



Developer Mike Close wanted to expand the coastal aesthetic in building this home; one of the ways he accomplished that is through the private two-story courtyard. The interior spaces are tied together with pale oak floors and mahogany.

STORY

COASTAL CONTEMPORARY

MODERN MATERIALS, CLEAN LINES AND A 'HIDDEN JEWEL' MAKE THIS CORONA DEL MAR HOME A SHORELINE STANDOUT.

BY LISA LIDDANE
STAFF WRITER

For seven years, Mike Close would drive down the streets of his Irvine Terrace neighborhood in Corona del Mar and imagine what it would be like to create a house on one of the lots that runs parallel to the Pacific Ocean. Built in the late 1950s, most of the properties on the "Terrace"-named streets were deep and provided ocean views from the backyard. Some homes had been torn down, others remodeled, but quite a number remained untouched since their midcentury beginnings.

When a Galatea Terrace property became available in 2011, Close, president of Spinnaker Development, a boutique builder of luxury custom homes, lost no time in bringing in his previous collaborators, architect Chris Brandon and interior designer Kevin E. Smith, to fulfill the vision of a "soft contemporary residence." The new spec home was purchased before it was completed last year by a private couple who declined to be identified.

As someone who grew up in Newport Beach, Close understands what people look for in a coastal home. Doors are folded open to let the ocean breeze waft in. When a property has an ocean view, in this case, "straight on views of the jetty,

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PHOTOS: JERI KOEGEL

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Newport Harbor and Catalina Island,” as Close put it, the rest of the home is oriented toward maximizing that vista.

But he also believed that there was room to expand the definition of the coastal aesthetic, which in Newport Beach tended to be classic and traditional. For him, it could be contemporary and sophisticated.

That much is evident in the façade of limestone bricks and the horizontal mahogany-paneled front gate and garage doors, which make a vivid statement from the curb that what lies beyond is different from other homes in the neighborhood. “We felt that the ultratraditional/ Cape Cod feel was heavily used in Irvine Terrace, and we wanted this project to be unique in its architecture,” Close said. “This marquee property afforded the opportunity for an edgier design, with clean lines, modern materials and warm color palette.”

When the front door swings open, a glimpse of ocean and sky blues at the far end of the house draws you in. But once inside, you discover that you’re in a two-story courtyard, which Close called the “hidden jewel” of the home.

“We decided to undergo a subterranean build to provide a dramatic increase in both indoor and outdoor living space,” he said. “This proved to be a ‘wow factor’ space when entering the property. We did sacrifice some livable square footage with this design, but this allowed for a significant amount of usable, private outdoor space, which is not often achieved with view properties in Newport Beach.”

Close outfitted the courtyard with a 12-foot-high water wall, built-in fire pits, limestone walls, mahogany paneling and a two-story living green succulent wall. With upholstered bench seating and club chairs, the lower level of the courtyard is made for outdoor entertaining and serves as the entryway into a bedroom suite and the second of the home’s unexpected features, a basement that comes with a movie theater and a huge walk-in wine cellar behind the wet bar.

Rather than going with the cliché billiard table as the focal point of the game room, Smith designed a custom concrete table tennis table. “Pingpong is pretty hot,” Smith said.

Upstairs, the living room, dining room and kitchen are all arranged in one expansive and airy open space that overlooks the ocean and is unified by the pale oak floors, the white walls, and touches of dark mahogany everywhere. For these spaces and throughout the house, Smith chose clean-lined contemporary furniture and a palette of pale blues, grays and whites – the

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The courtyard area includes architectural elements, planters and a reflecting pool. The interior of the home uses a palette of pale blues, grays and whites so as not to compete with the views.

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MIKE CLOSE

PRESIDENT,
SPINNAKER
DEVELOPMENT



Large windows and glass doors throughout the home let in ocean breezes and offer spectacular views.



Limestone and mahogany set a modern tone. Close wanted to distinguish the house's facade, as well as its interior, from the Cape Cod aesthetic of the neighborhood.

