

A day at the beach house

Work is under way at our 2017 Idea House in Rhode Island, where traditional architectural features combine with modern building techniques to create a family home with a relaxed coastal sensibility **BY JILL CONNORS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI**



TOP: Sweenor Builders crew members do porch and trim work on all three levels of the 2017 Idea House, with an assist from a basket crane.
INSET: An artist's rendering of the house, which features classic elements of coastal New England architecture.

➔ **AS BUILDER** Jeff Sweenor does a lap around the job site in East Matunuck, Rhode Island, he points out some of the iconic New England architectural features that are emerging on TOH's 2017 Idea House: an eyebrow window, shingled roofline sweeps, a pair of gambrel roofs, a wraparound porch. Even better, to his mind, is the house's dual personality. "There's a great combination of old-style architecture and modern building techniques and materials," says Sweenor. For instance, while he is using pine for all the exterior trim—traditional on New England houses—this particular type has been developed to have new attributes. Called radiata pine, it is specially treated to be more moisture-resistant. Grown from saplings that are pruned every year to eliminate knots, the harvested

pine is pressure-treated in a solvent-based preservative (versus water-based ones that make other pressure-treated pine quite heavy), then kiln dried. "I love working with real wood, as long as it can withstand the weather and moisture," says Sweenor. "Radiata pine can do everything regular wood does, without the negative effects from water. And it takes paint well." There will be plenty of innovation on display inside the Idea House, too, with a flexible floor plan that enables all the living to happen on one level if desired, or on multiple levels as needed. "The main intent was to design the house so the floor plan supports a multigenerational approach," says project architect Christina Carlson of Union Studio. "This house can welcome empty nesters who want to live entirely on



TOP: The wood-look capped-polymer porch deck will be impervious to water damage.
LEFT: Contractor Jeff Sweenor trims out one of the hurricane-rated, aluminum-clad wood windows as his son, Ryan, an apprentice on the job, stands ready to assist. **TOH** TV host Kevin O'Connor dropped by to check out the house's progress.
ABOVE: Ryan Sweenor readies a preprimed radiata pine trim board for installation.

HOUSE WRAP, ROOF UNDERLAYMENT: GCP
WINDOWS: ANDERSEN
PORCH FLOOR: AZEK
EXTERIOR TRIM: LIFESPAN SOLID SELECT

RENDERING: UNION STUDIO ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN



Spray-foam insulation boosts energy efficiency in the loft above the garage, which will be finished as a game room with a vaulted ceiling that showcases the gambrel-roof structure.



LEFT: Jeff Sweenor has been building custom houses in Rhode Island for more than 25 years.

BELOW: Crew members install zinc-coated copper on the eyebrow window; the long-lasting roofing material contours better to an eyebrow shape than standard roof shingles do.

SPRAY-FOAM INSULATION: ICYNENE
ASPHALT ROOF SHINGLES: GAF

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the first floor, or a family that spreads out across all three levels. There are spaces for entertaining and plenty of room for big family gatherings.” A dog wash has even been designed into the mudroom, addressing the important role that the family pet has come to play, says Carlson. With open-plan living spaces, a half bath, and a master suite downstairs, the 3,150-square-foot house will also have two more bedrooms, two more baths, and a bunk room upstairs.

Individualized comfort is woven into the Idea House with its innovative HVAC system, as well, with each room being its own zone. The system’s single-phase variable refrigerant flow (VRF) allows for a separate temperature control per zone. “Every room has a thermostat, so you can have one room at 65 degrees and the room next door at 75 to suit individual tastes,” says Sweenor. The Carrier system also makes use of simultaneous heat-and-cool technology to recover heat from one area of the house to use in another, helping improve its overall energy efficiency.

Efficiency is also on display throughout the building envelope, with spray-foam insulation and high-performance, hurricane-rated windows, as well as a vapor-permeable weather-resistant house wrap, a self-sealing watertight roofing underlayment, and long-wearing laminated asphalt roof shingles.

The design extends the living space outdoors with a wraparound front porch, a rear screened porch off the living room, and a rear deck off the kitchen. “Outdoor living has taken on a whole new meaning and importance,” says Sweenor, who has been building custom houses throughout Rhode Island since 1989.

Beach-inspired colors and materials will add the final touch to the exterior, with weather-resistant cedar-shingle siding prestained an oyster-gray hue and vivid blue aluminum-clad wood windows. Once construction is complete, the interior design will continue the theme, with lots of cream, taupe, and gray tones, and washed and pickled finishes that suit the seaside look.

Constructed from long-lasting materials, with a flexible floor plan that can welcome multiple generations, and thoughtful room-by-room comfort built in, this is one hardworking beach house. For the family who will live here, life should feel like a vacation 365 days of the year. 🏠



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