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CASE STUDIES

## A Seaworthy Modern Family Home Built to Withstand the Elements

This contemporary custom house for a young family of five is built to withstand the salty sea air, coastal storms, and generations of use—guaranteed

BY SHELLEY D. HUTCHINS, LEED AP AUGUST 5, 2024





This project takes advantage of all developable space including rooftops to take advantage of the mild climate, views of the surrounding bay, distant ocean vistas, and unbeatable sunsets. | Photos courtesy Patterson Homes

This three-story modern house occupies almost its entire waterfront lot in Newport Beach, Calif. And while it might seem like it was complicated to build a more than 4,000-square-foot home on around a third of an acre lot, this was a straightforward project for builder Andrew Patterson, owner of [Patterson Custom Homes](#). The builder is used to working in dense neighborhoods and constructing buildings to endure Southern California's coastal environments.

Another reason for the ease of building this siry, open house is Patterson's frequent collaborations with the same architect.

The builder estimates he's completed around 150 houses just with Chris Brandon, owner of [Brandon Architects](#), who designed this house. This consistent partnership allows Patterson to quote costs early and accurately. He gets involved during the design phase, which avoids most surprises to the budget or the build.

"We describe our firm as design-build because we work with architects like Chris from the beginning and can build to the clients' budget," Patterson says. "Instead of shocking clients with a bid based on their completed design, we show them three or four houses similar in size and style to what they want and tell them what it costs."



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## All-Inclusive Pricing Mitigates Budget Shock

Another key reason Patterson can avoid budget shocks is his insistence on always using the highest quality materials, mechanical systems, and products.

He explains that building this close to the ocean means they're effectively building a boat, and the high-quality exterior finish materials that come standard in a Patterson custom home reflect it. Not only does this approach create houses that last for generations, and reduce cost overrides or change orders if clients want, say, frameless glass shower enclosures, but it means Patterson's employees don't have to constantly upsell.

"Brass hardware and copper or zinc flashing, for example, are the only materials that can withstand the salt air and wet environment here," Patterson says. "But the cost is four times as much as standard specs, so clients can get worried. But I just do all-inclusive pricing for durable finishes, so everyone on my team knows what to order and no one has to sell upgrades. It's an assembly line for high-end."



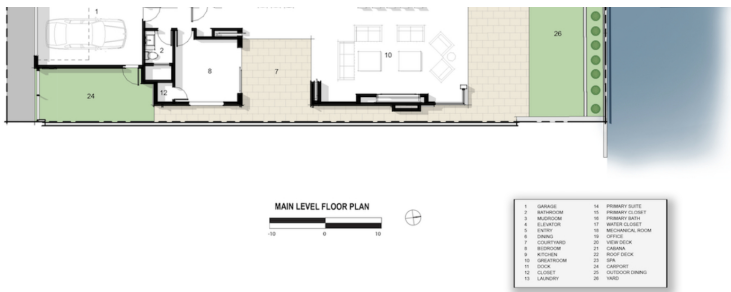
WHERE THE COURTYARD CUTS INTO THE FLOOR PLAN, A RECTANGULAR DINING AREA SEPARATES THE OPEN KITCHEN AND GREAT ROOM FROM THE ENTRYWAY, GUEST SUITE, AND TWO-CAR GARAGE. CLEAR WHITE OAK FLOORS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE PROVIDE A LIGHT FOIL TO THE HEAVINESS OF BOARD-FORMED CONCRETE FIREPLACE SURROUNDS AND DARK MILLWORK. PHOTOS COURTESY PATTERSON CUSTOM HOMES

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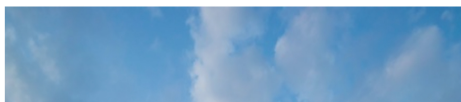




## Low-Maintenance Products for Longevity

Durable and beautiful materials used on this house include board-formed concrete, which anchors exterior and interior walls, aluminum composite planks that mimic wood acting as a bris soleil on the second story, plus clear western red cedar on the eaves, garage door, and privacy fence.

Powder-coated black aluminum-framed **windows** and doors complete the long-lasting ensemble of exterior finishes. In addition to withstanding salty sea air, these materials are fire-resistant and require little to no maintenance.



**A Lifetime  
Guarantee**



Patterson feels so confident in the quality of the firm's finishes that they offer a lifetime—maintenance program called Custom Care. More than 100 clients are enrolled in the program—including these homeowners.

The firm creates a list of all maintenance needs for each custom house, from HVAC filters to power washing to screen repairs, and plugs the list into a computer program to organize the maintenance timeline for each project.

In addition to hassle-free home upkeep, the program records everything done to the house so

the homeowners can provide it to sellers, who can then continue enrollment in the program if they choose. Patterson will share his [customcaredtech.com](https://www.customcaredtech.com) system later this year with builders across the country.

