

New Design & Construction – less than 5,000 sq.ft.
 Winner: **Braulio Casas Architects, P.A.**



Project: Residence,
 Seaside, FL

Architect: Braulio Casas
 Architects, P.A., Seaside
 FL; Braulio Casas, design
 principal; Alexander Remen,
 project manager

Contractor: Arkon Group,
 Inc., Rosemary Beach, FL;
 Hamid Joodi, principal

Gulf Tower

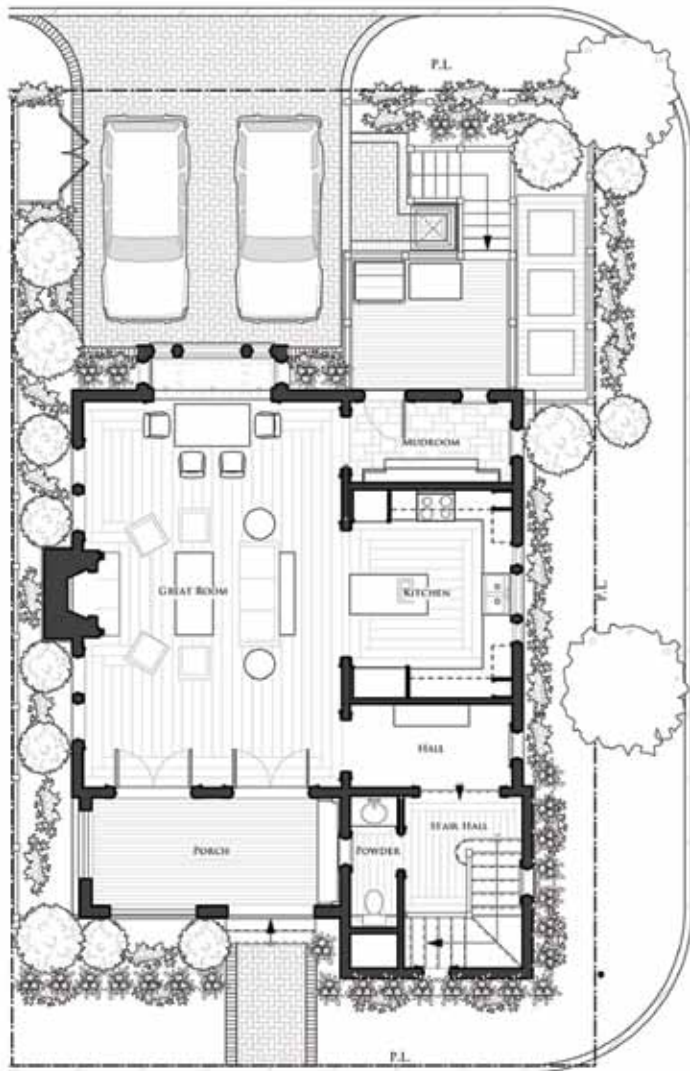
On a small lot on Forest Street in Seaside, FL, a four-story tower rises above a new 3,000-sq.ft. house, serving as an urban marker at the eastern entrance to the New Urbanist town. Along with creating a sense of arrival and departure, the tower also provides both circulation for the house and expansive views of Seaside and the Gulf of Mexico. Inspired by English and Southern Carpenter Gothic traditions, “57 Malvern” (it takes its name from the owner’s childhood address) is the latest of eight Seaside projects by Braulio Casas Architects over the last four years.

As a point of departure for 57 Malvern, principal Braulio Casas and his team evaluated the corner lot in terms of good urban manners and best practices, and what kind of approach they wanted to create from the east side. “Very early on, the tower started to emerge as that element,” says Casas. “It also allowed us to begin to think about efficient ways of circulating vertically within the interior. By and large, traditional architecture provides some wonderful models of what is truly efficient. As you look at the different residential models that we constantly see, the reason that they stand the test of time is that they really are efficient. That allowed us to take that three-dimensional, urban element and also use it in on the interior for circulation.”

