The Newton Project

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THE SHINGLE LIFE

An update of a classic seaside architectural style, our 2017 Idea House is built for easy living, with a flexible layout that can welcome multiple generations.

By Jill Connors | Photographs by Nat Rea
Produced by Claudia Jepsen | Styling by Denise Enright

ABOVE: Designed by Union Studio Architecture & Community Design and built by Sweeorn Builders, the Idea House incorporates classic Shingle-style elements: gabled roofs, a balcony, walls that curve into windows, a deep front porch—and, of course, wood shingle siding.

ABOVE: The living area feels both beachy and elegant, thanks to a neutral color scheme for walls and furniture, textural touches such as woven window shades, and clean-lined upholstered pieces. The TV console is made of reclaimed wood; an updated candle chandelier serves as a focal point overhead. The vaulted ceiling is lined with white-painted v-groove boards accented by dark-stained beams. Walls of windows invite in light and fresh air, with French doors providing access—and open sight lines—to the adjacent screened-in porch.

THESE PAGES: JAPANESE TOP SHINGLES: SAFETY FIRST Shingles: SBC-1 3000 textured Interior and Exterior LIFESPAN Celotex Select 3000 Barnsley Woolley Railing: Walpole Outdoors

GARAGE DOORS: Clopay EXTERIOR SIDING: SIMPSON Door Company EXTERIOR DOORS: ALEXA PAST: Olympic's Stearing Smoke: (dining room walls) and Chinese Porcelain (fret door).

ABOVE: The kitchen’s zoned design includes a center island for gathering and prep work; a windowed cleanup area complete with an ergonomic pull-down faucet and stainless-steel sink; food-storage areas along the cooktop wall; and a wet-bar beverage center that’s out of the cooking fray. The colors of sand, sky, and sea inspired the palette: The mosaic tile backsplash suggests sea glass, the perimeter countertops evoke white sand, the island countertop has a driftwood look, and the cabinets are painted a deep ocean blue. The custom vent hood’s nautical-inspired brass trim is repeated in the pendants and bar pulls. The task lighting is simple to adjust—as is true throughout the house—with a system that includes wireless dimmers, remotes, and mobile app control.

Perhaps best of all, these features take shape within a 3,200-square-foot house whose outward face finds design inspiration in one of New England’s most iconic architectural styles: Shingle style. “The details and forms draw on Rhode Island’s 19th-century tradition of Shingle-style architecture, with gambrel roofs, flared gables, and curving shingled walls at balconies and windows,” says principal architect Don Powers of Union Studio Architecture, who teamed up with project architect Christina Carlson on the design of the house. “But we adapted those historical elements to the way people like to live right now,” he says.

A prime example of this updated approach is the open-plan kitchen-dining-living area that is the heart of the home. “We wanted to create the easy flow and communication from one space to the next that is so desirable today,” Powers says. But the team ensured that the open-plan space still had a traditional sense of defined rooms—something often missing in contemporary open spaces—by varying the ceiling design. A vaulted ceiling with white-painted V-groove boards distinguishes the living area; a coffered ceiling...
with V-groove insets marks the dining area; and a smooth plastered ceiling caps the kitchen. Structural columns flanking a built-in cabinet further delineate the living and dining spaces, while providing useful storage and maintaining open sight lines.

"We also created a layout so that all the living could happen on the first floor if that's what is desired," says Carlson, who felt strongly that the house should support one-level living for aging in place.

"Many of our clients today insist on a first-floor bedroom," she says. In addition to the first-floor master suite, thoughtful aging-in-place design features include minimal stairs from garage to main house to outdoor-living areas; maximum daylighting with walls of windows, as well as variable lighting controls; lever-style handles and a curbless walk-in shower with a seat in the master bath; a first-floor laundry; and 40-inch-wide hallways.

Flexible upstairs spaces are designed to accommodate different scenarios, including multigenerational living. For example, visiting guests or grown

ABOVE: The powder room has a luxurious look, with a vessel sink atop a jewel-like quartz countertop, gray-blue painted wallpaper, and sleek brushed-nickel accents.

RIGHT: Sliding barn doors open onto the study, where a bright patterned rug sets the color palette for custom built-ins lined in lime green; a vintage desk refreshed with bright-blue paint, and a modern slipper chair in soft aqua.

ABOVE: A bay window opens up the master bedroom; lavender walls and soft neutral furnishings create a serene setting. The bed ups the comfort factor with adjustable head and foot positions, and a mattress-cooling system.

RIGHT: The master bath has a curbless shower and lever faucet handles for ease of use. Its ocean-motif wallpaper sets a refined tone, which is carried through in the polished marble floor and wall tiles, and quartz vanity top.
LEED: Packed with function, the mudroom features built-ins from one end to the other. A boot bench holds rows of hooks and cubbies. A heavy-duty washer and dryer are raised to comfort height. A dog-wash station is a thoughtful convenience. The slate floor stands up to grit and muddy paws.

BELOW LEFT: At the mudroom entry off the front porch, shell-colored stained shingles, a custom seagull cutout, and light-gray capped-polymer porch flooring all establish a beachy look.

BELOW RIGHT: Perfect for a quick rinse after a walk on the beach, the dog wash features a driftwood-look tile enclosure, a pebble-tile floor, and a low-flow hand sprayer. It doubles as a general-duty utility sink.

children can occupy the second floor of the main house, which holds two bedrooms and a bath with a secondary laundry. The youngest members of the household—or grandchildren—can take over the third-floor bunk room, and 20 somethings can gather in the bonus space above the garage, designed as a game room with a freestanding bar.

