

New Design &amp; Construction – less than 5,000 sq. ft.

**CURTIS & WINDHAM ARCHITECTS, INC.**

**PROJECT:** SEASIDE AVENUE  
RESIDENCE, SEASIDE, FL

**ARCHITECT:** CURTIS & WINDHAM  
ARCHITECTS, INC., HOUSTON, TX;  
WILLIAM CURTIS AND RUSSELL  
WINDHAM, PRINCIPALS

**ABOVE:** Curtis & Windham Architects, Inc. of Houston, TX, designed a Palladio Award-winning vacation home on the last un-built lot of Seaside Avenue, the most prominent street in Seaside, FL. An elliptical form was incorporated at the center of the continuous double-height porch on the street-facing elevation. All photos: Paul Hester (Hester + Hardaway Photographers)

## Seaside Retreat

The master plan of Seaside, FL, one of the country's first New Urbanist towns, designates Seaside Avenue as its most prominent street. As part of its design code, each house on the avenue is required to build a continuous double-height porch that faces the street. Throughout the years, this has rendered a homogeneous effect of similar buildings and porch treatments on undifferentiated façades. While the code was put in place to maintain a certain standard and sense of continuity in Seaside, it also encourages range and expression as each home is required to be stylistically different from the next.

In 2010, when the clients of Curtis & Windham Architects of Houston, TX, asked them to design a vacation home on the last un-built lot on Seaside Avenue, they saw the porch stipulation as an opportunity to explore a different approach. The

firm had previously designed a house for the clients in the Houston suburbs and was given pretty much carte blanche for this project.

"We looked back at 19th-century architecture that was built up and down the East Coast for Victorian-esque forms," says principal William Curtis. "We looked particularly at a house in Newport, RI, called the Isaac Bell House for inspiration in curvilinear forms. We didn't want a big long rectangular porch so we incorporated an elliptical form in the middle that we thought harkened back to the era we studied. Our design extended 5 ft. beyond the building line and we were given the variance to build it. That is the town's way of saying, 'we think this is a neat idea and it is worth doing.'"

A white picket fence at the property line encloses a small front yard and in-ground bubbler fountain where brick pavers lead to the double-level porch.

Both levels feature an elliptical outdoor room set between two rectangular spaces. The lower level room functions as a living room and is furnished as such complete with a built-in bench. Gas lanterns, fabricated by New Orleans, LA-based Bevolo Gas & Electric Lights, and swinging benches create a welcoming atmosphere in the rectangular spaces for the entries into the house. A pediment frontispiece differentiates the main entry and provides some asymmetry on the front elevation.

The upper level is relatively private with a 12-ft.-dia. daybed at the center of the room and is flanked by seating areas on either side. Above, exposed ceiling joists draw attention to the cone-shaped gable covered with a lead-coated copper roof supplied by Morrell Architectural Systems, Inc. of Tampa, FL. The Doric entablature on both levels is complemented by solid wood turned columns designed by the

