



A DREAM HOME

Steve Murray of Murray Homes takes great pride in building incredible luxury homes and estates that are individual and unique to each client, homeowner or investor.

This stunning 5,700 square foot waterfront Bird Key home, the 40th project built by Murray on this key alone, was originally commissioned as a “spec” home, meaning that it would be designed, built and resold as an investment. When you are not building for a specific buyer, the ‘what’ and ‘how big’ become complex, almost scientific questions because the possibilities are endless and often difficult to calculate. The investor’s challenge to Murray was to build a luxury home with wow factor that would achieve optimum investment return and sell quickly on the open market. Murray was charged with overseeing all aspects from design to build, including interior finishes, landscaping and hardscaping.



FIRM // Murray Homes CONTENT WRITER // Brtittany Mattie // PHOTOGRAPHER // Mark Borosch

Builder Steve Murray,
Murray Homes, Inc. **Designer**
Shawn Ambrose, CADDesign
Interior Designer Carrie Riley,
Riley Interior Design.
Landscape Michael Gilkey,
Michael A. Gilkey Landscape
Architects

Murray Homes
 941-906-7000
 murrayhomesinc.com
 25 S. Osprey Avenue
 Sarasota
 FL 34236



→ "Sarasota is a wonderful place to live and it needs beautiful, thoughtful modern architecture."

Steve Murray, Murray Homes

Before commencing the project, the Murray team researched and considered highest and best use for the 15,000 square foot parcel of land using in-depth knowledge and expertise to understand lot limitations, create the perfect aesthetic, and optimize design flow and curb appeal. They assessed Bird Key, the street and the lot, its views and the surrounding homes before assembling a group of the best professionals including Shawn Ambrose as lead designer, Carrie Riley, interior designer and Michael Gilkey, landscaping and outdoor spacial design. Together they crafted an exceptional, modern living experience from the ground up; one that would achieve the trifecta of architectural longevity, sensitivity to the local environment, and most importantly, instantaneous and enduring appeal to the most discerning buyer.

Ordinarily, a home design project begins with a general idea of size, style, desired number of bedrooms, garages, etc. However, in this instance the initial concept was crafted with no preconceived boundaries for these elements, supporting the Murray's ethos that scale is not always relative or relevant to design integrity, vision

and the quality of craftsmanship. In fact, the home was designed entirely around the outdoor living space. As the project moved into its construction phase and the home began to take shape, a unique twist came about. The investor, who already lived on in a stunning bayfront home built by Murray Homes in 2010, started to fall in love with the new project. Steve Murray commented, "We were probably about halfway into construction when the clients shared how excited they were by it and, while they acknowledged that their home is larger and has more expansive views, they were bowled over by the design, the finishes and the aesthetic of this investment project. They ultimately decided to move in and put their own home on the market, which really is the best compliment to our team and vision!"

Murray is consummately proud of the end result - a beautiful, luxurious, California-contemporary residence designed completely from the outdoors in. It features a living room on each floor, four bedrooms, a den complemented by a spectacular 250 bottle wine wall, and an innovative 5 car garage. The property is



engineered and built to the latest FEMA 2018 codes, and is effectively maintenance free. Although Murray was intrigued to see how the market would react to this innovative design when it was completed, he admits that the fact that they didn't get to bring it to the open market is a direct reflection of the success of the

project. He adds, "Sarasota is a wonderful place to live and it needs beautiful, thoughtful modern architecture. It's our job to inspire this kind of passion in our clients. We have a desire to leave our city and environment in a better state than we found it; it's about where we live and about where my kids will grow up."

"We consistently strive to guide and advise our clients throughout the entire design and build process, and we don't walk away once it's done. We provide ongoing support with our post-construction comprehensive maintenance program" Steve commented. "It's caring and sharing. That's who we are - we're a family business grounded in family values." In the aftermath of devastating storms such as Irma, Murray and his team went around to 42 of their clients' homes to personally assess any damage for repair, which was expectedly minimal, but gave absentee owners peace of mind. This is one aspect that what sets Murray Homes apart, the desire to understand their client's DNA, to take their passions, their interests and their inspirations and translate them into a unique living experience. **MH**

SENSE OF PLACE

The 'Before & Afters' of DWY Landscape Architects' handiwork will have your head spinning from the metamorphosis of stark, empty lots to lush, scenic paradises.



