

Project Information: 1318 Chuckanut Home, Bellingham, Whatcom Co., 0.62 Ac. Site, 2716 sf

History:

Client was given a property, that was extremely difficult to build on, with a very steep, 25-30' drop. They tried to sell the property for many years, with no luck. They finally decided that they should build something on it, for themselves, to prove it could be done. No access was allowed at the top of the steep incline. Client assumed it would be an expensive foundation built parallel to the hillside, somehow.

Program:

The program involved a level for one floor living, (LR/DR/KIT/MBR/UTILITY) as an age-in-place for this recently retired couple. Any other levels should have additional bedrooms that could also feel like a separate AirBnB space, or allow for a future caretaker. There was also a desire for a garage with a recreational vehicle and regular car. The main floor should take advantage of the primary views to the southwest, even though the lot faces due west. Also a desire for easy access to an upper level trail and low maintenance materials with easy maintenance access to roof. The preferred style was a fresher, contemporary feel.

Solution:

A concept design was presented, initially desired by the client, *parallel* to the hillside, as they had originally envisioned.

An alternate idea was also presented, that was *perpendicular* to the steep hillside. This avoided having difficult foundations on the steep hillside, by spanning... *over* it. It also allowed the top, main floor to be farther out on the west end of the site to avoid neighboring view blockage & to better see the primary southwest view. Savings in foundation costs allowed the installation of a residential elevator to get from the garage to the top, main living level. Stairs were also available for regular exercise. An exterior deck was angled towards the primary SW view to the San Juan Islands. The roof was originally desired to be a hip style on all sides, but a better solution allowed for a simple slope back to the 10' high east side for easier maintenance & access, since the west side was almost 50' high!

The clients undertook this home as a speculative, temporary project, intending for it to add value, to sell. However, the unexpected solution, and experience in living here, has them wanting to stay forever.























