



Comfortable furniture beckons in the family room (above), which replaced a dilapidated screened porch; an iron Formations chandelier from Holly Hunt hangs from the vaulted shiplap ceiling. Adirondack chairs (opposite) take in the vista from a perch above the water.

*A design team crafts a welcoming  
retreat on the Severn River*

# FAMILY TIME

*Text by Paula Peters Chambers | Photography by Matthew Dandy*



Seen from the bay side, the sprawling house features gabled volumes, pergolas and easy access to the pool. Speight Studio Architects converted the pool house into a guest cottage.



**W**hen a retired couple discovered a one-and-a-half-acre property on a bluff overlooking the Severn River in 2018, they knew how lucky they were. They were eager to move from the DC suburbs to a home they could enjoy and share with their family: five adult children, all of whom are partnered, and a growing crop of grandchildren. “We fell in love with the site first and foremost,” the husband says. “Though the house had a lot of issues, we knew we could turn it into what we needed for our family and lifestyle.”

The parcel included a 4,000-square-foot, three-bedroom clapboard house built in 1952 that had been added onto over the years, leading the husband to describe it as a “Chesapeakeglomeration”—a hodgepodge of rooms with no particular architectural style. The captivating waterfront lot also featured a four-car garage, a pool and a pool house that was being used as a gym.

The interiors were less than appealing. The small kitchen was designed for a couple, not a crowd, and a cramped layout made gathering spaces tight. The owners envisioned an open, welcoming floor plan that would offer room for family members to spread out, whether relaxing or in work mode. They also wanted to make the most of the panoramic river views. However, strict regulations on the narrow, rectangular lot ruled out a significant expansion.

The couple turned to Speight Studio Architects and Mueller Homes to craft and execute a renovation that would stay largely within the home’s existing footprint. “It was generous, but the living space wasn’t what one would expect, given the size of the house,” recounts project architect Stephanie Cook. “What was needed was a new vision for the floor plan.”

The renovation happened in stages. First came a reimagining of the two-story garage, where the fourth car bay became a mudroom and gardening area. Unfinished space above it was redesigned to accommodate a two-bedroom apartment with a full kitchen. Next, the pool house was converted into a one-bedroom guest cottage, adding even more living space for guests.

The final stage was the main house. Critical area rules made adding onto the back impossible. So to create the generous proportions desired, the design team conceived a brick-clad addition of roughly 300 square feet at the front, facing the driveway. “It complements the existing structure without feeling heavy,” observes Mueller Homes’ Paul Mueller, Jr. “The brick gives it an Old World look that ups the curb appeal.”

Renovation Architecture: D. Wayne Speight, principal; Stephanie Cook, project architect, Speight Studio Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. Interior Design: Melissa McLay, Melissa McLay Interiors, Annapolis, Maryland. Kitchen Design: Kitchen Encounters, Annapolis, Maryland. Renovation Contractor: Mueller Homes, Annapolis, Maryland.



Clockwise from top, left: The home nestles on a one-and-a-half-acre bluff; piers cater to activities on the water. A mature wisteria vine grows atop a pergola. The family room’s gabled roofline is seamlessly integrated with the existing structure. The approach to the house reveals the small addition, fronted in thin Georgetown brick.





The kitchen island boasts V-groove paneling and posts with chamfered edges. Brass-accented Robinson pendants are from Visual Comfort Signature and the bar chairs are by Vanguard. A Roman shade in Carolina Irving fabric was sourced through John Rosselli.



Clockwise from opposite, far left: John Himmel chairs woven out of palm fronds occupy the family room; windows, sourced at Loewen Window Center of Annapolis, frame the view. A beverage bar displays glassware in the kitchen, where cabinetry is custom-painted in Benjamin Moore's White Dove. The spacious laundry room sports a window seat overlooking the front drive. A coffee station is among the kitchen's enhancements. A playful Cole & Son fish print papers the powder room walls. Herringbone brick flooring and wood countertops set the butler's pantry apart from the kitchen.



## “The home has a fresh, traditional look that feels relaxed.”

—Melissa McLay

The addition, which encompasses the relocated laundry room and pantry and a new powder room, required the removal of an interior wall—and gave the kitchen its much-needed expansion. Now, an open-plan kitchen/dining area spans the depth of the house from driveway to rear. A cedar-wrapped ceiling beam, crafted on site by the Mueller team, was added for support between spaces. “It’s a good accent and also differentiates between the kitchen and eating area,” Mueller says.

Designed by Kitchen Encounters, the enlarged kitchen features abundant cabinetry and plenty of workspace arranged around a seven-and-a-half-by-six-foot island. Designer Melissa McLay, who spearheaded the interiors, conceived its clean, crisp palette, which combines white custom cabinetry with pops of blue in a tile mosaic above the stovetop and on the island, painted in Benjamin Moore’s Van Deusen Blue. Just steps away, the pantry offers additional workspace, with ample storage and countertops and a wall of shallow shelves tailored specifically to spices and other cooking needs. In the updated laundry room, a new window provides symmetry to the home’s front façade.

The redo also called for replacing a 14-by-17-foot screened side porch with a water-facing family room boasting two walls of windows. “Most 20th-century homes built on the water weren’t really situated to take advantage of the view,” observes Cook. “They were oriented toward the street. Now we craft views to the water.” A 14-foot-tall cathedral ceiling built on site by Mueller Homes gives the space a sense of drama; it’s covered in shiplap and embellished with poplar beams in a decorative scissor-truss pattern.

When it came time to choose furniture and finishes, McLay followed her clients’ mandate to create a coastal cottage feel and complement the water views. She purchased new furnishings with clean, classic lines and selected neutral upholstery, with pops of color in the couple’s favored blue and green. “The home has a fresh, traditional look that feels relaxed,” she notes.

Further visual interest comes through varied patterns in window treatments and eye-catching accents; McLay incorporated textured fabrics, woven materials in wood tones and brass fixtures that complement new white oak floors. “All the walls and millwork are white, so I balanced that out and added warmth,” she says. “The entire space is fun, happy and welcoming.”

The homeowners are delighted with their finished abode. “We wanted to create a seamless integration of outdoors and indoors,” says the husband, “so that wherever you are in the house, you can see the river or gardens and trees.” Mission accomplished. ▲



A woven-seagrass bed anchors the primary suite, where Fabricut Cael wall covering conveys a soothing vibe and conjures a connection to the outdoors. A French door opens to the backyard, with water views beyond.