as a letter of support from adjacent property owners. If the applicant is not the current property owner, provide a notarized authorization for this application from the current property owner. See the stream variance submittal checklist for additional requirements for stream variances.

1. all property lines with dimensions
2. location of buildings and other structures, creeks and easements referenced to property lines
3. north arrow, scale, lot and block numbers and land lot
4. topographic and drainage information if pertinent

Address of property 913 Third Avenue Decatur, GA 30030  
Name of applicant Allison Phalen Phone 404-735-4102  
Address 913 Third Avenue City/state/ZIP Decatur, GA 30030  
Email akbphalen21@gmail.com  
Name of property owner Allison Phalen Phone 404-735-4102  
Address 913 Third Avenue City/state/ZIP Decatur, GA 30030  
Current zoning of property R-60

.....  
Please answer all of the following questions on a separate sheet.

1. What is the variance requested? What code requirement do you wish to vary from?
2. What are the special conditions relating to the specific piece of property in question (narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography, or other extraordinary and exceptional situation)?
3. Explain how the application of the zoning ordinance to this specific piece of property results in peculiar, extraordinary and practical difficulties?
4. Are the circumstances or conditions applying to the building or land in question peculiar to the premises? Do they apply generally to other land or buildings in the vicinity?
5. Explain why the granting of this variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a property right and does not merely serve as a convenience to the applicant.
6. Did the condition for which the variance is sought result from an action by the applicant?
7. Explain how the variance will affect the supply of light and air to adjacent property, the traffic on public streets, the danger of fire, the public safety and established property values.
8. Explain how the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Decatur land use plan.
9. Will the granting of the variance allow a structure or use in a district restricted against such structure or use?

.....  
I hereby certify that the above and attached statements and documents are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Applicant signature

Date

10/2/23

## ANSWERS TO THE VARIANCE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the variance requested? What code requirement do you wish to vary from?

We would like to replace the existing smaller, shallow porch with a front porch that extends the entire width of the house. The new porch would be over the average front yard setback.

We are also requesting a variance to the maximum floor area allowed for this property.

2. What are the special conditions relating to the specific piece of property in question?

The house on the right is pushed back much further from the street than the house on the left. The right side of the house is less than two feet of the average front yard setback, making it difficult to accommodate a porch with a reasonable, useable depth and width. The diagonal line connecting the porches on either side impacts this house in a way that restricts the porch design more on the right than on the left.

The lot is smaller than a typical lot, at roughly 50' wide. An existing garage and retaining wall further restrict the ability to expand the footprint outward without significantly reducing the usable yard space.

3. Explain how the application of the zoning ordinance to this specific piece of property results in peculiar, extraordinary and practical difficulties.

We would like to remove an existing smaller front porch and replace it with a larger covered front porch that extends the entire width of the house. Due to the nature of the diagonal line connecting the porches on either side, the porch space would encroach on the average front yard setback more on the right than on the left. This makes a usable, house-width porch really difficult to accommodate with any usable furniture arrangement.

The application of the zoning ordinance, when taking current conditions into consideration, restricts the allowable upper-level square footage, resulting in spaces that are too cramped to be considered usable.

4. Are the circumstances or conditions applying to the building or land in question peculiar to the premises? Do they apply generally to other land or buildings in the vicinity?

Yes and Yes. There are a good many houses in Decatur, and specifically on this street, that do not comply with the average front yard setback, due to some houses being pushed back further on one side than the other. The application of the average front yard setback affects different houses in different ways depending on the neighboring houses. Each house is different, but several houses in the area are impacted in similar ways. In this instance, the right side of the existing home projects further forward than the left side. At the same time, the diagonal setback line impacts the home more on the right side than the left side. Both of these items together significantly impact the ability to create a usable porch with more width

The layout of the current site, with existing retaining walls and an existing garage, restricts the allowable upper-level square footage. Adjusting these conditions would require either expensive adjustments to the site or the demolition of the garage.

5. Explain why the granting of this variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a property right and does not merely serve as a convenience to the applicant.

One of the great things about Decatur is the preponderance of large, open, front porches. These large, welcoming porches are so much a part of the neighborhood that it is more common to see a house with a large porch than one without. The ability to greet a neighbor walking by and have a sit-down conversation on a covered, front porch is one of the best ways to interact with neighbors and truly enjoy the most welcoming feature of a well-designed home. Front porches are so much a part of Decatur that there is even a festival (Porchfest) which celebrates these large, open porches, and the social nature of their design.

With a large family of five and the need for work from home space, the current square footage is really feeling tight. The proposed plan is the best solution to address all of the needed additional spaces.

6. Did the condition for which the variance is sought result from an action by the applicant?

No.

7. Explain how the variance will affect the supply of light and air to adjacent property, the traffic on public streets, the danger of fire, the public safety and established property values.

The design of the porch should not have an impact on light and air as the porch would be a low-slope, single-story element and the adjacent houses are roughly 25' away. There is no impact on traffic, fire, and public safety. The biggest impact on established property values would be an increase in value, due to the more welcoming appearance of the home.

The proposed design of the home was carefully articulated to minimize the impacts to the neighboring houses. The upper-level walls were pulled in to increase the space between houses. Pulling in the walls creates a smaller footprint than a typical "pop the top and double the square footage" design that has become a common approach to design in Decatur. The plate heights of the walls were also reduced to below 8', further minimizing the vertical massing of the design as it relates to the houses on either side. This design utilizes sloped ceilings, sometimes getting down to 6', to further reduce the impact of the additional square footage. The original design involved full two-story walls, characteristic of a four-square design. This design utilizes lower roof elements and dormers to create a design that feels more like a 1-1/2 story home. The lowered height and increased distance will allow more light and air to reach the neighboring houses. There is no impact on traffic, fire, and public safety.

8. Explain how the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Decatur land use plan.

The ultimate objective of the front porch was to create a usable, covered, welcoming space to enjoy neighborhood interactions in a covered/protected space where you can truly enjoy the outdoors. The covered front porch allows a variety of ways to accommodate seating for an impromptu gathering of neighbors. The lower slope of the porch roof minimizes the visible impact that the new porch will have on neighbors.

One of the goals Decatur is trying to accomplish is to create homes that are more efficient, better built homes, that don't feel like massive structures from the street. The proposed design uses architectural features and forms that reduce the overall appearance of mass as it is seen from the street. While the square footage may be slightly over the allowable square footage, the design of the home reduces the impact of the additional square footage on the neighboring homes.

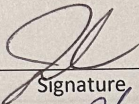
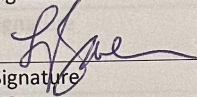
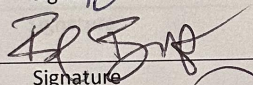
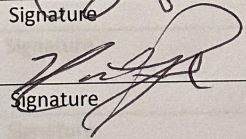
9. Will the granting of the variance allow a structure or use in a district restricted against such structure or use?

No.

Allison and Rob Phalen  
 913 Third Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030  
 September 25, 2023

Decatur Zoning Board of Appeals:

As a property owner around & adjacent to 913 Third Avenue, I have had the opportunity to review the design plans from Robert Koch Designs, dated September 12, 2023. I have no objections to issuing a variance to reduce the front yard setback from the front property line to allow for a usable, covered front porch as shown on the drawings. I also have no objections to increasing the allowable floor area by 335 square feet. Thank you.

