



# Just the Right Size

*The delight of this lakeside home is in the details.*



The owners' home was designed to be a vacation/retirement home with the relaxed look and feel of a camp, and also to make the best use possible of the sloping lot it sits on. The house was built to absorb the slope and sited farther back from the old camps it replaced in order to protect the lakefront, offer a flat front lawn, and to provide walk-out convenience toward the lake in the basement level.

**J**UST A SHORT DISTANCE north of Vermont's capital city of Montpelier, Vermont Route 12 enters forest land and skirts the foothills of the Elmore Mountain Range along its way to the village of Lake Elmore, long known as the beauty spot of Vermont and a popular vacation destination.

Close by the ever-popular resort town of Stowe, the lakeside town of Elmore itself is among the fastest-growing towns in Vermont. When it was time to consider building a lakeside home in this lovely little village, Jon and Betsy Anderson did some very careful planning and research. Jon, an environmental/land-use lawyer

whose office is in Burlington, closely coordinated planning efforts with Betsy, who owns and runs a bed & breakfast business in Montpelier. Their first move was to acquire two side-by-side lots on Lake Elmore, the first in 1988 and the second in 2004, on which initially sat two old, deteriorating summer cottages.



Upstairs, large, paired windows let in lots of light and lend a fresh, airy appearance to each room. The master bedroom and bathroom are connected to a study via the bath, and there's an extra bedroom for guests. Since the house doesn't crowd the lakefront, there's plenty of room for recreation (and relaxation) down near the water, at the basement level.

A third lot was purchased in 2007 to provide space for anticipated development of an adequate septic disposal system for the Andersons' new structure.

Meanwhile, Jon and Betsy had been doing research, reading several of acclaimed architect Sarah Susanka's books, among them *Not So Big Solutions for Your Home* and *Creating The Not So Big House*. The Andersons were suitably inspired by Susanka's work and writing, and used a CAD program to further focus their ideas before engaging the services of Montpelier architect Sandra Vitzthum, well regarded throughout New England for her ecologically sound designs and practice of using sustainable materials. The Andersons' house was to be a vacation/retirement home with the feel of a camp. "Summer camps,"

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The home's eat-in kitchen has a direct connection with the deck (top), which overlooks Lake Elmore; the judicious setback of the new home preserved the lakefront space and enabled easy access. The living room is adjacent and handy to the kitchen, as well as to the lakefront view.

reflects Sandra, need to have "relaxed, flexible space, as open as possible...we tried to accomplish all this, plus make the Andersons' home strictly energy efficient and fit comfortably on the side of Lake Elmore."

Chief among considerations the Andersons brought to the drafting board were that the house be "retirement friendly," enabling them to live on the main level. The first floor was planned with a living room, dining room, eat-in kitchen, laundry, and handicap-accessible bedroom and bath. Another was that all rooms be sized precisely and planned to accommodate multiple functions as a series of suites, with no space wasted. Also, "Jon spent a lot of time designing the heating system," recalls Sandra. A compact, 96-percent-efficient, propane boiler (a Buderus GB 142 model) was called for once oil heat was ruled out, but wood remained in the picture as well. "So, there's a special wood storage area under the house, and a chute in the garage for easy wood chunk delivery and stacking," Sandra explains. The wood storage area is vented by a fan and

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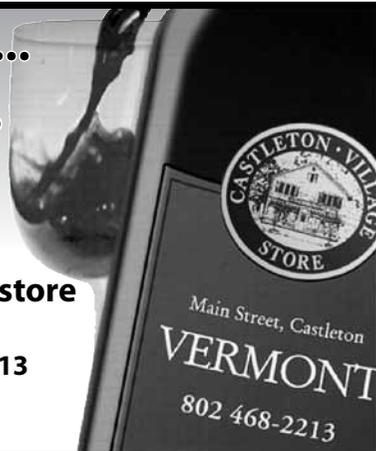
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The eat-in kitchen offers direct access to a deck, with a pass-through for easy serving. Besides being designed with energy efficiency in mind, the house was designed for maximum utilization of space and also to accommodate multiple functions in a series of suites. The house's overall layout (approximately 3,000 square feet) gives one the impression of a much bigger building than it really is.

controlled by a humidity sensor so the wood can be stacked green. A handy aspect is that one of the three fireplaces in the home can be fed directly from the wood storage.

Another consideration, a specialty of Sandra's, was making the best and most responsible use of the site. Unlike the old camps the house replaced, the home was sited farther away from the lake, once a setback variance was obtained, both to protect the lakefront and also to absorb the 15–20-percent slope of the lot. A flat front yard was planned at road level and a flat backyard at the level of the walkout recreation room in the basement. A long, narrow footprint for the house meant more windows could be located on the lake side to maximize the view.

With Jon acting as general contractor, construction began in March 2009, with Bruce Watson of East Montpelier doing the carpentry. To supplement the propane heating system, three fireplaces were built. To reduce heat loss, special attention was paid to insulation, and a combination of Pella and Marvin windows were used as part of the plan that also called for installation of energy-efficient light fixtures and appliances. As a result, a 5-star-plus energy rating was achieved. Construction was completed in March 2010, with the Andersons



doing landscaping work. The finished house “measures either a little less than 3,000 heated square feet (garage, wood storage, boiler, and cold room excluded) or a little more, depending on how space under sloping roofs is counted,” explain the Andersons. “Despite its traditional appearance,” comments Sandra, “the rooms are open and connected...this is important for making a small building

feel spacious.” The eat-in kitchen—Betsy's favorite room—“has a direct connection with the deck, the focus of activity on sunny days, with a pass-through for easy serving.” Above the main living space, on the second floor there is a master bedroom and bathroom with a study conveniently connected to the master bath, plus an extra bedroom with en suite bath. Below the main floor,



## Just the facts

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Careful planning and research done by the Andersons and their architect paid off in a vacation home that's easy to maintain and that leaves a small enough footprint so the lakefront footage is still available for maximum enjoyment.

the walkout basement has another two rooms, plus a den and a private porch. The overall impression is a place that's cozy for 2 people or 20. This lakeside house that's not so big, but not too small on amenities—in the Susanka-style tra-

dition—won a very big award in 2010. It was the Best Homes Award from the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Northern Vermont, for the best single-family house more than 3,000 square feet in size and less than

\$500,000 in cost. Without a doubt, the Andersons will be enjoying quality time at their lakeside house and accolades for its design and construction for many years to come. **T**



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This 2009 sq. ft. compact home was designed to nestle into the site while disturbing very few existing trees. It has a large summer porch with views to Camels Hump and features an open floor plan on the main floor and three bedrooms and two full baths upstairs.

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