



WATERFRONT HAVEN

A design team melds modern and traditional styles in a home by the Severn River

Text by Deborah K. Dietsch / Photography by Tim Lee



Previous spread: Living spaces and the master suite are located at the rear of the house, where large windows capture dramatic views. Ashlar and stucco exterior walls rise to roof soffits clad in mahogany. Lynbrook used forged-steel balusters on the staircase (above and right), which is constructed so it appears to float. The wide, travertine-paved entrance hall (top) is reached via the driveway/courtyard (opposite), featuring a decorative pool with a sculptural fountain at its center.

Years of searching the Chesapeake Bay waterfront for a home led Marshall “Marsh” and Estela McClean to purchase a hilltop property overlooking Mill Creek near the Severn River with the idea of building the home they wanted. “We liked the size and shape of the site, and the deep water for our boat,” says Estela, retired CEO of a firm providing electrical infrastructure expertise overseas. “The land goes out to a point so when you are on the dock, you feel like you are standing in the middle of the creek.”

The empty nesters spent weekends in an old cottage on the Annapolis-area site before demolishing that structure to make way for a spacious house with sweeping water views. They hired Vincent Greene Architects and builder Lynbrook of Annapolis to construct a two-story, four-bedroom home with space for their grown children and grandkids.

“The site offered stunning panoramic views but within a narrow buildable area,” says David Myers of Vincent Greene Architects. “When we began to layer all the required setbacks on the site plan, we were left with a long, slender, pie-shaped area that drove the organization of the house.”

The architects met the challenge by locating the main living spaces and master suite nearest the water, while placing guest bedrooms and utility spaces closer to the street. A driveway/courtyard leads to the attached garage on one side and to the home’s centrally positioned entrance on the other.

Blending both modern and traditional architectural elements, the house features corner windows separated by fiber-cement panels and walls sheathed in stone and stucco. The soffits of the overhanging roofs are clad in mahogany. “We chose materials that provide longevity and should age well over time,” says Myers.

The 17-month building process involved frequent meetings among the homeowners, architect and contractor to keep all the parties on track. “The design is distinctive and required a high level of detail,” says Raymond Gauthier, president of Lynbrook, who built four-foot-high mock-ups of the ashlar-lined exterior walls to get them right.

The high quality of the design and construction extends to the interior, where a dramatic, two-story foyer lined in cherry-wood panels greets visitors. Just beyond the entrance, the living areas are visible, bordered by tall windows that wrap the rear and sides of the house to capture vistas of the creek in nearly every direction. “We wanted a simple, elegant design with lots of light and space,” says Estela. “We preferred an open, modern style, but didn’t want to go overboard with something too contemporary.”

Architecture: Vincent Greene, AIA, principal; David C. Myers, Jr., project architect, Vincent Greene Architects, Baltimore, Maryland. Contractor: Raymond Gauthier, Lynbrook of Annapolis, Annapolis, Maryland. Landscape Design: Richard Evans, Holly Acres Landscaping, Harwood, Maryland.

In the living room (these pages), the main seating area focuses on a double-sided gas fireplace clad in the same stone as the exterior; it is open to the TV room. The other sitting area is arranged beside the large bay window offering panoramas of Mill Creek. The chairs, sofas and coffee table are from Ethan Allen. The dining area (opposite) is sunken below the living area and kitchen for unobstructed water views.



The stone-clad gas fireplace in the living room is double-sided and also faces a smaller room used for watching TV. "It's a place where the two of us spend most of our time at the end of the day, sitting in front of the fire and enjoying the atmosphere," says Marsh McClean, a retired financial advisor.

In the opposite corner, the dining space is sunken from the living area so views of the water from the adjacent kitchen remain unobstructed. In the living and dining spaces, paintings of maritime scenes and a model of a clipper ship are among the nautical touches throughout the house.

The McCleans had an elevator installed near the entrance "so we'll be able to stay in the house longer," notes Estela. The alternative is an elegant staircase that appears to float; it leads to the second-floor bedrooms and basement. To achieve the floating effect, Lynbrook extended unobtrusive steel brackets from the stairs to supportive plates hidden in the walls.

Upstairs, the master suite is framed by large windows presenting expansive water scenes from the bedroom and bathroom. Next door, a corner home office offers vistas up and down the creek. "There are no bad views in this house," says Marsh.

Down the hall, a bunk room for the grandchildren incorporates built-in corner beds and three balconies. "It's a place where the kids can congregate and be kids without worrying about noise transmission to the adjacent spaces," explains Myers.

The McCleans, who own a condo in Florida, mostly spend summers at their Annapolis home, where they enjoy kayaking and boating on the creek. "I always wanted a stone house on the water," says Marsh. "This was a rare chance in life to build something from the ground up." ↓





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The claw-foot tub in the master bathroom (far left) provides a relaxing place to watch activity on the creek through tall windows. Shelving in the master bedroom (above) displays the homeowners' collection of Asian artifacts, including a xylophone from Myanmar. Over the garage, the bunk room (left) with built-in beds accommodates visiting grandchildren.