

# DESIGN + DECOR

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# PERFECTLY PITCHED

Angles and symmetry define this Narragansett  
retreat by Cardello Architects

Story by Anna von Stelzer-Wirth  
Photography by Robert Benson





The graceful silhouette of the roofline  
landscape—elegant whimsy.





Curbside appeal is redefined with sweeping roofless and a collage of materials.

Fortune favors the prepared mind.” These sage words of Louis Pasteur come to mind when listening to Robert Cardello of Cardello Architects describe his pathway to becoming an architect—and working on this project in Rhode Island.

As a student at Tulane University in New Orleans, Robert knew early on that he wanted to pursue a creative field of study, but he was initially interested in film studies. It wasn't until after his first year at Tulane that he fully committed to a major in architecture. He spent the summer after freshman year completing the credits required to continue the rigorous five-year program—and the rest is proverbial history. Upon completion of his master's degree in architecture, Robert returned to his home state of Connecticut and worked in high-end residential architecture before branching out on his own in 1999. With offices in South Norwalk and Greenwich, his firm specializes in custom residential projects, but has a growing portfolio of commercial contracts as well.

A former client who was a member of the exclusive Carnegie Abbey Club in Portsmouth, RI, recommended Robert to a future neighbor. But the prospective client had already engaged an architect—who'd already drawn up plans—when Robert entered the scene. The property is very narrow at the front and opens up in the back towards Narragansett Bay, resembling a pizza slice. The original design did not take full advantage of the sweeping views, however. “I went out on a limb, grabbed the plans and sketched a dif-



A detail of the soaring, double-height great room.



A medley of stone, glass and exquisite millwork define the elegance of the great room.

ferent floor plan, which stretched out the back of the house so every room would have a view,” recounts Robert. The client was thrilled with his design, and Robert was positioned to take over.

### Coastal Vistas—and Whimsy

Located along the coastline of Narragansett Bay, the roughly 11,000-square-foot summer residence was executed in Shingle-style. This is the predominant theme in this community and also features prominently in coastal architecture throughout Rhode Island. Here, Robert satisfied the client’s wish for a whimsical design with interesting rooflines.

Built around a great room with double ceiling heights, the plan offers a balance between open areas and more intimate spaces. “In this house and in many of our designs, we pull the stairs out of the core of the house,” explains Robert. “In this design, the stairs were housed in the tower, which is more whimsical architecturally. You can create an open floor plan that is less conventional and, in this case, better suited to the clients’ needs.” The clients had a specific program in mind, which included a first-floor master suite. First-floor living is a trend

that is gaining popularity, especially in second homes. The upper floors were spaces dedicated to visiting family and other guests.

Although still decidedly an open plan, the kitchen and adjoining eat-in area represent a more intimate environment, with sprawling vistas onto the bay area. It’s Robert’s favorite space in the house. The client also required a home office, which Robert tucked away in the crow’s nest. The office also boasts stunning views and, although it is deliberately a private and separate space, it remains connected to the greater whole.

The house is intended to be a place of relaxation and fun. An exceptional basement offers a movie theater, billiard room, fitness area and wine cellar. An infinity pool and fire pit were also included in Robert’s design and executed by the builder. Robert’s responsiveness to the property’s shape and inherent restrictions enabled such an exhaustive plan.

### Symmetrical Integrity

The design had to comply with the rigorous guidelines set







The open kitchen and eat-in area offers stunning views of Narragansett Bay.



A glimpse of the breathtaking views from the open kitchen.



The home office is a more intimate space with spectacular vistas.



A fireplace in the master suite.



One of the guest bedrooms, located on the upper floors of the home. The abundance of natural light and varied ceiling heights make this room exceptionally inviting.





forth by Rhode Island's Coastal Resource Management Council. "I was able to stretch the back of the house by 30 feet, which was significant, by stepping the house along the setback line," explains Robert.

A rear view of the house reveals the division of space and its related function. The stone anchors the two wings of the home, which house the master suite and open kitchen, respectively. "The house has a nice gentle feel to it, and it spreads its wings in the back," says Robert. "There's something soothing about symmetry, and it was a prevailing idea that we had in this design."

### Rhode Island Roofline Redux

While the back of the home is open, the front gains its visual interest in the spectacular rooflines. "I knew it was going to be a big house, but I wanted the scale to be appropriate," explains Robert. "I wanted the roof to drop as much as possible, and doing this requires technical finesse—you have to be fluid and careful to stitch the dormers and stair tower together."

The verticality and precise

A rear view of the home highlights the stepped approach to Robert's design.



angles of the gables are offset by softer contours. Tucked beneath the eyebrow roofline, the main entryway opens into a hall and leads to the double-height great room—an uninterrupted flow facilitated by Robert’s decision to redirect the location of the main staircase.

Although they wanted a sophisticated and elegant residence, the clients explicitly rejected a “formal” home. Materials were also chosen to reflect this wish. The selective use of stone was intended to anchor the house. A prefinished white-cedar clad-

ding envelops the upper stories, which are crowned by red-cedar roof shingles. The result is a collaged aesthetic with a textural fluidity.

The clients had a bold and exhaustive program that Robert accomplished in fulfilling. He considers himself a facilitator, he says, “with a lot of creative thought sprinkled on top.” By manipulating a floor plan to ensure views from every room, integrating symmetry to anchor and balance, and relying on the traditions of the local vernacular to express the individuality



The sweeping integrity of Robert's symmetrical design.

of the design, Robert succeeded in creating an innovative and decidedly unique expression of his clients' vision.

"We do not have a signature style," he notes. "Every client is unique, and their requirements, along with a comprehensive site analysis, are the starting point for our designs." Good architecture does not rely on subscribing to a style or following trends. Timeless architecture honors the principles of design and aligns with the maxim that form indeed follows function. Steeped in these traditions, Robert and his team at Cardello

Architects are poised and prepared to execute whatever fortune has in store.

*Resources:*  
*Cardello Architects*  
*Robert Cardello*  
*97 Washington Street*  
*South Norwalk, CT 06854*  
*203.853.2524*  
*cardelloarchitects.com*