WHEN DOWNSIZE BECOMES UPSIZE, A LIGHT-FILLED DREAM HOUSE COMES TO FRUITION

“They were hoping to downsize, but they built a house bigger than the one they were in,” Howard Lathrop says. The architect, who runs Sellars Lathrop Architects with Ann Sellars Lathrop, is describing the contemporary Fairfield County home he designed for a healthy and active couple. The architects were dealt a challenging site—long and narrow, with no central distribution point or axis around which rooms would naturally organize themselves. That’s part of how the house got first stretched and then bigger. It’s not the first time the size shift has happened: “It becomes the dream house; they want the porch, the kitchen, they want this and that, and it adds up,” Lathrop explains.

Instead of the typical neighboring farmhouse with lots of tiny rooms, the clients “wanted something open and light and bright,” and that’s what they got. Massive planes intersect with equally massive windows, and the entire house is a study in airy geometry and careful articulations of frame, color and material. A double-height living room looks out over the water, two enormous sofas angling in toward each other, while an industrialesque catwalk overlooks the house. Its size feels like it fluctuates depending on program, one of the architectural highlights. “For most of the week, they feel as if they’re living in a one-bedroom house,” Lathrop says. “And yet when they entertain on weekends, there’s a nice big space in the summer where inside goes right to outside.”

Inside Story (clockwise from top left) A barely there staircase leads to a wall of glass overlooking the water. Kitchen cabinetry blends seamlessly into the crisp ethereality of the rest of the house, while a Chaise longue from Design Within Reach adds texture and detail. Sunroom seating is from Dedon’s Slim line collection, and drum side tables are from Design Within Reach. Outside, tile from Baciello mosaics, slivers of glass and lengths of stone (not seen) come together to form an angular yet inviting exterior. RH lounge chairs (front) and Tauci umbrellas line a pool and adjoining hot tub, while an expansive deck adds outdoor living to the home. See Resources.