

# New England HOME

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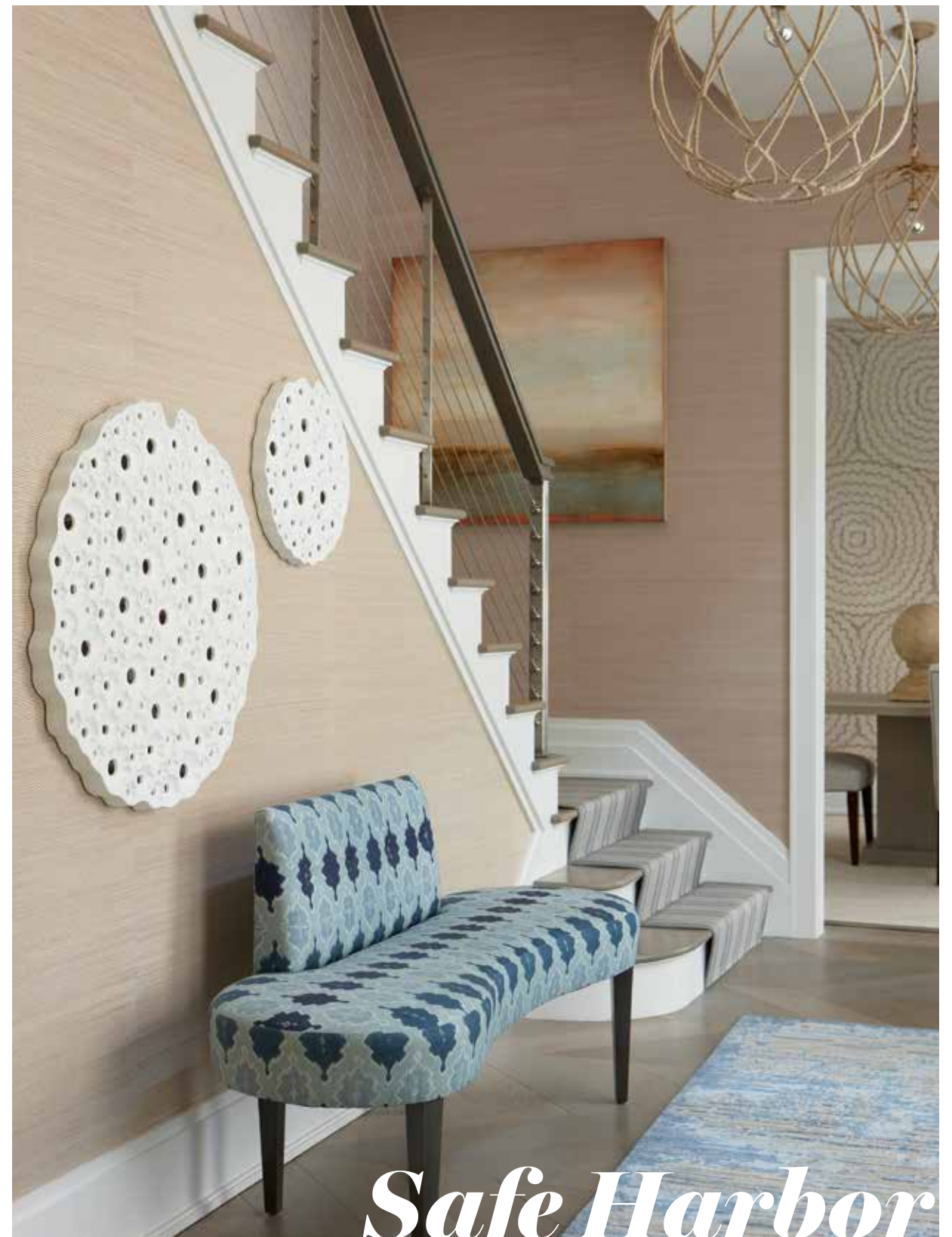
Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

## High- Impact Design

Styles may differ, but the  
goal is the same: livability  
and visual punch



Oversized Schumacher Feather Bloom wallpaper adds drama to the dining room, where an elegant Ro Sham Beaux chandelier hangs over a custom dining room table and chairs. **FACING PAGE:** Coral-like wall art and a shimmering rug announce the home's subtle nautical theme in the foyer. A custom bench is fashioned with an ikat pattern that gets repeated throughout the house.



## *Safe Harbor*

Custom touches turn a brand-new waterfront townhouse in Greenwich into a warm, personal sanctuary.

Text by **Bob Curley** | Photography by **Michael Partenio** | Produced by **Stacy Kunstel**



A custom table reflects the geometric pattern on the rug in the family room, which effortlessly steps out to a harborside patio through a vanishing glass wall. Subdued, sandy tones on the sofa and wallcoverings are enlivened by pops of blue from the toss pillows and twin ottomans.

**IT** was the biggest job of Lauren Muse's career. She was hired to design the interiors of The Harbor at Greenwich, a development on the shores of Smith Cove that included four single-family homes and seven condominiums. Despite the large scope of the project, however, the job still ultimately came down—as it always does—to matching the skills of the designer with the individual tastes of the buyers.

"Initially, we selected and designed all the hard surfaces, from the cabinetry design to tile, faucets, and lighting," Muse explains. "But as the homes started to sell, we were hired by many of the homeowners to complete them with furnishings, as well."

John and Michele Tesei were among those clients. Michele was familiar with Muse's work—she's the principal real estate agent for the project—and became so enamored with The Harbor that she and John eventually decided to buy one of the single-family homes for themselves.

"Lauren and I did the model home together, and then I picked out the finishes on the house that John and I ended up buying," Michele relates. "I chose what I would have wanted if it was my own house—and then it was."

