

## new kid on the block

On the Florida Panhandle's Emerald Coast, a house in Alys Beach puts the "new" in New Urbanism



**f**lashback, circa 1980: A drive down the Florida Panhandle's Gulf Coast guarantees views of ho-hum brick ranch houses, neon motel signs, and quickly multiplying high-rises. On a stretch of land between Destin and Panama City Beach, however, looms the promise of Seaside, a burgeoning planned community charged with radically changing the future of residential development along these shores. Flash-forward to that same stretch of land today: Carefully crafted towns dot the now famed Highway 30A, scattered with joggers and bikers, upscale restaurants, families walking to

the beach, and friends having coffee; bookstores, ice-cream shops, and small businesses frame bustling town squares. The sense of community is unmistakable.

This is the stunningly successful result of northern Florida's New Urbanism movement, a cluster of historically inspired towns and close-knit neighborhoods where residents can shop or earn a living without even bothering to get in the car. "The communities carry on the tradition of idyllic Tuscan or charming Cotswolds towns, where general accessibility reduces time spent behind the steering wheel," says Steve >

Houses in Alys Beach are made of reinforced concrete blocks clad in white stucco siding—a soothing contrast to the bright colors in nearby communities.



The living room (above) features abundant natural textures—hemp slipcovers, an abaca rug, driftwood lamps by Bleu Nature, Kravet linen curtains, and Dominican coral stone floors. Alys Beach houses include private courtyards (near right) with small gardens and pools that provide a respite from the outside world. Reclaimed red gum wood cabinets and pendant lamps by Gervasoni add natural warmth to the sleek kitchen (far right).



Mouzon, an architect at Mouzon Design in Miami and founder of the New Urban Guild, an agency that promotes people-friendly architecture. “New Urban homes have held their value. The town amenities aren’t just a bunch of services—they’re the start of a whole new way of living.”

Since Seaside was designed, to great acclaim, by the architecture and urban planning firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company in 1981, a smattering of towns adopting the same core principles has popped up along the Emerald Coast. (See “New Urbanism on the Gulf,” page 53.) Alys Beach, also planned by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, is the newest addition to the fold—and perhaps the most revolutionary. While Seaside homes are designed with wide front porches to encourage interaction with neighbors, Alys Beach homes are closer to neighboring houses, sometimes even attached. To incorporate a sense of privacy, they feature vestibule entries into interior courtyards that offer homeowners a break from foot traffic outdoors. Furthermore, while Seaside is a self-contained town, Alys Beach is divided into zones that range from rural (lining inland wetlands) to urban (surrounding the town plaza near the Gulf), giving residents a wider selection of housing options. “Seaside and other earlier New Urban communities seriously affected the design of those that followed,” says Andrés Duany, New Urban guru and principal at Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company.

Alys Beach houses, including the Steve Mouzon-designed home featured here, >





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building at the beach



have a sophisticated air, clad in all-white stucco that gleams brightly next to the turquoise Gulf water. Reinforced concrete-block exterior walls and concrete-tiled roofs offer protection from termites, heat, humidity, and hurricanes; the white stucco is both moisture-resistant and sun-reflecting. Inside, vaulted passageways and thick, plaster-clad timber walls create the illusion of heavy-duty masonry walls found in historic European buildings. All of these components helped Alys Beach earn a Fortified classification—a measure of natural disaster resistance—from the Institute for Business & Home Safety. “The shell of the buildings is far stronger than anything I’ve ever worked with before,” says Steve, who traveled to Bermuda and Antigua (a UNESCO World Heritage city in Guatemala) to study architectural structures that have faced similarly harsh conditions. “Bermuda’s buildings are made to >

The walls of the master bath shimmer with Tessera glass mosaic tile by Oceanside Glasstile.

building at the beach



### 30A STYLE

You'll find all kinds of communities along Highway 30A, from pioneering Seaside to funky Grayton Beach. *30A Style* (Design-360, 2011) by Eleanor Lynn Nesmith, with photographs by Jean Allsopp, takes readers on a design tour of this beloved stretch of coast.



The master bedroom's Balinese mosquito netting is suspended with fishing line.

withstand hurricanes, while those in Antigua have some of the best-looking private courtyards on Earth."

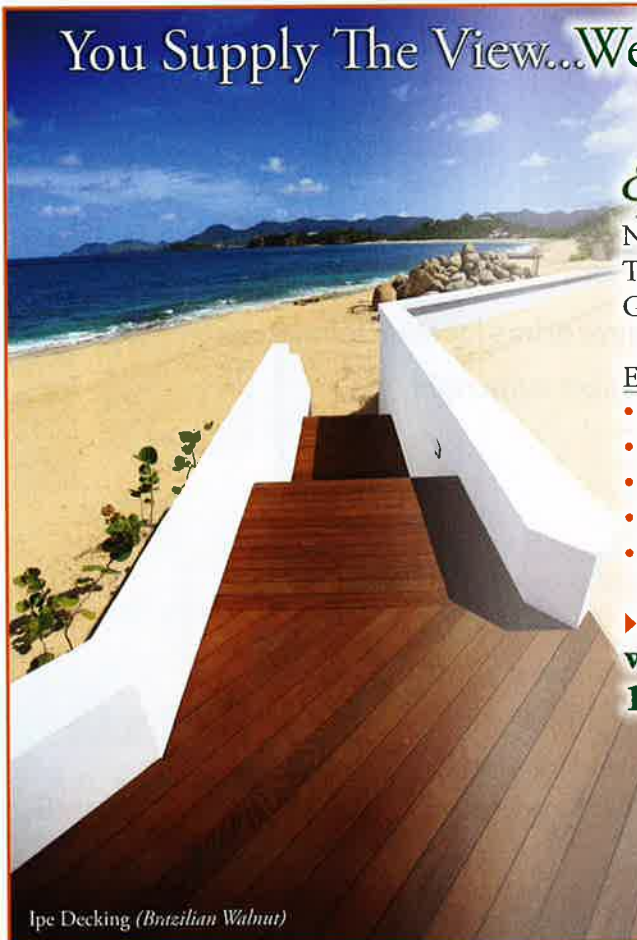
Smart design and a tranquil, polished look define the courtyard home's decor. "I like to use a white canvas in beach houses," says Grayton Beach-based designer Beth Dillard,

who designed these interiors. "Some people want color, but the sun can bleach it. You can bring in different tones with your accessories and artwork." Beth prefers to add dimension to monotone interiors with natural textures such as linen and hemp, reclaimed wood millwork, and woven rugs. Such elements offer a soft counterpoint to sleeker finishes, such as the coral stone floors. "I use a lot of stone, tile, and concrete in warmer coastal climates

because those materials are cool to the touch and make for easy cleaning of all the water and sand that are inevitably tracked in," she says. A sensible point, one in keeping with the logical directives of New Urbanism. After all, despite all the advancements at Alys Beach, it's still a beach house in the end. 🌿 Sources: page 110

BEDROOM: COLLEEN DUFFLEY; BOOK: TED TUCKER; OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF WATERCOLOR, COURTESY OF DUANY PLATER-ZYBERK & COMPANY, DAVID HILLEGAS, COURTESY OF ROSEMARY BEACH; MAP: CLAIRE CORMANY

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