

BEACH HOUSE

Esplanade asked six architectural firms to design a beach house they'd like to see built. **The results are in.**

The beach house or summer cottage – for most of us anyway – has morphed over the past 130 years. The days of loading the family silver and portraits into trunks and moving to a 27-room summer place are pretty much history. Times have changed; the way we live has definitely been transformed. With the busy lives most of us lead, simpler is better. That, in a clamshell, is really what going to the beach is all about, isn't it? Calming down and enjoying simple things like steamed lobster dipped in melted butter washed down by a cold Corona with lime.

The design of the beach house, always a personal affair between architect and client, seems to be moving in this same pared-down, carbon neutral direction. Less fanciful and more practical, newly designed homes focus on natural light and integration with the landscape, more often sitting lightly on the land rather than covering as much of a lot as allowed by law.

We were interested in seeing what six different architects might dream up for a beach house client. We asked the six, from Massachusetts, New York, Texas and Florida, to design a home with water frontage for somewhere in the Northeast. We kept the parameters to a minimum, just a lot size of 100' X 150' with 100' on the water.

The water could be anything they liked. A pond-side home in Western Massachusetts, an oceanfront home in Montauk, on the dunes of Cape Cod or a riverside in Maine.

We only gave them a few weeks to come up with a design, and instructed them not to get caught up in the sea of local zoning restrictions. The idea was to light a fire, stir the pot and see what delicious things might make their way to the table. The next 13 pages hold the results of this friendly competition.

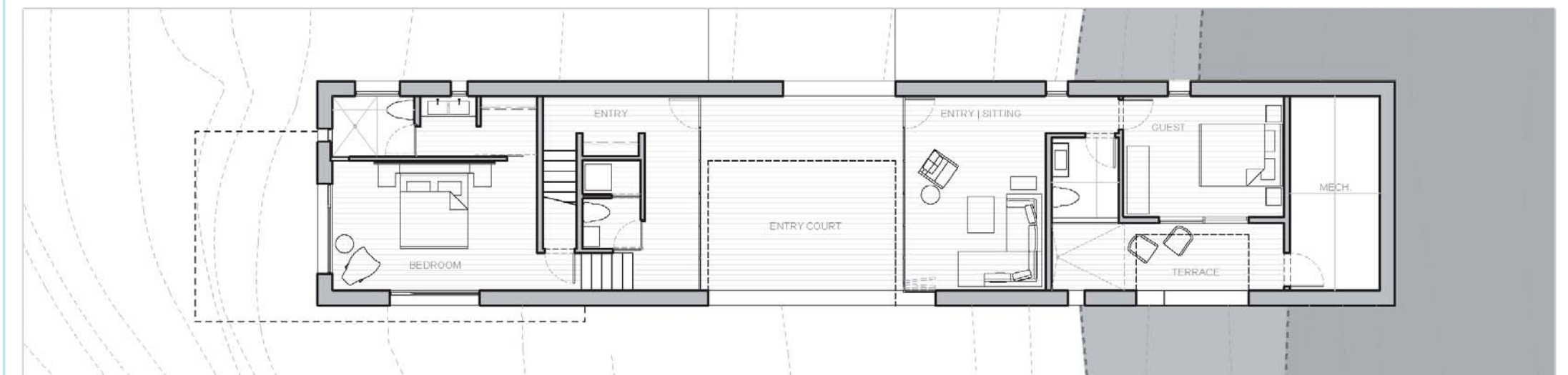
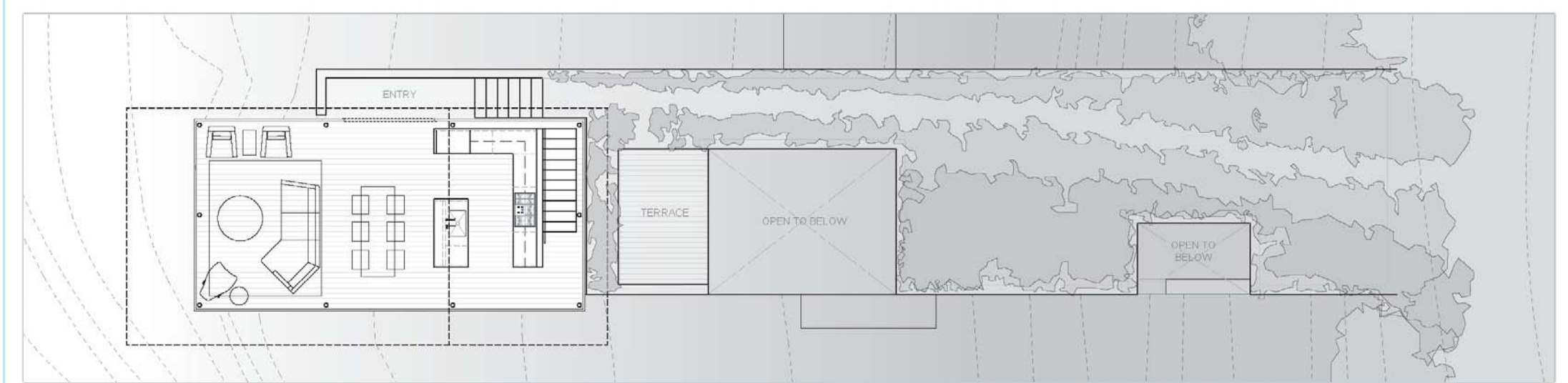