To play up the house’s personality, the design team pushed for some distinctive custom features. Chippendale-style railings with bold diagonal lines call attention to the stairways in the main house—and are even repeated on the outdoor balcony. The mudroom holds a dog-washing station with a wood-look tile enclosure, a pebble mosaic floor, and a hand sprayer. No dog in the house? No prob-

— The screened-in porch can be accessed from the living room’s French doors or from the back deck. A gas fireplace extends the space’s use to three—or even four—seasons. Exposed cedar trusses stained off-white, a stone-clad chimney, board-and-batten walls, capped-polymer porch flooring, and upholstered outdoor furniture help it weather its openness to the elements in style.

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furniture," says interior designer Denise Enright. The color of the exterior window cladding became a jumping-off point for Enright, who used various shades of blue throughout, spiced with accents of green, dusty purple, and pink.

"This is definitely a very detail-rich house, whether it's the built-ins that add so much function inside or the sweeps in the roofline that give it a traditional look outside," says Jeff Sweenor, who relied on the craftsmanship of his 50-man crew, including son and apprentice Ryan, to get the exacting work done.

The gambrel roof, which has become one of this idea House's trademarks, is a more challenging way of framing a roof because of the change in pitch on the rafters as well as the bottom flares. The eyebrow dormer accenting the one-story mudroom connector is another iconic architectural detail that requires finesse, as does curving the traditional eastern white cedar shingles in a few key places, such as the windows at the gambrel peaks. "All these special moments add interest, and complexity, but in Jeff Sweenor, we knew we had a builder who could do it all," says Don Powers.

**ABOVE:** The second-floor landing has extra storage or hangout space for the occupants of the two bedrooms off of it. A wallpaper mural helps give this space its own identity. It is one of the house's numerous HVAC zones, enabling room-by-room comfort; each zone is controllable with a smartphone app.

**ABOVE AND LEFT:** The garage's gambrel roof framing allows for lofty ceilings and angled walls that add a fun element to the room over the garage. Set up as a game room, complete with freestanding bar and vintage poker table, it could serve as a hangout for 20-somethings. It is accessed via a stairway in the mudroom.

As a practical plus, the weather-resistant materials used on the house add durability to the exterior and mean less maintenance down the road. Preprimed radiata pine exterior trim conveys a traditional look but also offers the moisture resistance that comes from a modern pressure-treating process. The capped-polymer decking and porch flooring for the house's multiple outdoor-living spaces provides a wood-like appearance that's splinter-free underfoot and also rot- and mildew-resistant. On the roof, thick fiberglass asphalt shingles stand up to sun, salt air, and wind, and are also algae-resistant.

Innovative materials and high-tech systems increase the home's energy efficiency as well. Closed-cell spray foam insulation fills the cavities between the framing timbers, with side and roof house wrap creating a layered barrier against cold and moisture. The hurricane-rated wood windows feature insulated laminated glass and aluminum-clad exteriors. For room-by-room comfort, the team chose single-phase variable refrigerant flow (VRF) for the HVAC system, enabling each room to have its own thermostatic control. It should improve
the house’s energy efficiency by as much as 40 percent over a conventional system.

The family who eventually lives in the house can feel secure in the knowledge that the easy-to-use smart-home security system will ensure reliable monitoring and alerts. Wireless lighting controls can be set for different scenarios—such as “coming home,” with bright entry lighting, or “relaxed evening,” with soft ambient illumination—as well as occupancy sensors. The security system includes not only smoke, carbon monoxide, and intruder detection but also remote access to live video feeds with an e-mail or text-message alert system.

Multiple spaces for outdoor living, each with its own distinct look and all easily accessed from inside, provide the indoor-outdoor-living ideal popular today. The wraparound front porch evokes the traditional porches of Shingle-style houses but is designed a roomy 8 feet wide to allow for easy circulation and furniture placement. A backyard deck off the kitchen provides space for dining outdoors, with a durable...
RIGHT: Tucked into the back of the house, a deck and patio offer casual entertaining space that’s screened from neighbors. Exterior doors lead out from the kitchen and screened porch; their three-over-one cottage style echoes the windows and is consistent throughout the house.

BELOW: A door in the dining room accesses the wraparound front porch and its swing. Keeping the home safe is a smart security system that includes cameras for intruder detection, e-mail alerts, touchscreen keypad displays, and a mobile app.

BOTTOM: Every beach house benefits from an outdoor shower enclosure—this one, made of weather-resistant cellular PVC, is built off a rear corner of the garage.

But the screened porch off the living area may be the real open-air showpiece, according to Don Powers, who predicts that it will be one of the most-frequented spaces in the house. “With its fireplace, you can use that room well into fall and even winter,” says Powers. “We intentionally didn’t make the screens go all the way down to the floor. Instead, we added a solid board-and-batten wall for the lower 30 inches, which creates more of an enclosure.”

The end result of the collaborative spirit—and skill—of the design and building team is clear from the first sight of the Idea House, with its mix of modern materials and amenities and classic architectural details. “There’s a nice balance here,” says Powers. “One of the interesting things about this house is that it shows that a traditionally designed house can meet every modern need, from energy efficiency to comfortable, stylish living.”

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PORCH, FLOORING AND DECKING: AZEK
PATIO PAVERS: Unilock
EXTERIOR LIGHTING: Barn Light Electric
SHOWER ENCLOSURE: Walpole Outdoors
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OUTDOOR FURNISHINGS AND ACCESSORIES: hayneedle.com
HOME SECURITY SYSTEM: Bosch Landscaping: Matthew Smith for Shalvey Bros.
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