DWY Landscape Architects' bleak-to-chic revamps are seriously a prize for the eyes—converting drab front and back yards to a lavish integration of horticulture, water features, art, and architectural experiences. "It's more than just this idea of gardening or laying out in the sun, but really to go outside and enjoy the outdoors is something that I don't think Floridians do enough," says President David Young. "Our goal is often about putting nature at center stage so it cannot be ignored—to reconnect you with what is essential. We want the exterior spaces to draw you out into the landscape to experience nature and the beauty that lives outside the walls of our homes.

Along the waters of Sarasota Bay, a residence on Bird Key carefully layers planting, hardscape, infrastructure and art throughout every square inch. DWY worked closely with the owners, contractor and architect to transform a dated, indistinct home into a contemporary dwelling that reflected the owners' cultured lifestyle as avid art patrons with an eclectic collection of art. Surprises are at every turn for visitors approaching the front of the home, with a striking tillandsia wall feature and bold collection of international pieces of art. "The idea was to make this indoor-outdoor connection so that the landscape became part of the experience, along with intentional pieces of sculpture," says Young. "Much of our work has a certain amount of rigor to it—really kind of architecture of the landscape created with a certain level of visual interest." The landscape can be seen before—now an artistic expression of functionality and

Before image.





beauty. The homeowner's daily activities are centered on the desire to be outside as much as possible—reading the morning paper by the cascading 'wet wall' under an illuminated pergola, exercising in the lap pool, decompressing in the hot tub, grilling alfresco in the dining/lounge areas, gardening along the bay-front setting and cooling off in the new outdoor shower.

And with a keen awareness of the sensitivity of this barrier island site comprised of decades-old artificial fill, a sustainable approach was fundamentally necessary. Young and his team stay green in the literal and figurative sense, devoted to environmental practices including LID (Low Impact Development) that reduce the impact of development on a site. Below the motorcourt of shell top concrete for example, a 6,000 gallon cistern captures rainwater, controlling runoff and providing irrigation. Above ground, the sleek, gutter-less edge of the refinished and steep roof became a source to supply the cistern. DWY also designed a decorative trench drain between the wall of the house and the pool deck, as well as a system of drains around the perimeter of the property to capture rainwater and redirect to the reservoir, keeping it out of the municipal

stormwater system. "Instead of allowing water to go down a pipe and out into the bay, we're actually capturing it and not adding to the load that often overflows and is released downstream somewhere often ending up in our bays and beaches." Young shares. "We're also really careful about reducing and managing heat island effect or solar penetration. We end up planting quite a few palm trees because the shadow you can get from them is crucial on the ground plane, creating this eyebrow effect. And it helps reduce that solar gain on a house, especially in a southern exposure where the sunlight pushes heat into the space within."

For the Citrus Residence hidden in the Hudson Bayou area, DWY collaborated with the home's architect and interior designer to ensure the architecture of the landscape was complementary, to seamlessly meld the architecture with the site and surrounding environment. The team distilled a singular design of clean, sophisticated spatial relationships between the aesthetic built and natural flora, to create a harmonious and tactile experience from the ground up. The suburban haven organically facilitates the owners' active lifestyle in their neighborhood and community, while also main-



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taining a sense of serenity in their vibrant landscape. The plantings, dense and sculptural within the enclave of the site, organically weaves the man-made elements together, showcasing an inward-focused home elongating across the property with a series of courtyards interwoven amongst the interior rooms. The master opens to both a meditation/yoga area and the pool/patio, reinforcing the connection between indoor and outdoors spaces. The entryway consists of a cantilevered front porch boasting curved coconut palms and a stepping stone pebbled pathway. A brightly painted waterwall is the focal point of the pool's courtyard, which also provides white noise from street traffic. And

a backdrop of dense tropical vegetation keeps the privacy at a premium for its residents, further embodying the feeling of being in your own exclusive, exotic resort.