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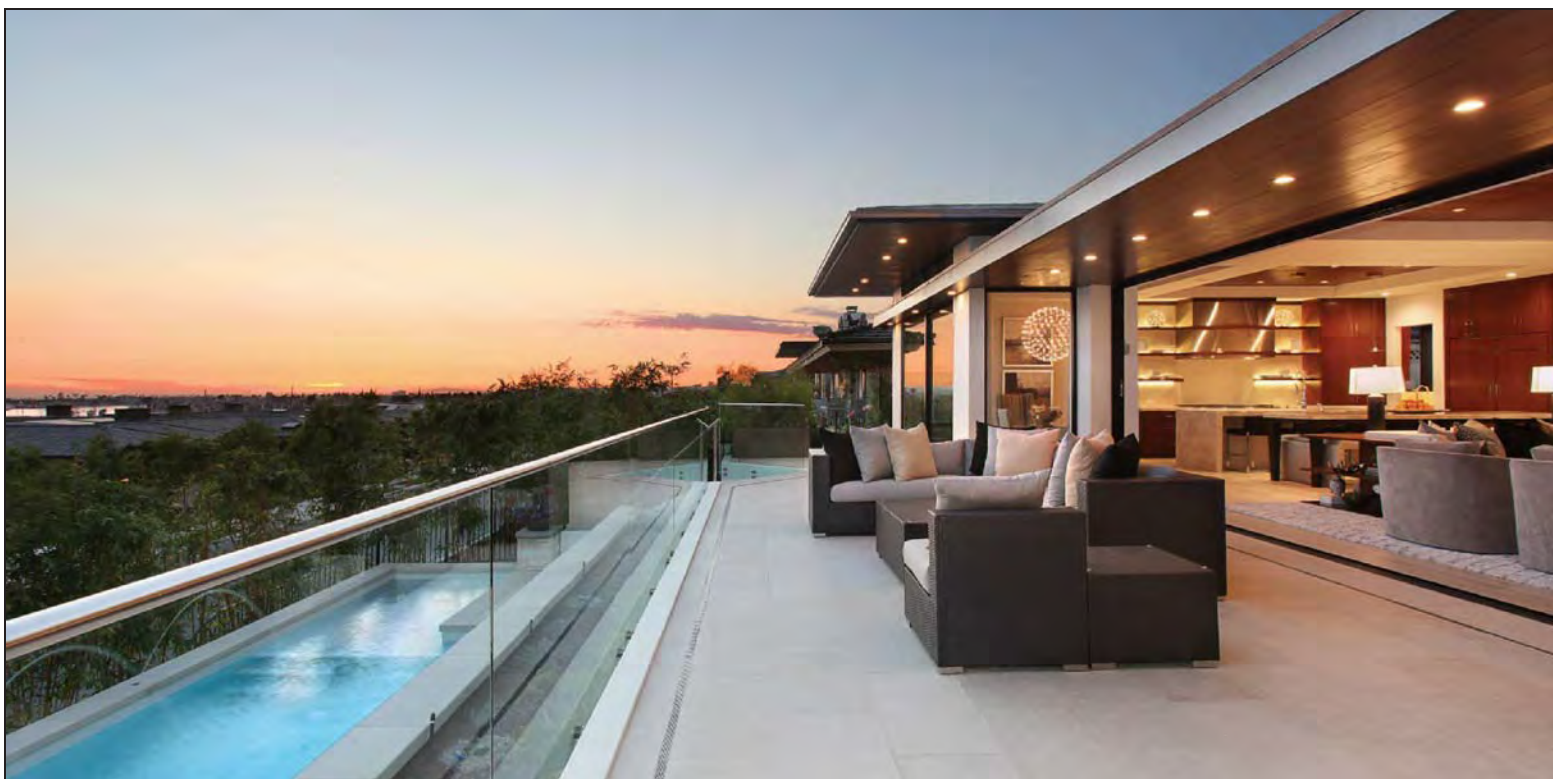
mainstays of coastal decorating palettes, as well as black, champagne and browns. “We didn’t want the interiors to compete with the view, so we went for understated,” he said. “The steely blues in the palette were a reference to the water and sky.”

Close intended for the property to be turnkey from the beginning, so Smith’s task was to select and design the furnishings to appeal to a range of potential buyers, yet still evoke the sophistication of a luxury custom residence. The designer paid special attention to making sure that the art was culled from various sources.

