

FEATURING THE FINEST ESTATES OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

# ANNAPOLIS HOME

**TIDEWATER  
MODERN**

**PREMIER CUSTOM BUILDER SHOWCASE**

**VISION ON WEEMS CREEK**

**THE HIGH-HEELED GARDENER**

**RESTAURANT REVIEW:  
THE BLACKWALL BARN & LODGE**

Vol. 10 No. 4 2019





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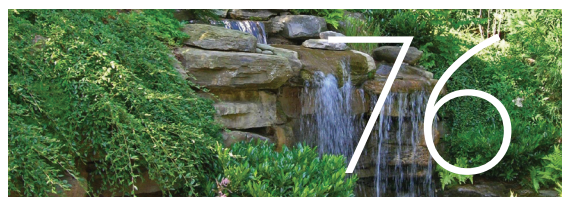


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On the Cover: Dining room from "A Modern Tidewater Home"  
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on Weems Creek

A magnificent home that began in one man's imagination a decade ago takes shape on Weems Creek.





# A VISION *on Weems Creek*

LUMBER & BUILDING EXECUTIVE APPLIES PROFESSIONAL  
EXPERTISE TO PERSONAL DREAM PROPERTY

Before, this hill was impassable. Now oversized pavers form an inviting pathway amid the native woodlands.





Drawing by Marta Hansen



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By ELIZABETH HEUBECK  
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BURROUGHS

Homeowners Frank Cicero and his wife Lori moved into their Annapolis home in November 2018, but the vision for it began almost a decade earlier. Cicero knew he wanted a house with a water view. Having traveled the country and grown up on Baltimore’s east side, he was familiar with Annapolis and drawn to its aesthetic appeal.

Always envisioning building a new house that, as he put it, “looks old,” Cicero found his “aha” moment while sitting on a Delaware beach in the summer of 2009. Leafing through a local magazine dedicated to the Chesapeake Bay region, he came across an article profiling a striking house designed by Annapolis architect Marta Hansen. Cicero contacted her immediately. They soon began work on conceptualizing the family’s multi-generational, picture-perfect home that boasts thoughtful details inside and out, as well as breathtaking views from virtually every room. Cicero enlisted Matt Long of Gate One Builders to make his vision a reality. Long explains that “our team consisted of many talented craftsmen. Every detail was carefully considered by the entire design team.”





The interior decor is welcoming, with each space well-proportioned. Comfortable furnishings and mood-lifting colors inspire both conversation and introspection.



Accentuating the home's classic American sensibilities in the dining room and study are handmade furnishings by Thos. Moser.

Cicero, a self-described obsessive-compulsive, is a 35-year veteran and COO of 84 Lumber Company and therefore was not a hands-off client. Initially acknowledging that he was “pretty involved” in the process, Cicero eventually admitted that he had a hand in, as he put it, “every little crevice” of the home project. He’s quick to add that the home’s interior was “his wife’s canvas that she painted on.” Long notes that “Frank and Lori both had independent but equal roles in developing the finishes. Frank very much focused his attention on the exterior aesthetics and Lori had immense interest in the interior design and selections.” As it turns out, the couple’s meticulous input served the project well.

Even before entering the home, the property boasts distinctive features. Near the front door, for instance, is an eye-catching, copper rain chain: a

fanciful yet functional Japanese-inspired substitute for a downspout in which vertically-aligned, cup-like features attached by attractive chains guide water from the roof to the ground, where native plants soak up rainwater. It’s just one example of how the home and surrounding property were designed with an eye toward both aesthetic appeal and environmental mindfulness.

While the Ciceros, whom principal landscape architect Jay Graham describes as “good stewards,” set out to make environmentally sound choices with the property and its landscaping, complying with state zoning regulations also factored into some of their landscape decisions. For instance, any plants they added within 100 feet of a body of water—in this case, Weems Creek—had to be native.



Like many things in this home, bunk beds are custom made and intelligently designed; note the narrow wooden step ladder in the children's bedroom.



When the Ciceros bought the property, a steep hillside leading to the creek was, in their words, all “briars and brambles.” Graham recalls, “We thought: Wouldn’t it be nice if we developed an understory—flox, foamflower, Solomon’s seal—all woodland natives.”

They did just that, replacing dead trees and invasive plants with native plants that prevent erosion and naturally flourish in the setting. So too do the two attractive rain gardens on the property. Ultimately, the home’s stormwater management system helped earn the home a Gold certification from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), the most widely recognized green building rating system in the world.

Many of the painstaking details that went into complying with regulations into also added significant appeal to the property. Consider the gracious boardwalk (its slats comply with state legislation regarding the ratio of impervious to pervious area on newly built construction) that leads from the back deck to a covered, yet open, patio high on a hillside overlooking the creek. From either the home’s main living room area or back deck, eyes naturally gravitate to the walkway and revitalized sloping hillside on the property’s northwest side. Whereas before the hill was impassable, now oversized pavers form an inviting pathway amid the native woodlands and down to a small shed that contains paddleboards and other water toys just steps from the creek’s edge.

It’s no wonder architect Hansen refers to the property as “an oasis of parkland in the city.” It’s a setting that begs to let light into the house and to provide ample opportunities to enjoy the view outdoors too. “We jogged the house back along the south and west sides, creating more perimeter area to maximize that number of windows for sunlight and views,” Hansen says.

Undeniably, the home’s windows, generous both in size and number and foregoing window treatments, allow for endless gazing outdoors. The home was conceived to welcome nature. Interior designer Melissa McLay explains that this “home not only has great light exposure but wonderful views of the water and the gardens from all the windows. Interior selections for furniture, fabrics, and paint colors were made with this in mind.” She adds that “we wanted to ensure the interior of the home was harmonious with the exterior of the home and that they did not compete with each other.” But there are endless special features to absorb once you step inside the house, from the two adorable sets of custom bunk beds separated by



A potting area warmed by pastels and custom plank wall is equipped with just about everything a gardener needs, including lots of elbow room.

The interior design is elegant, calm, with a restful palette.







The slats of this gracious boardwalk ensure the ground beneath can absorb rainfall. It complies with state legislation regarding the ratio of impervious to pervious area on newly built construction.



This outdoor room, composed of tile and stone, features a fire place, lanterns flanking the mantel, comfortable seating and tranquil views.

a narrow wooden step ladder in the children’s bedroom, to the outside shower adjacent to the fitness room, to the embedded decorative aluminum wreath in the doorway to the “potting” (aka gardening) room that acts as a boot scraper—and on, and on.

“You can always see something different,” says Cicero. “There’s always a decent view.” Maybe more of us should become as meticulous. Cicero, who began his vision for the property with the setting foremost in his mind, has exactly if not more than what he imagined a decade ago. **AH**

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