

No Place Like Home

A stunning downstairs gathering space tops
off the sequential transformation of a once-
humble Harwich retreat.

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Colors of the sand and driftwood mixed with
pops of turquoise give this totally transformed
basement a sophisticated yet casual look.



A sunny corner of the living room boasts a pair of natural grass arm chairs paired with a mid-century modern style cabinet that doubles as a bar.

Years ago, when their now-adult children were 4 and 7, a couple from Greater Boston sought a second home on Cape Cod where their family could relax and enjoy carefree, low-key living—something simple in a child-friendly neighborhood. With another couple, they purchased an unassuming 1960s ranch amid a cluster of similar homes in a lakeside association in Harwich. “It had been on the market a long time,” says the wife. “It had shag rugs, cheap paneling and Formica, but we loved the bones of the house.”

For decades, it was perfect. The family formed tight bonds with their neighbors and adored being able to walk to the lake. After purchasing their friends’ share of the house, they gradually upgraded it in phases, depending on which area needed the most attention at the moment. One project at a time, they bumped out the house for a great room addition, opened up the foyer and remodeled the kitchen. Laura Urban of Urban Design Interiors has been the interior designer every step of the way, working in tandem with Total Interiors, a construction services group.

“The first priority was to transform the master suite and guest bath,” explains Urban. “In the master, we used soft blues and created a serene setting where the homeowners could kick off their shoes and relax after a stressful week. The guest bath has an upscale coastal feeling using sand tones and other colors found by the sea. This gave us the starting point for the rest of the home.”

Recently, says the wife, she and her husband assessed their Cape living situation and tossed around options, including moving to a bigger second home somewhere else. But, she explains, “The community was too important for us to leave. We decided we’re just going to stay and make this our own and a place for family.”

Once the decision was made to stay put, “They needed more space,” says Urban, noting that extended family often visits and grandchildren are on the horizon. Plus, the family frequently entertains neighbors and other friends. Having previously added the great room upstairs, the designer and homeowner now cast their eyes on the cellar. “It was an unfinished basement, concrete floor, no walls,” says Urban. Once remodeled, she adds, the homeowner “didn’t want it to feel like a basement.”

To give her clients the attractive gathering space they desired, Urban added an exterior window along with ingenious and decorative interior transom windows with a beaded-glass look. The wall paint is “Wind’s Breath” from

Benjamin Moore, an off-white that pairs nicely with the cream-colored knotted rug. A handsome coffered, bead board ceiling and driftwood-like laminate floors wrap the room in a sophisticated upstairs-worthy envelope.

Arguably, the pièce de résistance is a huge, distressed-white, custom media piece that runs along one wall. Indeed, there is nothing basement-like about this beautiful space, which includes a spacious, tastefully appointed bathroom cum steam shower, an item on the homeowner’s wish list. Even the staircase leading down from the kitchen is real hardwood and illuminated by a statement chandelier.

For furniture in the new space, Urban repurposed several existing pieces, including the couches from the great room (which were replaced with new custom-upholstered pieces) that she had slipcovered to match the mostly neutral downstairs décor. “I brought in aqua and taupe,” says Urban “and I used crypton fabric on everything downstairs.” Crypton is something of a miracle fabric as it’s mildew- and mold-resistant as well as stain-resistant for the life of the fabric. It is not a topical treatment, so it doesn’t wash off.

Throughout the home, the client wanted a “coastal, beachy feel.” Elements like a “rope” side table, natural fiber rugs, and lamps with sea glass bases and handmade shades read “coastal but not kitschy,” says Urban. Works by local artist Chris Reverdy also enhance the subtle seaside aesthetic.

When the owner speaks about how she wants her home to feel, she uses the words “calming” and “peaceful” liberally. The living room has always had a soft-blue color scheme, the great room embraces a greener palette, and the new gathering space downstairs is soothingly awash in the tonal gradations found in grains of sand. As her longtime and trusted designer, Urban has succeeded in bringing this client’s vision to life, one dreamy chapter at a time. **H**



ABOVE: For this great room addition, an earlier project, Urban chose a palette of green and white paired with natural fibers. **LEFT:** Seafoam blue gives the guest bedroom the serenity sought by the homeowner.

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