Jodi Cobb		917 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave 30030
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Rachel Gerwin		918 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave, Decatur, GA 30030
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Rob Broadfoot		909 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave, Decatur GA 30030
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Nathan Renaud		912 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ave Decatur GA 30030
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Printed Name	Signature	Address
Printed Name	Signature	Address

## IN DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE FRONT PORCH VARIANCE

### Initial findings after substantial research (some articles cited at the end)

After substantial research into the ideal front porch depth, the consistent prevailing porch depth recommendations established that a 6' porch was an absolute minimum depth to allow for comfortable seating. An 8'-10' porch depth was recommended if space allowed. "Just two feet can vastly expand your options for furnishing", according to the article, This is the best size for a porch in Southern Living.

While a 6' deep porch will allow for several small chairs, the introduction of a coffee table or a porch swing into the mix is where the real difference becomes apparent. Laying out furniture on a 6' porch, using a standard depth coffee table, would require the table to be pushed within a couple inches of the porch railing, leaving the arrangement feeling cramped and forced. Adding as little as 6" can markedly improve the impression and functionality of the arrangement.

### General porch design guidelines based on the specific home

The form of the entry gable focuses your eyes to the front door and is further reinforced by the increased depth at this location. The porch depth in general should be maximized to allow for the best use of furniture, circulation, and general enjoyment of the homeowner and their guests. The columns should be laid out so that the windows and doors are centered between the columns if possible. This helps balance the design. Handrails should be centered on columns. A lower slope roof can be used to lessen the visual impact of the majority of the porch to the surrounding homes.

### Proposed Design

This design incorporates a minimum 6'-6" depth from house to column. This design works the middle ground between an 8' porch that is more ideal and a 6' porch that feels cramped. The porch is deeper at the stairs to give the entry a focal point and draws attention to the main entry door. It is also deeper on the left side to allow room for more furniture layout options. A lower slope roof lessens the visual impact to the surrounding homes.

Research materials referenced above:

<https://www.southernliving.com/home/porch/porch-design-size>

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/porches/21072538/all-about-porches>

<https://www.hunker.com/13402405/typical-size-for-a-front-porch>

<https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/outdoor-remodel/4-types-of-porches>

<https://homedecorbliss.com/good-size-for-front-porch/#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20a%20typical%20porch,a%20porch%20swing%20if%20necessary>

<https://www.houzz.com/magazine/the-right-dimensions-for-your-porch-stsetivw-vs~25889920>

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/87960998947458068/>

<https://www.finehomebuilding.com/forum/what-is-the-ideal-porch-size-minimum-size>

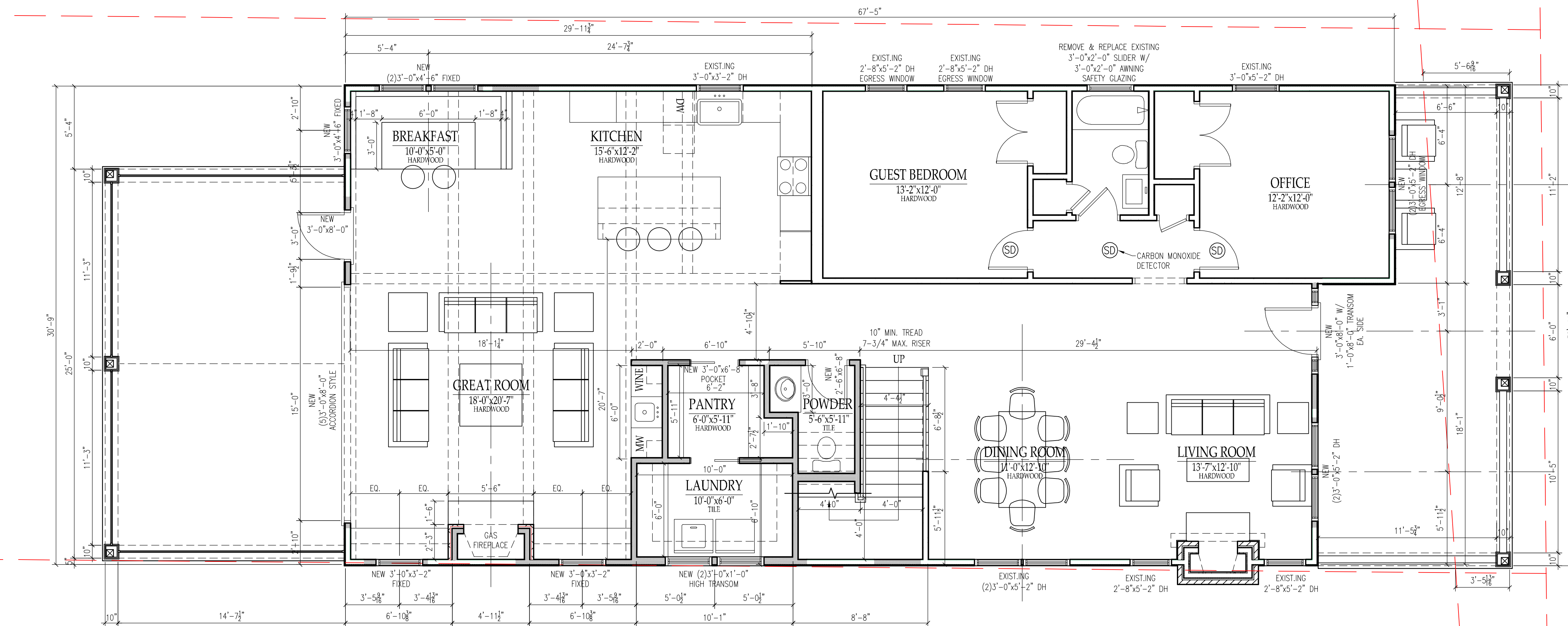


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RENOVATION & ADDITION TO EXISTING RESIDENCE AT  
**913 THIRD AVENUE**  
DECATUR, GEORGIA



**EGRESS NOTE:**  
EVERY SLEEPING ROOM SHALL HAVE AT LEAST ONE WINDOW SUITABLE FOR EMERGENCY EGRESS. THE SILL SHALL BE NO HIGHER THAN 44" OFF FLOOR. IT SHALL HAVE MINIMUM CLEAR OPENING DIMENSIONS OF 20" WIDE AND OF 22" TALL. IT SHALL HAVE AT LEAST 5.7 SQ. FT. OF CLEAR OPENING. (EXCEPTION: 5.0 SQ. FT. MINIMUM ON GRADE LEVEL ROOMS.) IT MUST BE OPERABLE TO THE FULL CLEAR OPENING WITHOUT A KEY OR TOOL. ALL OBSTRUCTIONS (BARS, GRILLS, OR SCREENS) MUST BE REMOVABLE WITHOUT A KEY OR TOOL.

DOOR LOCATIONS NOT DIMENSIONED ARE 4" FROM CORNER OR TO MIDPOINT OF WALL, TYPICAL.

**2 MAIN LEVEL PLAN**  
1/4" = 1'-0"  
1,983 HEATED SQ. FT.  
3,641 TOTAL HEATED SQ. FT.  
3,309 MAX TOTAL HEATED SQ. FT.