The house is the sixth of 18 houses that will be built in the extreme east corner of Seaside. From the beginning of the design process, Casas and his team set out to elevate the quality of this iteration of the town by pushing the limits of the Seaside design code. “We didn’t want it to look like a three-story building, and to be able to give the appropriate contrast between the two forms [house and tower], we thought the two-and-a-half-story model would work perfectly without losing substantial footprint,” says Casas. “So the massing took shape from the standpoint of the contrast that we wanted to create between the two forms, the contrast that we wanted to create between the house and the surrounding area, and the kind of character it meant to the inside and the outside.”



The new 3,000-sq.ft. “57 Malvern” house in Seaside, FL, was designed by Braulio Casas Architects to fit into the urban context of the New Urbanist town while drawing on the owner’s English roots. All photos: Jack Gardner



Casas says that for a design to resonate and have a sense of harmony within Seaside, it needs to follow the code, but that it needn't be a mere regurgitation. "Not every house needs to be three stories," he says, "because then the street scene becomes very basic and mundane. So we supported the code by changing it ever so slightly. If anything, I think we reinforced certain aspects of the code, and hopefully allowed for this to stand as a model of how to improve it."

The design team also drew on precedents from further afield, resulting in a house that reflects its neighbors while also honoring the owner's English heritage. "He was very interested when we started to talk about other influences that the house might have – the Carpenter Gothic being one, and his ties to both England and New England. So we found models in the South that gave us the sense of the Carpenter Gothic, but we also looked at models from Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. Some of those very early Colonial models gave us the sense of the English that he very much appreciated – the kick that separates the base from the main body of the house, and the modillions have a birds-beak character reminiscent of a Gothic profile."

Instead of initial cost savings, materials were chosen and measures were taken with an eye toward long-term benefits. For instance, the siding and shingles are sealed on all sides. "If any moisture gets in behind the shingle or siding, it is allowed to drain and/or evaporate and not penetrate the siding," says Casas. "This is something that you don't see often enough, but it is an old practice. We added a furring strip, which adds an airspace behind the shingle and the siding, thus allowing it to breathe. From the beginning, the client was on board with pursuing a beautifully put together house, in terms of design and the craft of the building."

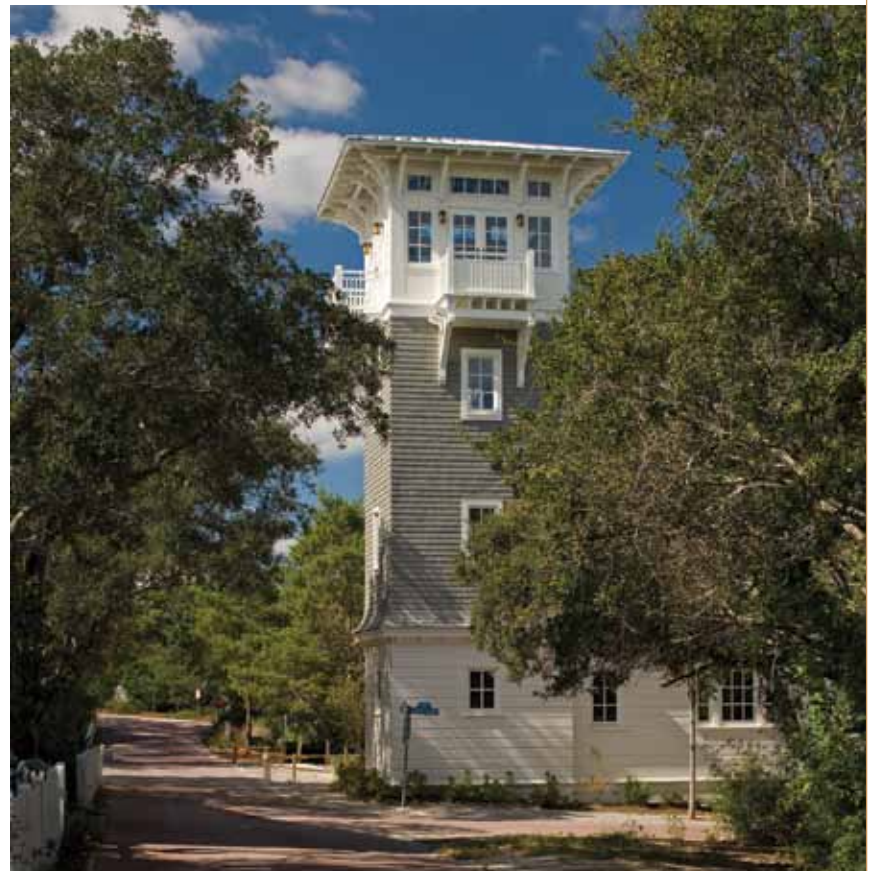
While the house takes up most of the small lot, the firm took advantage of limited outdoor space with a front porch. "The tower provided us the ability to set that space back," says Casas, "and gave it a little bit more dignified entryway into the house." While most traditional houses have a foyer or vestibule, this design is a bit more casual, allowing the porch to provide the sense of transition usually conveyed by those spaces.