DWY's love of art, architecture and nature shows in their creative work. They feel that landscape architecture has the ability to improve one's environment and quality of life. "We spend too much of our lives in a box—we pull into a garage, we live in a solid domain, we work in buildings—we believe that if you bring the same level of thought and design to the outside as you do to the form, layout and materials of the inside, then you can make it appreciable enough to get people outdoors." **MH**

DWY Landscape Architect 941-365-6530 | 300 S. Orange Avenue, Sarasota, FL | dwyla.com

Lap of Luxury

The luxury-built homes of NWC Construction take the word 'custom' to the next level— with a commitment to personal service, superior craftsmanship and a long list of industry designations to back it up.



“We build one-of-a-kind, unique projects—that is our trademark,” President Nathan Cross notes explicitly. “Anybody can go out there and try to build—I say try, because there’s things that you learn throughout the years that perfect your trade. I’ve been doing this for 20 years, and we have a really well-managed, perfected trade that makes us different.” Actions speak even louder than words, and lucky for Cross, he can back it up with a recently landed job in Bird Key from a client who picked NWC over another builder who he’s used in the past, but felt NWC was smarter route with more of an innovative design sense.

When you call on Cross to build something, you’re calling him because you want to build something above the norm. “You hire us do the stuff that other builders say, ‘Well, we have to find a product for that,’ or ‘Oh no, that can’t be done.’ We can do anything—what our clients want, our clients get,” says Cross. “It doesn’t matter if they make a product for it or not—we’ll take six different products, chop them up and engineer the product you want.” Indeed, a lot of the things NWC’s done, has never been tackled before. One client wanted pocket Dutch doors. They googled it—it doesn’t exist. Challenge accepted, Cross and his team came up with a system to build one. Technology also plays a huge role at NWC, with clients now operating their entire home through Google. If they want to open their window, they say, “Hey Alexa, open up my master window blinds.” Another client with a bad back and huge dogs to take care of, didn’t want to bend over to constantly clean dog bowls, so they integrated sinks and put a stopper up high so that she doesn’t have to bend down to drain the water. She can fill and drain the bowls all at chest height.



→ "Every job we do, we put ourselves in the clients' shoes." *Nathan Cross, NWC Construction*



This page: Far left and far right, top and bottom: The Element House; Architect- Solstice Planning and Architecture. **Center:** Colt Lane Home.

With hundreds of renovations under his belt, Cross has ultimately grown NWC into a standout construction company for customized homes. "We get to see what 90% of home builders never see. We get to dissect the past—we see what worked and what didn't work, what to do and what never to do." Cross explains deconstructing houses is invaluable education, and having worked on numerous houses for numerous decades, it becomes clear how he's managed to establish such a prominent name in Sarasota. But despite being a top-shelf renovator in the industry, NWC especially loves to build new. "Every job we do, we put ourselves in the clients' shoes and think, okay, is this going to be easy to maintain? Is this going to be easy to clean? There's a whole cycle of things that we toss around and bring to people's attention to make better," says Cross. "We're not going to do what 10 other people would have done—put up some walls and give you a roof." It's true, NWC

sells an intricate kind of service, which means a limited amount of jobs per year. Cross personally prefers to be heavily involved in every project. "I'm engaged in every single project, and that's what gives us consistency in our execution and our results."

The Element House in particular, resembles a prime example of NWC redefining the word 'custom', with extravagant results. Not only the greenest home in Southwest Florida, this property remains the third most energy-efficient home in the state of Florida and the sixth in the entire U.S. The owner now holds what is considered, a net zero house, so they essentially have no electric bill to pay. "What we build for people is not an average, everyday house," mentions Cross. "Most of the homes that we build are the big step-up home or the last homes that people live in. Most of our clients who come to us have had multiple homes built, they've worked very hard all their lives and they're ready for their last home.

This is it, this is the last hurrah—let's make it count." With jaw-dropping bespoke-built luxury homes in its portfolio, NWC has inevitably created a reputation as the builder in town that will give you everything you want, so you can live out the rest of your life in supreme comfortability.

NWC's ingenuity proves not every home builder is created equal, as they lead the way in blending mechanical and design together with its ace team of architects and interior designers. "We love what we do, and wouldn't change it for the world," shares Cross. "I get to build the stuff that 99.9% of builders will never get to build in their lives. It's very neat from that perspective, and it's been a very rewarding career so far." **MH**

NWC Construction
941-374-6623 // nathan@nwccustombuild.com
NWCcustombuild.com