Date:	Issue:
09/12/23	SCHEMATIC DESIGN

JOB NO:	DRAWN:	CHECKED:
042323	RR	RR

A-1

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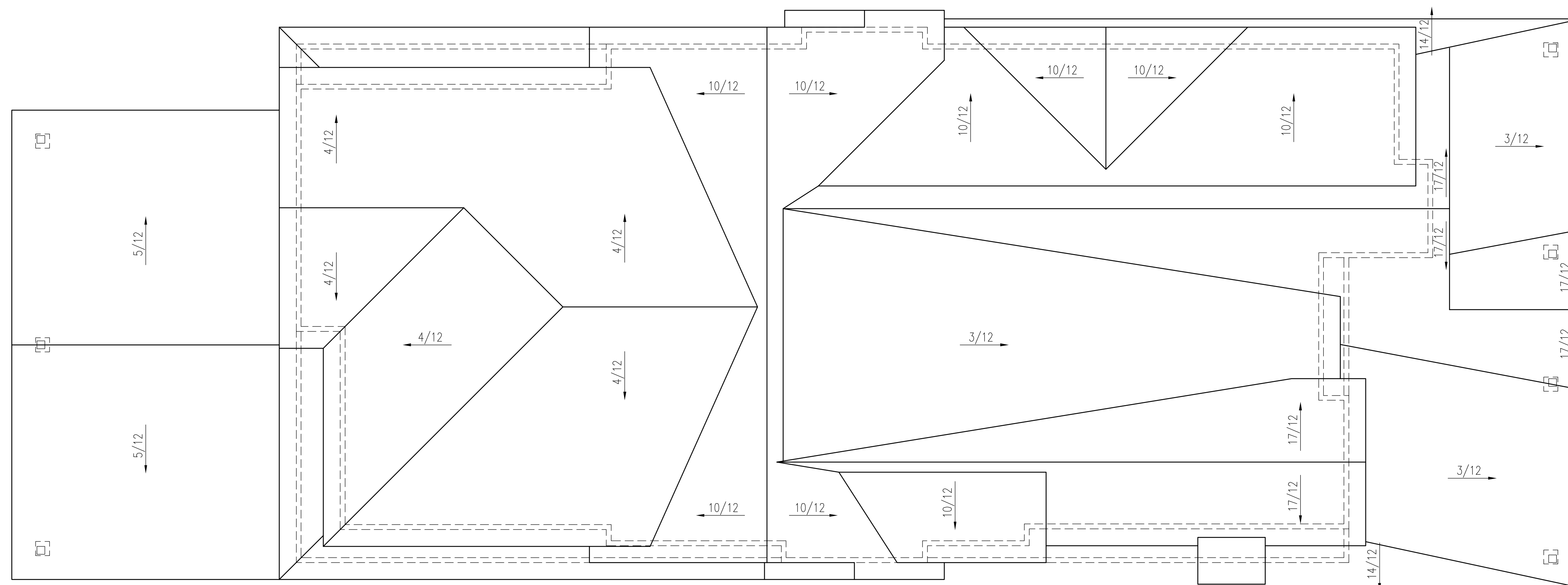
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Date: 09/12/23 Issue: SCHEMATIC DESIGN

JOB NO: 042323 DRAWN: RK CHECKED: RK

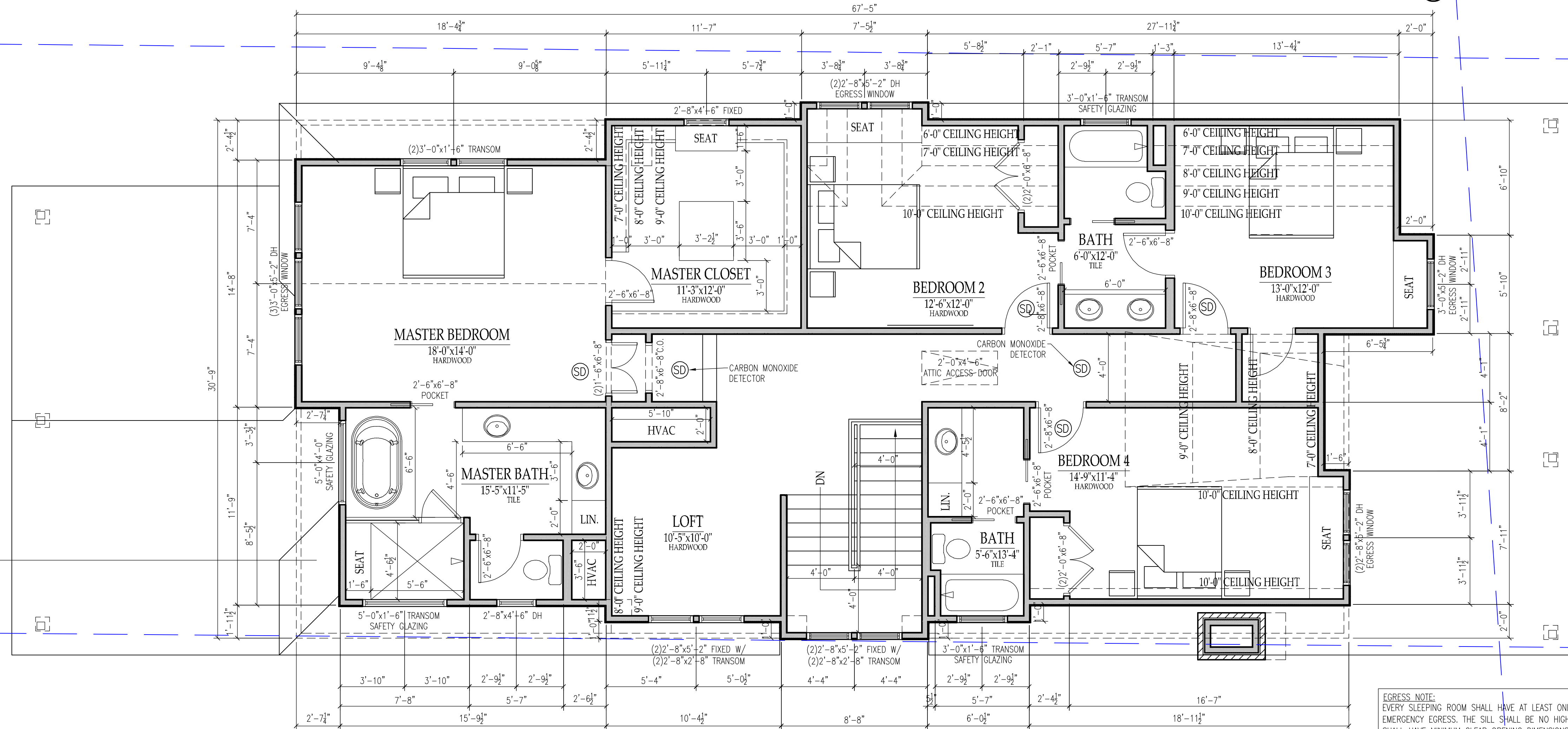
A-2

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- ROOF NOTES:
1. ALL SURFACES TO BE ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOF UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.
  2. DIRECT ALL ROOF PENETRATIONS, VENTS & FLUES TO REAR OF RIDGE LINE.
  3. PAINT ALL ROOF PENETRATIONS TO MATCH ROOF.
  4. ALL GUTTERS ARE 6" TYPICAL AND DOWNSPOUTS ARE 4".
  5. ALL ROOF OVERHANGS ARE 1'-6" UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE.