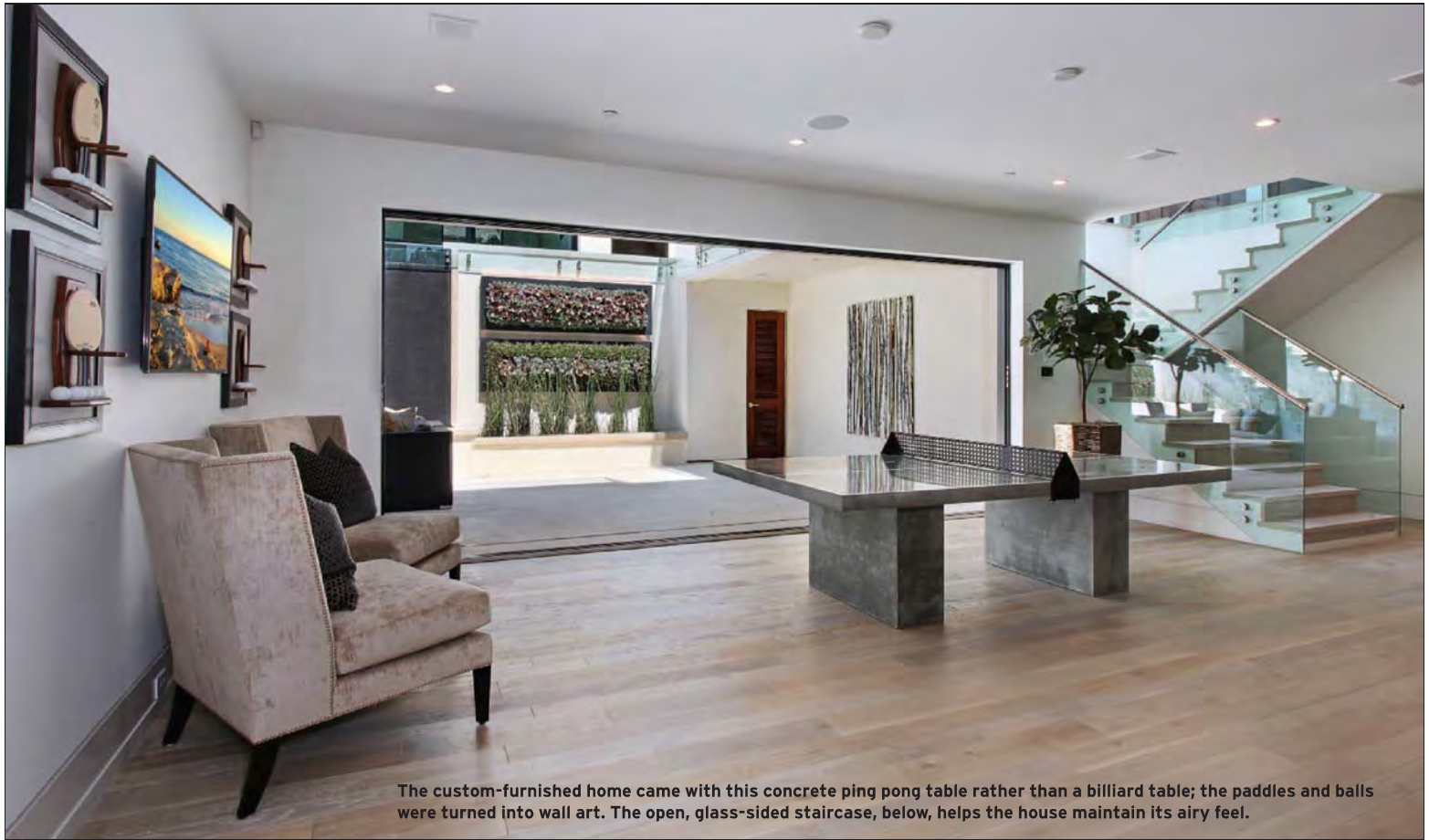
“We feel strongly that the interiors need to be cohesive with the architectural elements of the home,” Close said. “More often than not we learn that our future homeowners are either downsizing or upsizing, and typically their furnishings from their prior residence may not be aesthetically correct or sized appropriately for some space. So the interior package is comprehensive, including all furniture, artwork, window treatments and knick-knacks or shelf fillers. This is spec’d down to the picture frames, place settings and tissue paper holders. Our buyers were shocked with the amount of detail provided as well as the extent of items. This >>



The home's neutral palette and modern furnishings are reflected in the master bathroom, which also offers ocean views and outdoor access.



The pool and spa are on a lower level than the living spaces, utilizing the bluff and accessible by the decks and staircases that expand the home's living space.



The custom-furnished home came with this concrete ping pong table rather than a billiard table; the paddles and balls were turned into wall art. The open, glass-sided staircase, below, helps the house maintain its airy feel.



is not a staged home – it's custom-furnished."

Integrating a bluff into the overall design of the property was one of the challenges of the project, Close said. But he and his team chose a terraced approach to get the most out of the yard behind the house. Rather than placing the swimming pool and spa at the same level as the living room and dining room, they positioned both on the lower level and added decks and staircases on either side of the pool for easy access. To create the feeling of privacy, they lined the edge of the property with a curtain of bamboo. These elements, along with minimalist lounge chairs on the upper deck and doors that folded open to create a seamless flow between the indoors and the outdoors, transformed the bluff into a dramatic entertaining space.

Close knew he and the others in his team had nailed the project during a preview party that Spinnaker threw for neighbors and industry professionals after everything was completed. "I remember studying our guests' reactions as they entered the property, surprised by what was behind the gate," Close said. "One after another stopped in awe."