



## Seattle, Washington

### ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Joe Schneider and Michael  
Freeman, JAS Design Build

# JEWEL BOX

Located in the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle, Jewel Box was designed in 2017 for a retired homeowner who wanted to travel and rent out his main residence. "He was making it for himself," says designer Michael Freeman of JAS Design Build. "He wanted a sweet little place to stay when he was in town."

At only 500 square feet, Jewel Box is the smallest ADU that JAS has designed. It has a kitchen and dining area overlooking a private patio on the lower level, and a bedroom/living room with a bathroom above. At the time, ADU zoning laws in Seattle were extremely restrictive, limiting square footage based on lot size. "This lot was very tight," Freeman says. "We played all kinds of games to get the most out of it that we could."

Because one side of the original garage runs along the property line, the upper level had to be moved over about 2 feet to comply with the fire code. "Historically, garages were allowed to run

along the property line, but those rules have changed," Freeman explains. "Any new addition need to comply with the current code." To make up for lost space, he bumped the opposite side of the upper floor over as well, so it hangs over the lower level. "The interesting thing about these ADUs is that you have to run all the numbers first," Freeman says. "Once you've done that it's more like putting together a puzzle that's already solved."

With two-level ADUs, Freeman says the challenge is where to put the stairs, which still need to meet standard-sized code requirements. "They take up so much space," he says. "Start there, then think where you have room to flex and push the boundaries." In Jewel Box, the stairs cut into the ceiling space of the garage to ensure the required head height.

They also pushed boundaries along the gable roofline, where they inserted a series of pop-up dormers that add height and volume to sections



Site plan of the lot details the size restrictions.

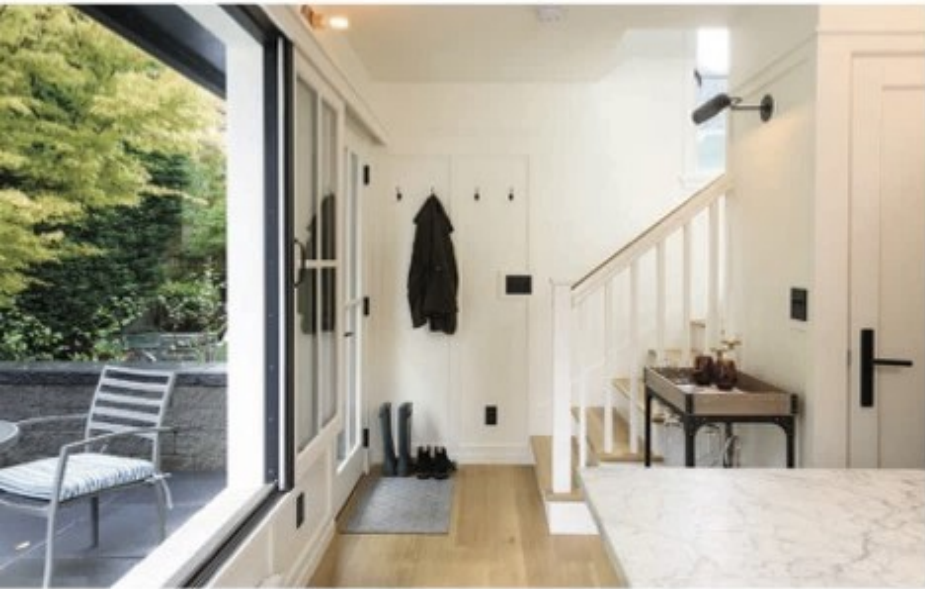


A wall of sliding windows stretches the lower level by connecting the kitchen/dining space to a private courtyard.

of the sidewalls. "That's where the bathroom is," Freeman says. "It feels like you're inside a cabinet."

While he recognizes that this type of restricted design is "less conventional," Freeman, who lives in an 800-square-foot ADU he built himself, believes there's something uniquely satisfying about these quirky little homes. "People think it'll feel too cramped, but when they occupy these spaces, it's actually really nice," he says. "There's a comfort in being cradled by the building."

Freeman says that interest in ADUs has grown steadily since the city legalized them in 2009. JAS has built a handful over the years, ranging in size up to 800 square feet, which until recently was the maximum size allowed by code. (Code revisions have increased that to 1,000 square feet.) "These are interesting design problems because they make you reconsider what we really need to live comfortably," Freeman says. "And from a larger perspective, they offer another option to help Seattle address housing shortage and affordability."



**bottom**  
 The designers tucked the bathroom into a pop-up dormer. An interior window called a relite brings light in from multiple directions and makes the small room feel more spacious. Exposed and painted paneling (Benjamin Moore's Intrigue) adds texture and personality to the upper level.



Skylights pull natural light down the stairwell, lighting the lower level as well.