**2 ROOF PLAN**  
1/4" = 1'-0"



**1 UPPER LEVEL PLAN**  
1/4" = 1'-0"

1,660 HEATED SQ. FT.  
1,326 MAX HEATED UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.

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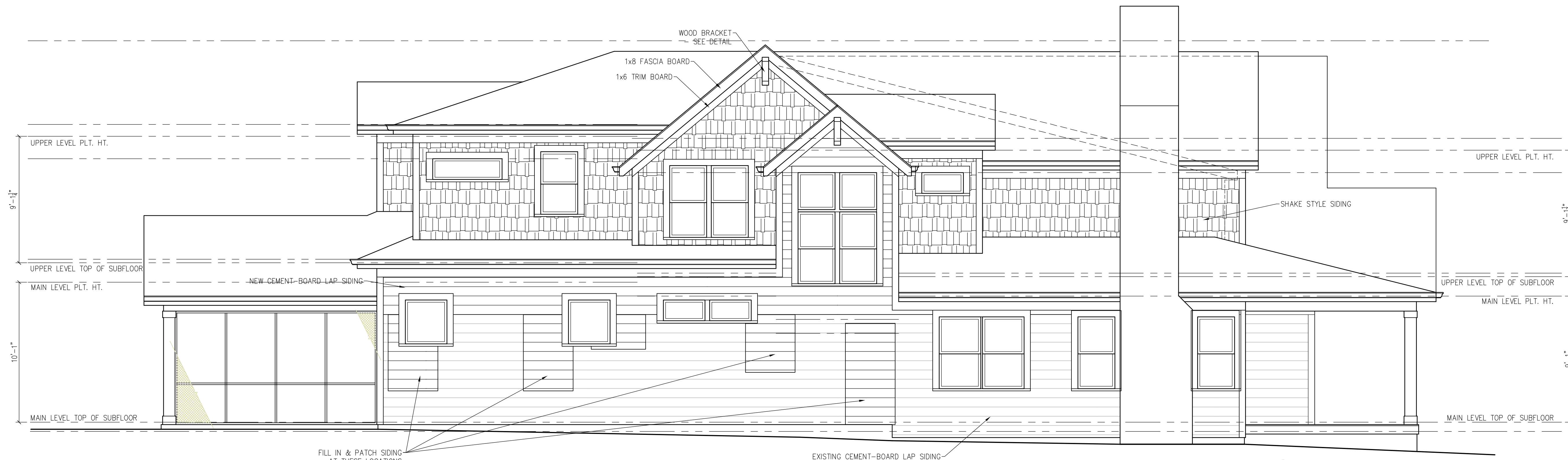
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**1 FRONT ELEVATION**  
1/4" = 1'-0"



**2 LEFT ELEVATION**  
1/4" = 1'-0"

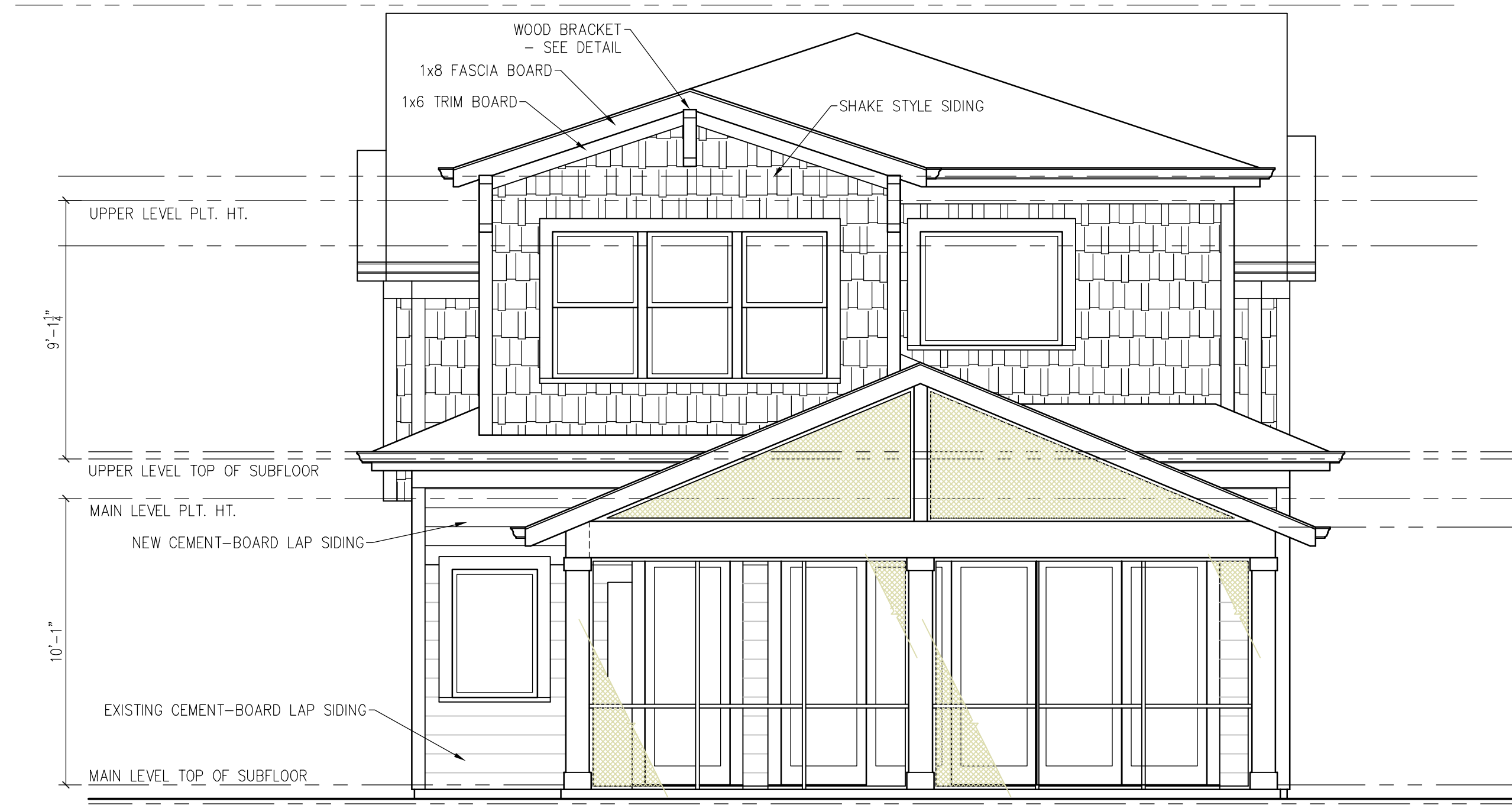


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**1 REAR ELEVATION**  
1/4" = 1'-0"



