

# Home



JERSEY HOME MAKEOVER

# Mod world

Couple replaces bungalow with modular 'prefabulous' home

Kimberly L. Jackson For The Star-Ledger

The little bungalow right off the beach in Manasquan was flooded in Hurricane Sandy — but its owners of less than a year figured they would get it back to usable shape for Shore days while they decided on their ultimate plans.

With a repair list that kept growing and two daughters away at college, however, the bank executive and his wife decided that downsizing from their home in Howell to a rebuilt beach house in Manasquan was the right thing to do — sooner than later.

They would hire Manasquan-based Atlantic Modular Builders, which delivered their three-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom custom home in seven pieces on flatbed trailers. The factory-built modules came together in a three-story dwelling worthy of inclusion in "Prefabulous Small Homes" by Sheri Koonen, an author who has written extensively about prefabricated houses.

Dubbed Olde Seawatch for its proximity to the U.S. Coast Guard Station, the new house was built taller in answer to the constraints of its small lot.

"The lot is only 25 feet wide, so it didn't lend a lot of options," said Atlantic Modular Builders' Ryan Scott Meyers who designed the house, built in Pennsylvania by Excel Homes. To comply with updated flood zone regulations that require Shore-area houses to be lifted above future floodwaters, the house has a site-built ground level, constructed around timber piles sunk 20 feet below ground.

"We set the modular units on top of those pilings that are sticking up eight feet out of the ground," Meyers said. The ground level is all garage and storage space. Its concrete floor is walled by a flood-friendly fiberglass sheathing called Dens-Glass. James Hardie fiber cement siding was used for the exterior, which is trimmed with Azek PVC molding. The moisture-resistant materials help make the ground level flood compliant, Meyers said.



At left: The original beach bungalow in Manasquan before it was torn down by Atlantic Modular Builders to make way for a three-level beach house. Just above is the house after its big make-over.

"If floodwaters come up, it won't grow mold, it won't deteriorate. It will dry out and look exactly the same as when you installed it," he said.

The couple also added a flood-friendly outdoor living area designed by JM Lifestyles of Randolph. It features a proprietary lightweight concrete-based material molded into water-resistant tabletops, counters, planters and other elements that look like wood.

Since the couple, who wished to remain anonymous, built the 1,900-square-foot house as their "forever home," an elevator was installed along with a staircase to access its three levels. The kitchen, a half bath and a family room opening to a deck with water views are on the home's top floor. The couple chose GE Monogram appliances in stainless steel, including a 48-inch dual oven range. The counters are "leathered" granite with a sheen-free finish. Wide-plank hardwood flooring is used throughout the house.

On the middle level, the master bedroom has a walk-through closet to the master bath. Two smaller bedrooms share a bathroom, and the long hallway is lined with shelves for books and decorative objects.

"Most people are surprised at how much design variety we can put into the modular process," Meyers said. He estimates that the cost of modular construction is about 10 percent less than that of a traditionally site-built house. "When people are wanting to build that really nice house, they are starting to look in the modular direction," he said.

"I think we utilized every inch of this narrow, small lot to the best of our ability," the wife said. "We got in everything that we wanted to."

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## All the details

**What they renovated:** A small beach bungalow was demolished and replaced by a new three-level home.

**Who did the work:** Atlantic Modular Builders of Manasquan was general contractor; custom cabinetry by Jaeger Lumber; JM Lifestyles of Randolph designed the outdoor kitchen and bar area.

**How long it took:** About nine months including design decisions and appliance purchases. Demolition began in February 2015 and the house was ready for occupancy by July 2015.

**What they spent:** "The original budget was \$550,000, but we went over that," the wife said. Much of the added expense was related to the backyard dining and entertaining area, she said.

**Where they splurged:** "Definitely the backyard," the wife said. The outdoor living area has Lynx appliances and several custom concrete elements including the bar top and a water feature dining table with a small stream that runs through its center.

**How they saved:** They didn't. "Building this house, we tried to look at it as 'This is our forever home,'" the wife said. "We looked at it as investing in our future and our children's future."

**What they did themselves:** "We chose everything, we tweaked the design," the wife said. In fact, the wife's choices in surface materials and colors resulted in her being hired part time by Atlantic Modular Builders to help other customers with such decisions. "Coming from a customer's perspective helps me out," she said of her consultations.

**What they like most:** The master bedroom and the backyard. "I like the way we have a bedroom that flows into a walk-in closet into the master bathroom," the wife said. "It's an open concept, but it feels open without losing the privacy."



**From top:** The outdoor living area of the Manasquan beach house built by Atlantic Modular Builders. The water-feature table, bar counter, planters and other elements are made of a concrete mixture molded to resemble wood. Take a look at the third-level family room. The second-level master bedroom includes a walk-through closet to the master bath. *Photos courtesy Atlantic Modular Builders*