The Teseis moved into town from a country Greenwich estate, but with 7,000 square feet of living space, the new place wasn't exactly a pied-à-terre. "Downsizing to a property that size is pretty funny, but that's Greenwich," says Jim Carnicelli, president of the Gateway Development Group,

#### PROJECT TEAM

**Architecture:**  
Kevin Molnar, Gateway Development Group

**Interior design:**  
Lauren Muse, Muse Interiors

**Builder:**  
Gateway Development Group



**RIGHT:** A built-in banquette cozies up to a glass-topped table in the breakfast nook. **LEFT:** A sloped custom range hood and a pair of Geo Lantern pendants from Ilex Lighting are the eye-catching features of the kitchen. The cabinetry has backlit glass cutouts displaying keepsakes.



which designed and built The Harbor specifically to appeal to Greenwich residents looking to trade their backcountry houses for a “new urbanism” lifestyle of low-maintenance homes within walking distance of downtown.

Muse’s main design challenge centered on maximizing the efficiency of individual rooms and ensuring a sense of flow from one space and floor to the next. Spread over four levels—with a below-grade in-law apartment, first-floor common spaces, second-floor bedrooms, and a roof deck—the house is unusually “vertical,” she notes.

“Even though the home is quite large, the rooms, while plentiful, are compact,” says Muse. Clever designer tricks help these smallish spaces feel larger. In the kitchen, for example, Muse snuggled a built-in seat into a bay window to create a casual dining area. A custom glass-topped table keeps things light and airy. “Practically every piece of furniture is custom made, so we can control the scale and proportion in each room,” she says.

Muse also favors a degree of design consistency from room to room, “so if you want to move things

around, they all relate to each other.” Thus, for example, the Indonesian ikat patterns seen on the custom chair in the foyer are encountered again in throw pillows in the living room and bedroom, and even the window shades in the breakfast nook.

Predictably, a home with abundant water views from patios, decks, and an expansive rooftop favors a nautical motif, but under Muse’s direction, it’s admirably restrained. There’s nary an anchor or sailboat to be seen; rather, the colors of the bay are reflected in the blue/beige/grey color scheme and especially

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in the choice of materials, textures, and decor. “The owners wanted a sophisticated coastal look—a nod to the fact they are on the water, but in an elegant way,” Muse says. “The color palette is very natural and blends seamlessly throughout the home.”

Perhaps the best example is in the foyer, where round resin panels resembling coral are hung over

grasscloth walls, while open-weave hemp ceiling fixtures cast light on a hand-knotted wool and silk rug that shimmers like water. In the adjacent dining room, a seagrass and hemp chandelier pairs with geometrically patterned Schumacher Feather Bloom wallpaper. “You don’t need to have any artwork in this room, because this is artwork,” says Muse of



**LEFT:** The vibrant living room centers on a round Ralph Lauren seagrass table with a glass top; the chairs are covered in a mix of Romo and Schumacher fabric to match the Stark Carabello carpet.  
**RIGHT:** Cabinets with a built-in sink and refrigerator pair with a gas grill to create a seasonal open-air kitchen perfect for entertaining.

**THIS PAGE:** Parquet-style teak flooring covers the expansive roof deck that sports an outdoor fireplace and flat-screen TV. **FACING PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** The master bed is accessorized with a custom headboard, bench, and pillows covered in Quadrille fabric. The freestanding tub is an island of serenity in the master bathroom, with plenty of natural light reflecting off of the herringbone-patterned tile floor.



the attention-grabbing wallcovering. “I love how the foyer and dining room relate to each other. It’s tranquil and inviting—beckoning you to come in and stay awhile.”

Quiet but significant custom touches abound throughout the home. Bedside tables, for example, are fronted with leather to add a bit of warmth and texture; the Visual Comfort pendant hanging over the breakfast table has a custom linen shade accented with a strip of slightly darker grosgrain ribbon.

When it’s time to be bold, however, Muse doesn’t hold back. Custom living room chairs covered with sunlit navy and white fabrics swivel to take in the views of the bay through a retractable glass wall; in the middle sits a statement-making seagrass coffee table.

Another sliding glass wall opens from the living room to a waterfront deck with a barbecue, refrigerator, and sink built into teak cabinetry, and chairs upholstered in durable sailcloth. It’s perfect for summer meals, but when it comes to entertaining the fun tends to migrate to the spacious roof deck with its full outdoor kitchen, ample seating, and spa.

The size of the home may be comparable to the one it replaced, but with its multiple layers, “it lives



**“T**his is the kind of place where we can grow old together,” says Michele Tesei. “I think this is where we will end up—what’s not to love?”

differently,” says Michele. With an apartment on the garden level, John’s mother has her own private space, as do the couple’s adult children when they come home to visit and settle into the guest suites on the second floor. Yet the compact rooms mean the house never feels empty. “It can be as big or small as we need it to be when it’s just the two of us, but it houses a big family when the time comes,” says Michele.

When not providing safe harbor to family or entertaining friends, the couple can usually be found watching the boats bob on Smith Cove from the family room or having breakfast on the deck off the master bedroom—unless it’s baseball season, when John is on the roof deck watching his beloved Mets on the outdoor flat-screen TV.

Kayaks are just a few steps away from the Teseis’ back door, and downtown Greenwich’s shopping, dining, and entertainment venues aren’t much further off than that.

While the couple isn’t ready for retirement, “this is the kind of place where we can grow old together,” says Michele. “I think this is where we will end up—what’s not to love?” ■

**RESOURCES :** For more information about this home, see page 158.

