

This Shingle Style home has cedar siding and copper roof accents. It is situated on a narrow peninsula with views of both a major river and a quiet creek. The main house is connected to a separate wing by an arched bridge.

GRAND PRIZE

Pyramid Builders | *Custom Builder*

A vaulted, circular informal dining area projects into the rear yard, with views of the creek.

Below Right: Furnishings and stair railings have dark tones and provide a dramatic contrast with white walls and light wood floors.

Building is an unforgiving art. One wrong move prompts yet another and another. Imprecision can prove fatal. It's all about achieving a "predictable outcome" or possessing control of the building process, explains Bret Anderson, founder and president of Pyramid Builders, now in operation for twenty-seven years. The very idea of the word "control" almost invites its opposite: chaos, and on a building site, where blueprints become three-dimensional objects, there are plenty of opportunities.

Pyramid has had their share of challenges over the years and thus has learned to anticipate the worse possible scenario. With this in mind, Anderson and his team have figured out the best way possible to achieve a predictable outcome, which is a handcrafted home. Pyramid employs a staff of skilled craftsman, thus lessening their dependency on subcontractors. Relying on subcontractors, he says, gives control of the building process and outcome away to someone else. Pyramid, for example, employs its own painters, allowing the company to maintain a higher degree of finesse in the building process. This also allows the painters to perfect their technique in using Pyramid's special combination of primers and paints to produce a "superior level of finish."

To ensure that an architect's design is fully realized, Pyramid brings to the building process a thorough understanding of how lines transform into solid, useful forms. The judges of the 2013-14 AHM Builder and Fine Design Awards recognize Pyramid's achievement in building this Annapolis waterfront home. It is crafted with quality materials and extreme attention to detail, which is evident in the Shingle Style roof made of cedar shingle



Photography by Tim Lee

siding, the rubble stone water table that anchors the home in its surroundings, and the interior moldings and arches.

Architect Scarlett Breeding of Alt Breeding Schwarz Architects designed the residence. Breeding describes the home as a “classic Chesapeake” style home, an architectural aesthetic that she has refined over the years. Some architects lose control when designing a home of this scale, sometimes feeling compelled to include every architectural feature they know, resulting in a home that lacks overall unity and style. Breeding, however, has designed a tailored, unified home by using such details as arched windows that tie together the bridge connecting the main house with the in-law suite, and the grand doubled gabled roofs with a similar gable roof repeated on a smaller scale on the in-law suite. For an element of surprise and variation, the circular dining room extends out from the flat rear exterior, although the circular form is still connected to the whole by the repeated horizontal windows. Each of these design elements live only on paper or the computer screen until a builder is able to turn them into a three-dimensional, livable space, which Pyramid has expertly accomplished.

There are many beautiful houses in Annapolis. However, beauty is deceiving. It is often what you can't see that separates high-quality from mediocre construction, and what is invisible—foundations, primers, joints, pipes—determines how well a home endures over the years. What you cannot see, too, is the amount of collaboration, forethought, and discipline required to build a fine home. And, we don't want to see those things, we want to sense them. We want to know that the materials are true, that its lines, angles, and dimensions, much like the proportions of The Golden Rectangle, have come together perfectly and are somehow in harmony, calming to the mind. What ensue are the feelings of stability, a sense of well-being. They are priceless. They are the best proof of Pyramid's control.

Resources:

Pyramid Builders

Alt Breeding Schwarz Architects

Campion Hruby Landscape Architects

Landscape Contractor, Walnut Hill Landscape Company



This dining area has a white coffered ceiling that adds formality and visual weight, while, in keeping with the rest of the home's decor, accentuates the dark wood toned furnishings.