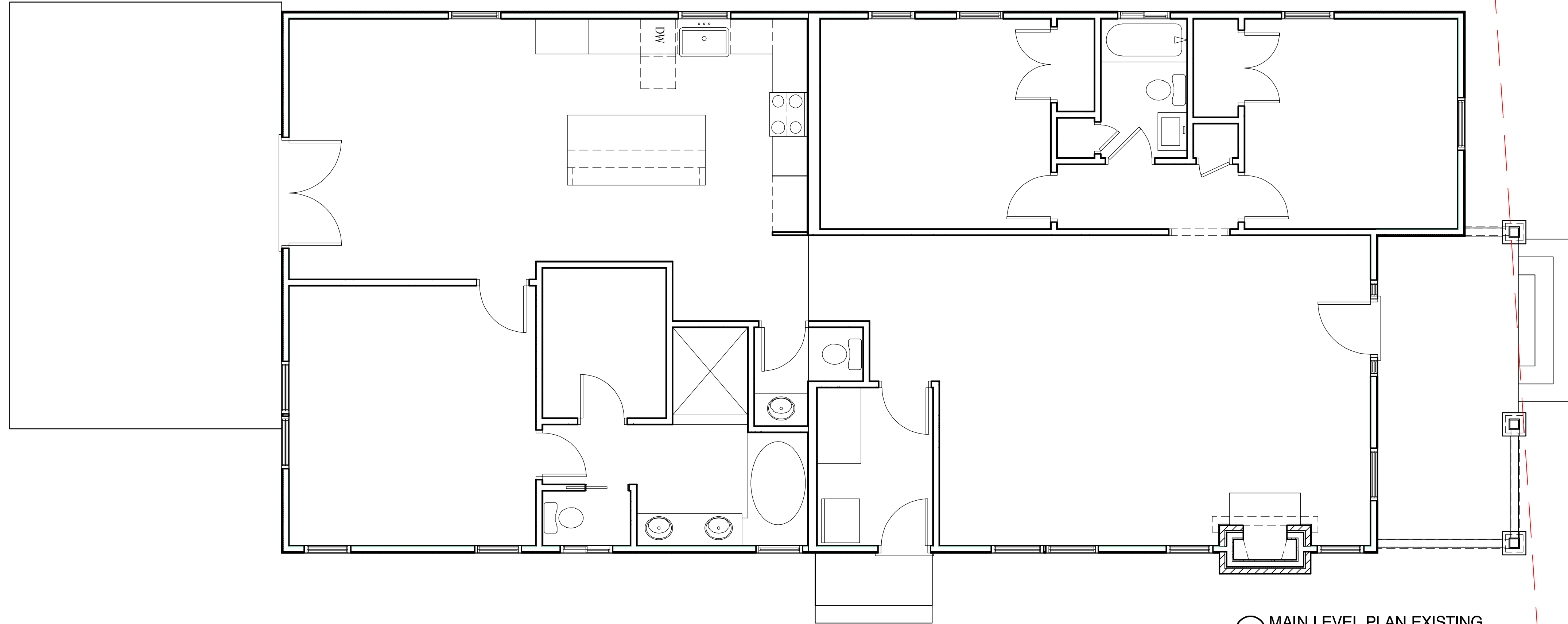
**2 RIGHT ELEVATION**  
1/4" = 1'-0"

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2 MAIN LEVEL PLAN EXISTING  
 1/4" = 1'-0"  
 xxxx HEATED SQ. FT.

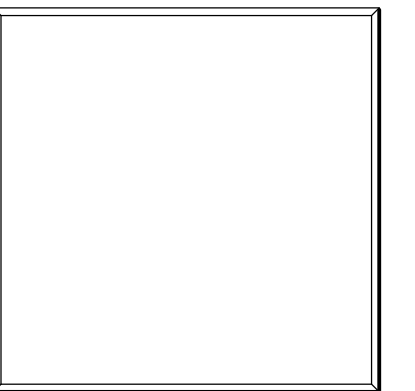


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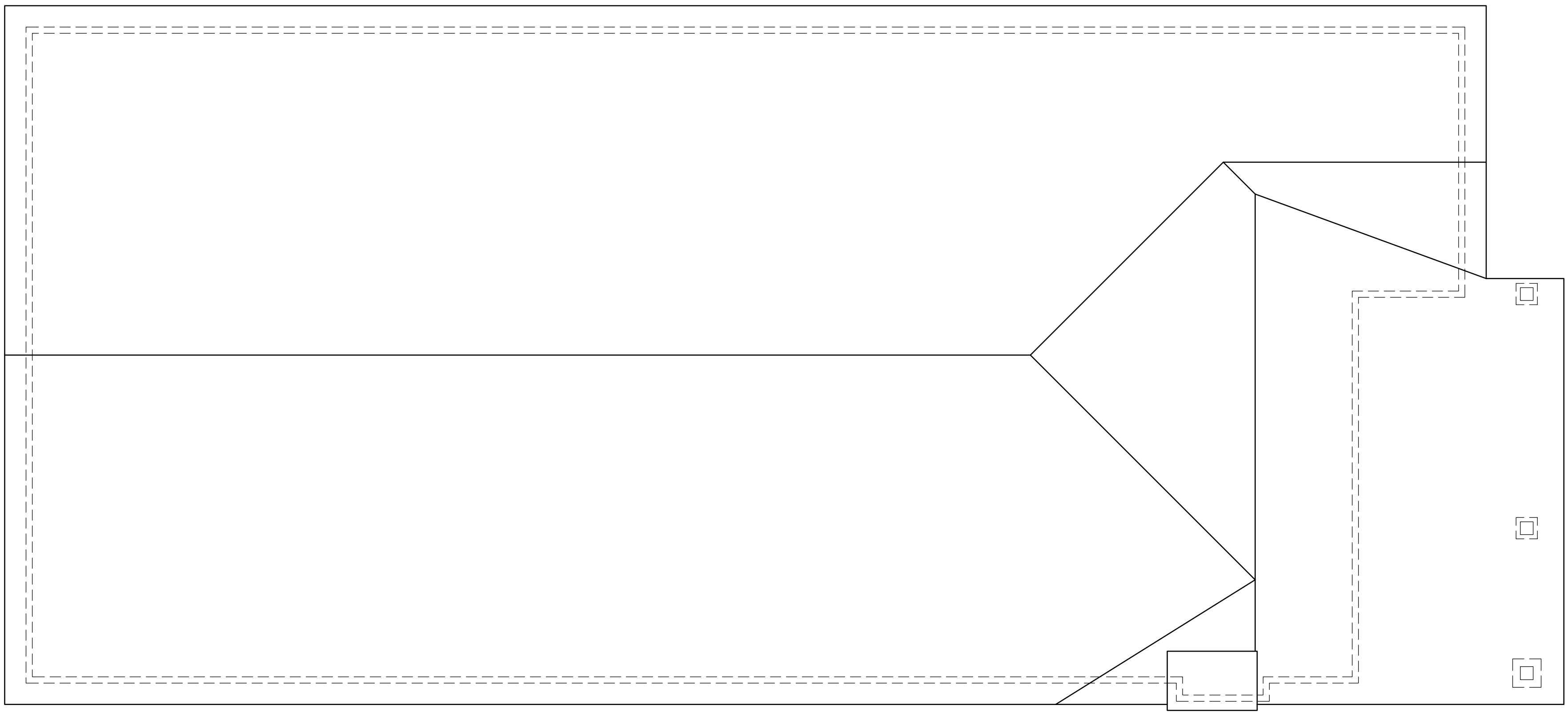