ABOVE: When viewed from above, beyond the walkway to the house, the structure seems to disappear into the landscape due to its roof, planted as a continuation of the landscape.

LEFT: The entire structure, as it buries itself into the dune.

OPPOSITE, TOP: Floor plans of the entry level of the house and its glass window lined living room, dining room and kitchen space.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The first floor of the home houses the sleeping quarters and an open courtyard that separates master suite from 2nd bedroom or guest suite.



Dune House

Truro, Massachusetts

It is a paradox common to waterfront houses everywhere: is there a way to occupy and by necessity alter the very landscape which one wishes to enjoy in an unaltered state? Our design for the Truro Dune House strives to reconcile the seemingly conflicting desires to protect the fragile beauty of the Outer Cape dunescape with the now almost overwhelming economic pressure to overbuild on the few remaining lots in and around the Cape Cod National Seashore. The Dune House achieves these goals by treading very lightly upon the land and giving its occupants direct access to the outdoors from every room in ways that are both ecologically sensitive and maximize the joys of being on an ocean-front site.

At a comparatively modest 1632 sf, the house is designed to as a summer and weekend get-away with flexible open spaces as well as more sheltered private spaces on two levels – one open and glassy, and one anchored and secure. The house is composed of a concrete base, partially submerged into the dune, with interwoven indoor spaces and outdoor terraces cut into its south-facing façade. This base contains two bedroom suites, separated by a sitting room and an outdoor courtyard. Above, a glassy, loft-like living and kitchen space seems to float above the shifting dune below.

The roof of the base is planted as a continuation of the existing context of native bayberry and dune grass. The house is approached from the land side and

from above, and can be entered through a simple continuation of dune paths across the lower roof to the glass living pavilion, or by direct entry through the lower courtyards. By situating the house below the rise of the secondary dune line, its impact on the horizon line when viewed from below or above is minimal, making the house appear dramatically smaller when viewed from the primary public ways of road and paths above or beach below.

The lower courtyards connect to beach paths and provide a much-needed outdoor living space protected from the prevailing winds. The smaller courtyard offers direct access to a sheltered but glassy shower to make return trips from the beach effortless. Separating the lower level into two roughly equal halves allows the bedroom suites to be zoned so that only those spaces in use need to be heated on winter weekends.

The end result is a house that lives much larger than other options with considerably more square footage, while minimizing both environmental impact on and visual interruption of the dunescape that is ultimately the full source of value for these parcels.

Ruhl Walker Architects

Sandra Baron, Taehoon Lee, Hillary Mateev, Nerijus Petrokas
Nick Radeski, William Ruhl, Grant Scott, Lilly Smith, Bradford Walker
Boston, Massachusetts
RuhlWalker.com.com