## Maximizing Views, Light, and Air

For the clients and their three young children, the key goal was to create an open floor plan with abundant natural light and fresh air. And keep the little one safe while keeping the views intact.

Spreading the three-story floor plan out across the lot's maximum buildable area allowed for an outdoor space to be cut into the center of the house along one side.

This compact courtyard—surrounded by operable glass windows and doors—brings sunlight and fresh ocean breezes into first-floor public spaces and guest suite, as well as the four bedrooms on the second floor. Frameless glass railings on the stairwell and second-floor walkway let natural light from the courtyard flow throughout the interiors.

Although a bistro table and chairs sit in the three-story space, the “courtyard is more about getting air and light into the house rather than a usable space,” says Patterson.

Narrowing the central section of the floor plan to accommodate this courtyard gives homeowners another requested feature—a bedroom suite separate from the rest of the house.



WESTERN RED CEDAR CONTINUES SEAMLESSLY FROM BENEATH THE SECOND-STORY EAVES INTO THE OWNER'S BEDROOM. PATTERSON EXPLAINS HOW THEY'D CUT SINGLE PLANKS OF THE WOOD AND INSTALL IT ON EITHER SIDE OF THE WINDOW FOR PERFECTLY MATCHED GRAIN ENHANCING THE ILLUSION OF AN UNINTERRUPTED PLANE CONNECTING INSIDE TO OUT. | PHOTOS COURTESY PATTERSON CUSTOM HOMES

Perched above the great room, this waterfront primary suite enjoys abundant views of Newport Bay through a floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall sliding, stacking glass wall. A section of fixed glass abuts the sliding door generating a transparent corner. The same frameless glass railings from the landing cross the wall-sized opening and turn the entire room into a generous Juliet balcony.

Above the bedrooms, a trio of roof decks look out across the Balboa Peninsula in all directions capturing ocean and bay views. The deck on the bay side of the house sits higher than the rest of the rooftop spaces to solve a ceiling height challenge.



In order to achieve soaring 12-foot ceilings in the great room, the primary suite is slightly elevated, which also bumps up the deck above it. To meet neighborhood height restrictions but maintain safety and sightlines, Patterson once again turned to frameless glass railings embedded on top of a low wall.

## How to Build Smoothly in a Tight Space

Another seemingly tricky aspect of building to the edges of a waterfront lot involves building it. How did Patterson store materials on site and get products—like nearly 20-foot-wide glass doors and a hot tub—in place? How did the builder avoid upsetting neighbors or possibly even damaging their homes given such tight side access?



PUSHING BACK THE SECOND-FLOOR CIRCULATION SPACE AND RUNNING THE CENTRAL STAIRWELL ALONG THE SIDE

...COMING BACK THE SECOND-FLOOR ENCLOSURE OF AC AND RETURNING THE CENTRAL STAIRWELL ALONG THE SIDE WALL ALLOWS LIGHT FROM THE COURTYARD AND THE REAR WINDOW WALL TO FLOW UPWARD INTO THE CORE OF THE HOUSE. THIS ALSO MEANS FEWER WINDOWS ALONG THE SIDE ELEVATIONS TO INCREASE OCCUPANTS' PRIVACY.

“A big part of a smooth build within a tight space is layering subcontractors—knowing who’s there when and for how long—to keep the schedules tight,” Patterson says. “There’s no parking or room for material staging, so making sure once the plumber is done, electrical can come in, and so on. It’s a more linear schedule.”

As for keeping neighbors happy and safe, Patterson sticks to a routine that’s worked for 25 years. He gives every neighbor a letter listing the construction schedule and workday routines. The letter also includes phone numbers for all team members and Patterson’s cell phone. This approach forms a positive connection and eases most concerns for the neighbors.

The firm wraps every project in scaffolding and windscreens once framing is up to protect surrounding dwellings. As for getting those massive pieces of glass and other large materials or products in place, craning them over the top of the house and installing them on-site is the only option.



**Project:** West Bay Ave Residence, Newport Beach, Calif.

**Location:** Newport Beach, Calif.

**Square Footage:** 4,612

**Builder:** [Patterson Custom Homes](#), Newport Beach, Calif.

**Architect:** [Brandon Architects](#), Costa Mesa, Calif.

**Interior Designer:** [Jodi Fleming Design](#), Newport Beach, Calif.

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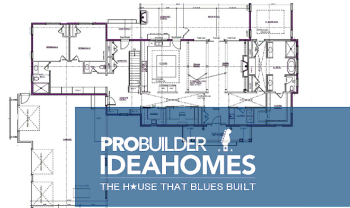
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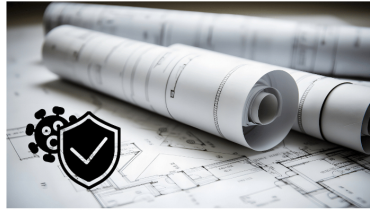




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