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**1** ROOF PLAN - EXISTING  
1/4" = 1'-0"

Date:	Issue:
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AB-2

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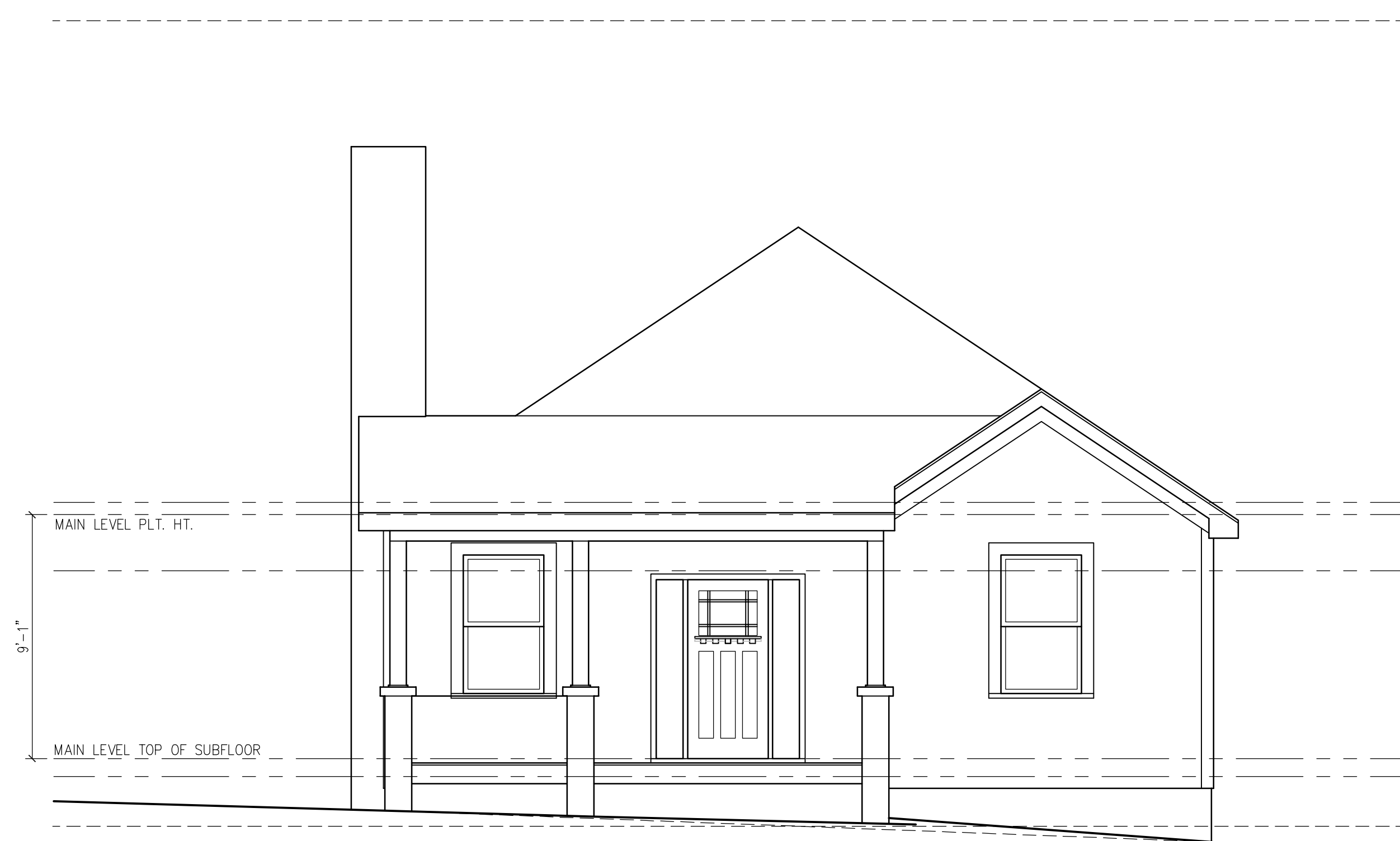


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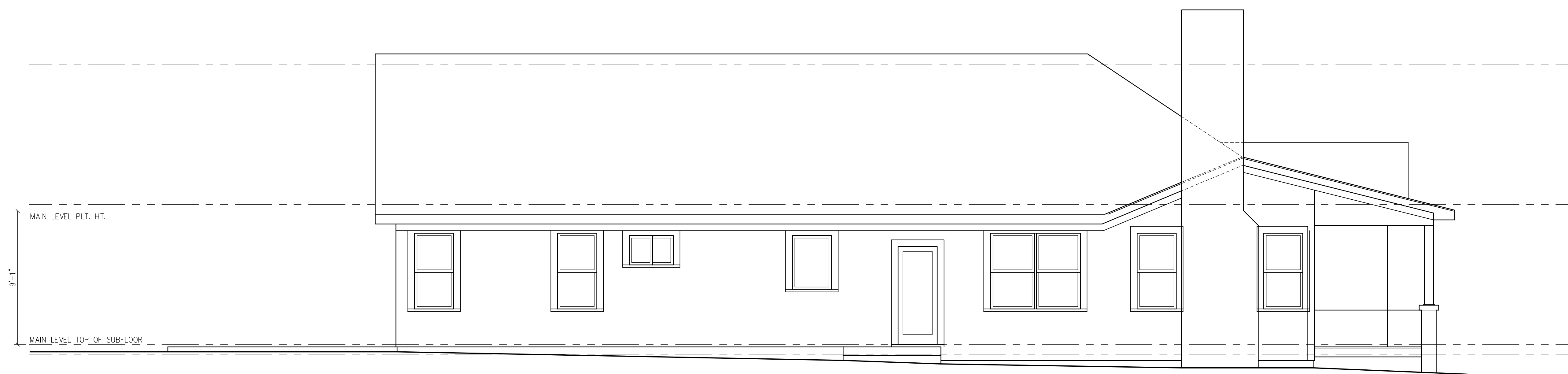
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1 FRONT ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1/4" = 1'-0"