On the first floor (left), which includes an entry porch, deck, mudroom, great room, open kitchen and a powder room, expansive windows maximize natural light and ventilation. The west elevation (above) reflects the house's English Arts and Crafts tradition with its wood shingle siding and reclaimed-brick chimney. Floor plan and elevation: courtesy of Braulio Casas Architects

In the interior, the east side of the house contains the service and circulation areas – stair hall, kitchen, mudroom – while the west side features a large, open living room. "The openness of the living room, dining room and kitchen was really a reflection of what one wants to do when one is at the beach," says Casas. "Everybody is participating at one time – from playing cards in the corner to having a snack on the kitchen table to maybe watching a soccer match – as the client is a huge soccer aficionado."

The second floor features guest and master bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry room and a porch off the master bedroom. As the client plans on using the house as his primary residence when he retires,



The tower at the southeast corner of the house provides interior circulation and views of the Gulf of Mexico; it also functions at the urban scale, marking one of the eastern entrances to Seaside.



Drawing on a Carpenter Gothic tradition employed in many southern locales, the belt course is animated with brackets in the form of bird's beaks.

the design had to incorporate sufficient storage, closet space and an expansive feeling in a limited area. To that end, the bay window on the second-floor porch gives the master bedroom more spatial quality without increasing the overall footprint. The bay window provides a sitting area in the interior and adds an architectural element to the porch.

"It's been said that when designing houses in Seaside, we're basically designing finely tuned boats," says Casas. "You have to use every square inch that you possibly can. In terms of the tower, it seemed that it would be very interesting if this tower felt fairly nautical and maritime. The balconies on either side make it feel like you're going out on the crow's nest – it's really quite breathtaking from up there. This is the place to take in sunsets, and the third-floor deck off of the family sitting room is a nice place to take in the sunset as well. Plus, you open



The open living room, dining room and kitchen facilitate social gatherings; the dining area is defined by a window seat and chandelier, while a reclaimed-brick fireplace anchors the spaces.

all of those doors and the windows on the opposite side and the breezes take care of any kind of ventilation needs, even in the hottest times."

Key suppliers for the project included Salisbury, NC-based Old Carolina Brick, Panama City, FL-based LaRocca Architectural Millwork and Amissville, VA-based Henselstone Windows & Doors. The lighting was supplied by Restoration Hardware and Portland, OR-based Rejuvenation; hardware was supplied by Whitechapel of Jackson, WY, Nanz of New York, NY, and Rejuvenation; and plumbing fixtures were supplied by Irvine, CA-based Perrin & Rowe and Kohler, WI-based Kohler.

"For us, it was about crafting the best house we possibly could for our client, because we knew that this would be an asset to Seaside," says Casas. "So if it was an asset to Seaside and an asset to the client, then we felt that we met all of the needs – and it just so happens that we like it too." – Will Holloway



The tower provides the primary circulation for the house (above); it also offers expansive views (left) of Seaside and the Gulf of Mexico.