

# Ocean odyssey.

DREAM PORCH | Woven vinyl wicker with matching reclining chairs makes this a welcome spot to hide and take a nap. To carry the tones from inside out, an orange ceramic garden stool that can double as a seat or table was added.



## Suburban Renewal

A builder, an architect and a design firm collaborate to create a dream beach house on an oceanfront lot where an older home once stood

*Text by Alice Garbarini Hurley*

*Photography by Wing Wong, Memories TTL*



**STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN** | Both the first and second floor decks face the ocean. To create even more space for socializing, the team added a spiral staircase to the roof. Now the homeowners can enjoy cocktails outside as the sun sets.

**SURE FOOTING** | The decking around the pool is a type of hardwood that's perfect by the sea. "You literally let it gray naturally," says builder Matt Pappas. "It doesn't splinter and it doesn't rot."



**S**tone Harbor is for beach lovers. It's a Jersey Shore gem celebrated for its pristine beaches and well-kept homes. So when a New Jersey couple with three active teen boys found a piece of oceanfront property in Stone Harbor that they could build on – after the existing home there was razed – they cast their line for the finest team available to help them.

The homeowners had already worked closely with Rachel Kapner, president of Creative Wallcoverings & Interiors in New Providence, NJ when they built their house in Chatham about eight years ago. Since they loved her work – including an inherent sense of style, impeccable attention to detail, and resources to handle the total task from top to bottom – they enlisted her to do all of the interior design for the shore house. Then after interviewing several, they chose an architect/builder team that works in tandem as smoothly as the gears on a bicycle built for two being pedaled along the boardwalk.

**DEVELOPING A PLAN**

Brandywine Developers – led by Matt Pappas, who spent family vacations in sunny Avalon as a boy – is sought out for handsome new builds and careful restorations on the Shore. Pappas says this Stone Harbor house has every amenity a busy family would want, and that was possible only because the home design team played so well together.

"I think the whole concept of a team approach was a great experience. Everybody worked together beautifully – the architect, the homeowner, the decorator and my team," says Pappas. Once a week, Kapner and the homeowner met in Chatham to plan the design. Once a month, they would leave Chatham at 6 AM and be back home by 4 PM. (it's a five-hour round trip drive), visiting the building site and choosing granite, cabinets and more. Email updates went out twice a week to the team, so the process would be seamless.

So while Kapner focused on soothing wall colors and durable materials that could withstand a little sand and water, Pappas was focusing on practical built-in assets and architect Mark Asher of Asher Associates Architects in Stone Harbor had his mind on other things, from historic details to modern conveniences, right down to how many docking stations the family would need for their iPads and iPods.

"Together, we analyzed every inch of the house," says Pappas. "We didn't shortchange anything, and it was due to a lot of effort. We all worked hand in hand, and keeping in constant open communication was the secret."

From his builder's standpoint, Pappas took a long look at the realities of living by the beach. For example, the porch can be screened in at the push of a button when the bugs get annoying.

"Seventy percent of the time, you don't need the screens and don't want them to interfere with the ocean view. But in the spring, you get no-see-um bugs and in late July or August the greenheads can

**OCEAN BREEZE LAUNDRY ROOM** The sunny space has a wood drying rack – found by the homeowner – painted to match the cabinets and incorporated into the design. The backsplash is a mix of glass and stone in tones of beachy grays, blues and browns.



be bad," he says. The first and second floor decks are equipped with powered "phantom screens" that also appear on demand – out of the valances – to close in the space.

Likewise, if a storm is coming, the porch has hidden shutters that can be put into place to seal the home snugly.

#### COASTAL AESTHETIC

"We try to make a house that is enduring and has its own sense of quality and place. These are almost heirloom houses. People don't want to sell them. They want to keep them in the family for their children and grandchildren," says Asher, the architect.

"We're mindful of the coastal aesthetic," he says. The porch is furnished and has ceiling fans so it's like another room, not just an outdoor sitting space. The back entrance gets a lot more attention than it used to, with cubbies for beach bags and flooring that can handle wet and sandy feet.

This home had to be rugged enough for an active family yet lovely to behold. "We had to be mindful that this house is going to get some hard use," says Asher. "You don't want it to be a touch-me-not home. It's going to be lived in." The plan incorporated two living spaces – one with a fireplace and a second room for overflow – plus a roof deck, so family and friends would have another place to gather.

#### BY-THE-SEA SENSE & SENSIBILITY

"As soon as we had the finalized drawing, the homeowner and I went through the house room by room and organized the color scheme," says Kapner. "I love looking at the ocean and I love summer, so this was a great project." She drew on the hues she saw in the beach sky when choosing the paint palette.

"The homeowner wanted it clean, fresh, beachy and elegant at the same time," Kapner adds.

Kapner sought out good-looking but durable fabrics like the heavy-weave, stain- and fade-resistant beige Sunbrella on the custom-made sectional sofa. Since the homeowners entertain – they even requested a guest room for each set of in-laws – the dining room table opens to seat 16.

The gas fireplace in the living room has polished river stones inside rather than logs – and the mosaic backsplash behind the stove is fashioned from glass, stones and stainless-steel pennies. The floor is a warm wide-plank yellow oak with dark walnut stain. All stand as examples of Kapner's passion for unique and purposeful designs throughout the house.

"Once the family moved in, they all felt like they could hang out and feel comfortable," says Kapner. "And that's exactly what they wanted."

Even indoors, thanks to Kapner's eye, the summer sky and seaside feel is within reach at this Stone Harbor retreat, from the shipshape navy in the boys' bunk room to the perfect paint color on the living room walls – Benjamin Moore Mountain Mist, #868, part of the company's Classic Color Collection.

"At first, the homeowner thought the walls were too blue," says Kapner. "She wanted to go a little lighter." Turns out, of course, that the blue is just right – as timeless and calming as a day at the beach. ■

#### RESOURCES:

Brandywine Developers 609.967.4400 [www.brandywinedevelopers.com](http://www.brandywinedevelopers.com) • Asher Associates Architects, LLC 609.368.1411 [www.asherarchitects.com](http://www.asherarchitects.com) • Creative Wallcoverings & Interiors 908.665.7997 [www.creativewallcoverings.com](http://www.creativewallcoverings.com)