2 LEFT ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1/4" = 1'-0"

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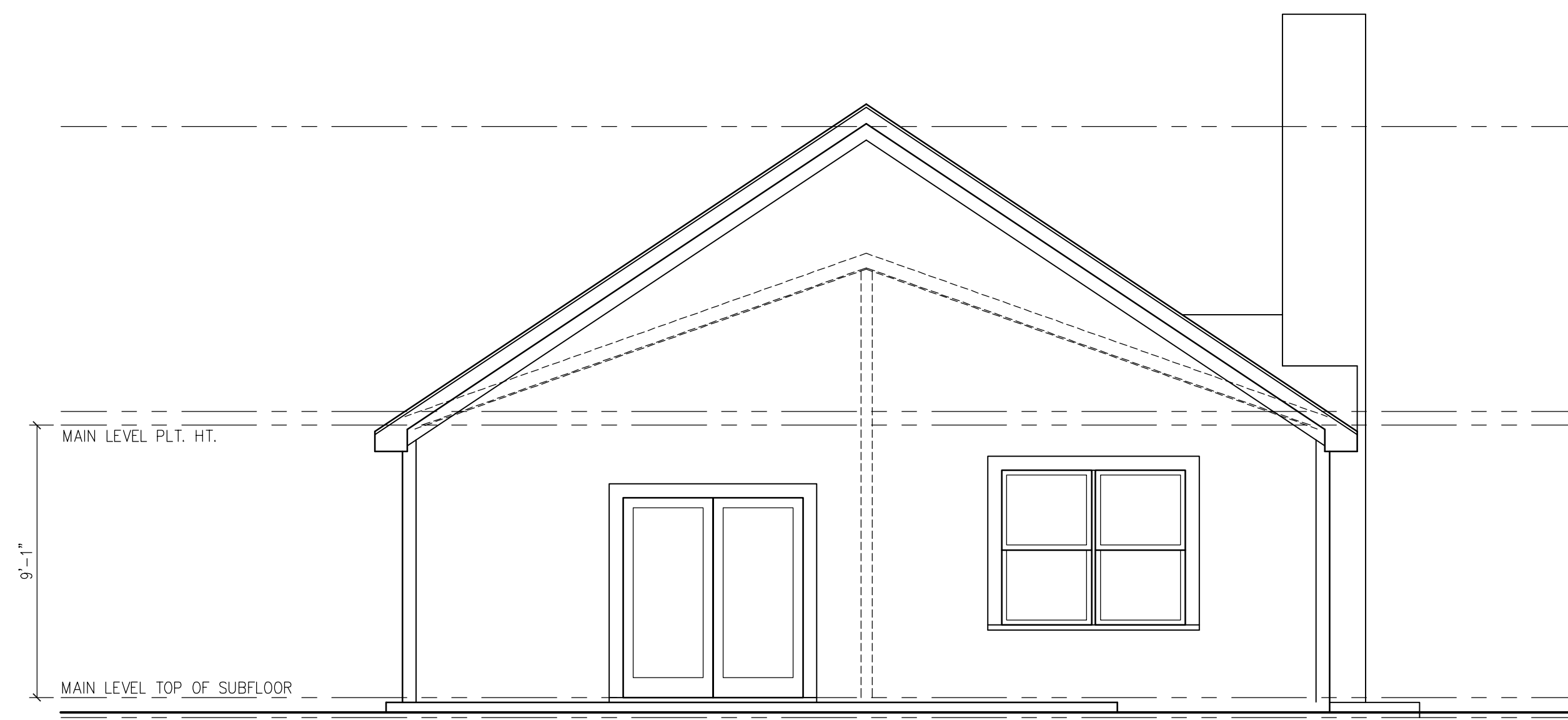


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1 REAR ELEVATION- EXISTING  
1/4" = 1'-0"



2 RIGHT ELEVATION - EXISTING  
1/4" = 1'-0"

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AB-4

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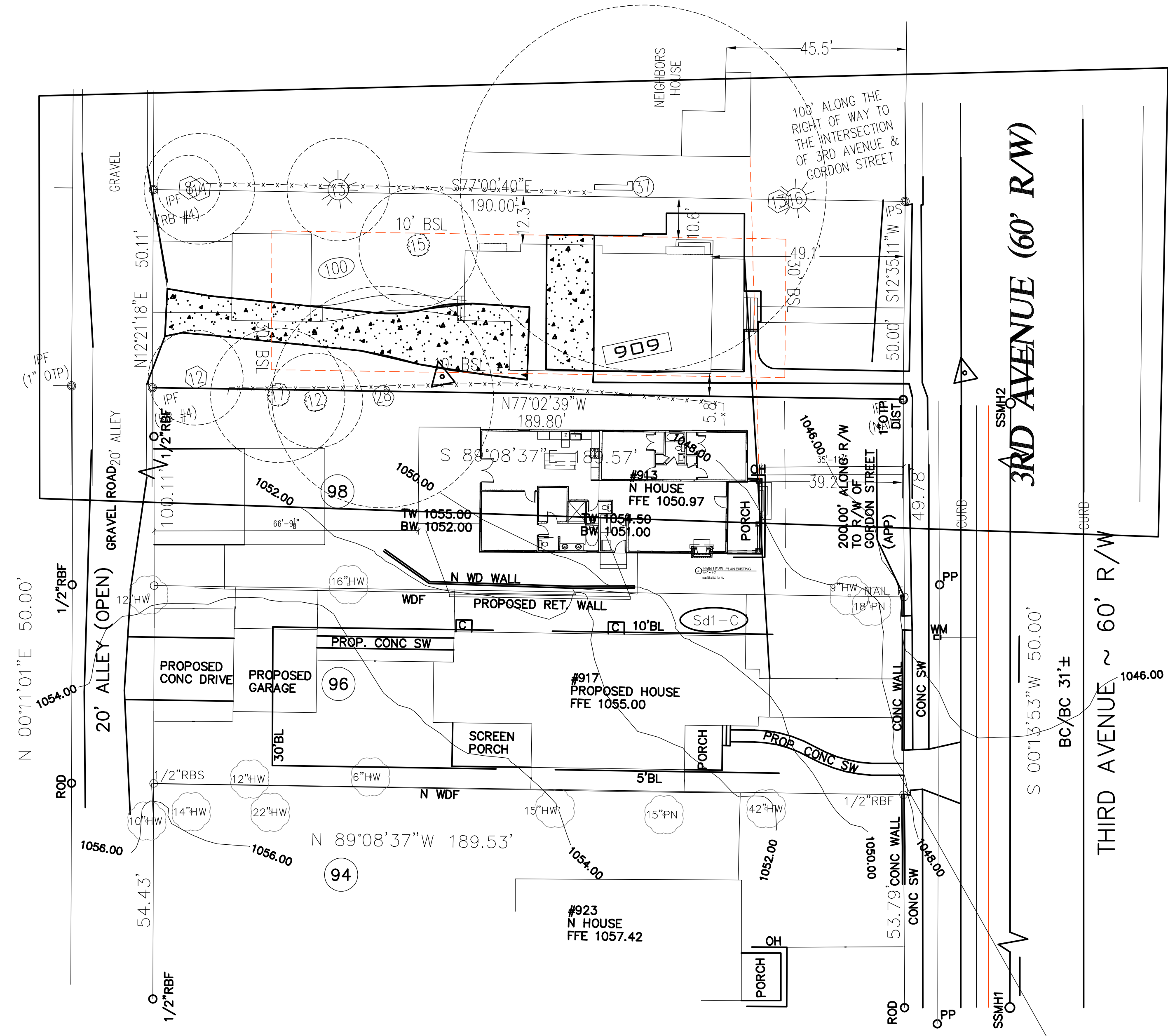


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1 EXISTING SITE PLAN  
1" = 20'

USE EXISTING CONC. DRIVE AS CONSTRUCTION ENTRANCE/EXIT

Date:	Issue:
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042323	RK	RK

AS-0



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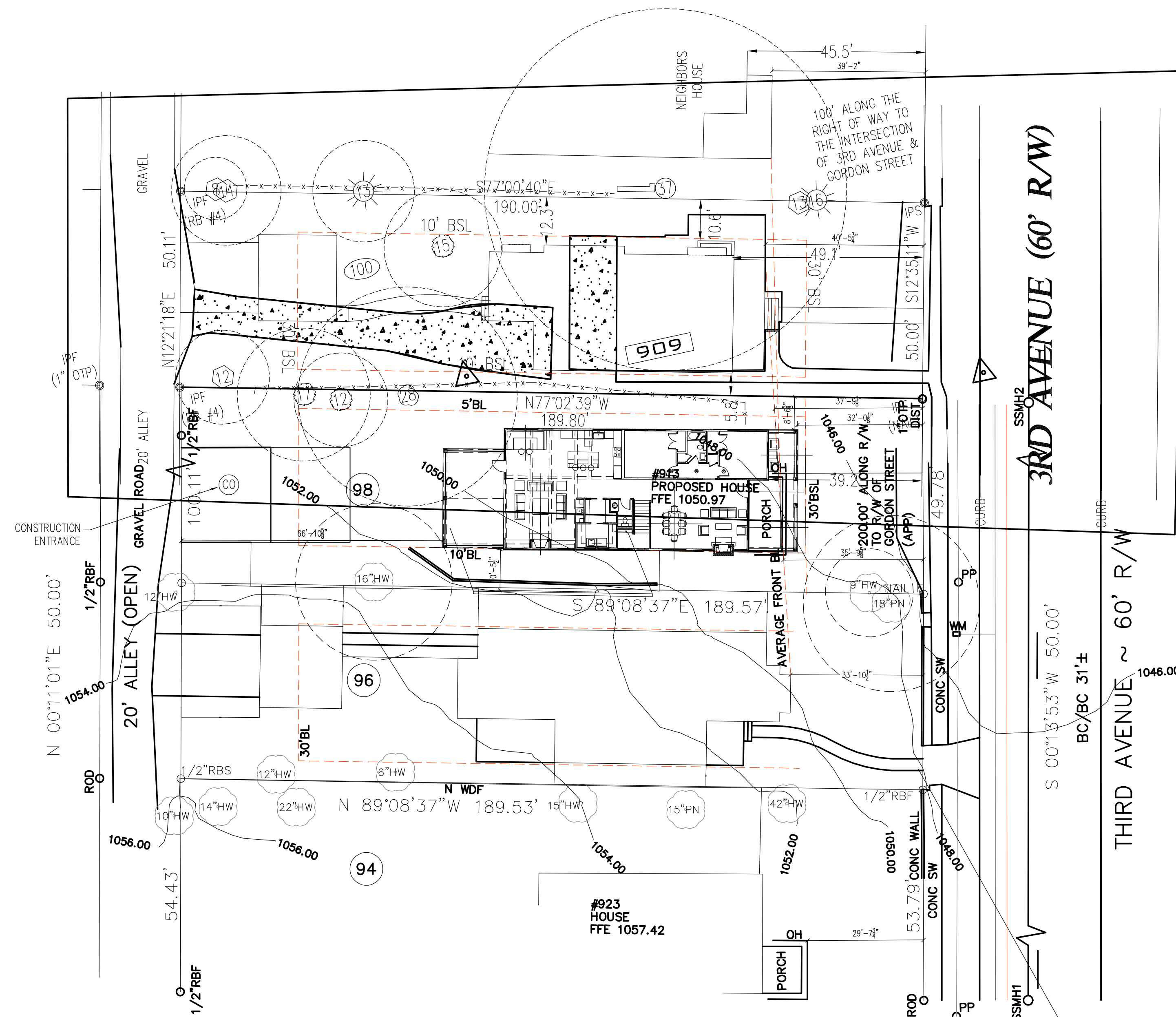
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30030  
678-464-1299  
rkoch@robertkochdesigns.com

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RENOVATION & ADDITION TO EXISTING RESIDENCE AT

**913 THIRD AVENUE**

DECATUR, GEORGIA



**1 PROPOSED SITE PLAN**  
1" = 20'

**ZONING ANALYSIS: R-60**

- MINIMUM LOT AREA: 9,000 SQ. FT.  
EXISTING LOT AREA: 9,463 SQ. FT.
  - MINIMUM LOT FRONTAGE: 60'  
EXISTING LOT FRONTAGE: 49.8'  
PROPOSED: NO CHANGE
  - MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO: 40%  
EXISTING: 26.1%  
1ST FLOOR 1,983 SQ. FT. + GARAGE 484 SQ. FT.  
DIVIDED BY LOT SIZE OF 9,463 SQ. FT.)  
2,467 SQ. FT./ 9,463 SQ. FT. = 26.1%  
PROPOSED: 43.6%  
(1ST FLOOR 1,983 SQ. FT. + 2ND FLOOR 1,660 SQ. FT. + GARAGE 484 SQ. FT. DIVIDED BY LOT SIZE OF 9,463 SQ. FT.)  
4,127 SQ. FT./ 9,463 SQ. FT. = 43.6%
  - MAXIMUM LOT COVERAGE: 40%  
EXISTING: 38.4%  
(HOUSE FOOTPRINT 2,006 SQ. FT. + PORCHES/DECKS 581 SQ. FT. + DRIVEWAY 553 SQ. FT. + GARAGE 492 SQ. FT. DIVIDED BY LOT SIZE 9,463 SQ. FT.)  
3,632 SQ. FT./ 9,463 SQ. FT. = 38.4%  
PROPOSED: 39.8%  
(HOUSE FOOTPRINT 2,006 SQ. FT. + PORCHES/DECKS 719 SQ. FT. + DRIVEWAY 553 + GARAGE 492 SQ. FT. + DIVIDED BY LOT SIZE 9,463 SQ. FT.)  
3,770 SQ. FT./ 9,463 SQ. FT. = 39.8%
- TOTAL NEW CONSTRUCTION  
PORCHES/DECKS 719 SQ. FT.  
= 719 SQ. FT. NEW IMPERVIOUS
- MINIMUM DEPTH FRONT YARD: 30'  
EXISTING: 36.0' (TO PORCH)  
PROPOSED: 32.0' (TO PORCH)  
AVERAGE FRONT YARD SETBACK = 36.9'
  - MINIMUM WIDTH SIDE YARD: 10'  
EXISTING: LEFT 10.5', RIGHT 8.7'  
PROPOSED: LEFT 10.5', RIGHT 8.6'  
RIGHT SIDE OF ADDITION IS MORE THAN 10' FROM THE HOUSES ON THE RIGHT AND LEFT  
MINIMUM SIDE YARD REDUCTION DUE TO LESS THAN 60' LOT WIDTH:  
(STANDARD LOT WIDTH - ACTUAL LOT WIDTH)/2 = (1) SIDE YARD REDUCTION (SIDE YARD NOT TO BE REDUCED BELOW 5')  
60' - 50' = 10/2 = 5'  
STANDARD SIDE YARD REQUIREMENT - SIDE YARD REDUCTION = NEW SIDE YARD REQUIREMENT  
10' - 5' = 5' RIGHT SIDE YARD REQUIREMENT
  - MINIMUM DEPTH REAR YARD: 30'  
EXISTING: 66.9'  
PROPOSED: 66.9'
  - MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT: 35'  
REQUIRED LOT WIDTH - ACTUAL LOT WIDTH =  
60' - 50' = 10'  
10' x 0.5 = 5' (REDUCTION IN MAXIMUM HEIGHT)  
REDUCED MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT = 35' - 5' = 30'  
EXISTING: 22.4'  
PROPOSED: 29.8'

Date:	Issue:
09/12/23	SCHEMATIC DESIGN

JOB NO:	DRAWN:	CHECKED:
042323	RK	RK

AS-1





