

# Urban cottage

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PHOTOGRAPHY: THE COTTAGE COMPANY OF HARBOR SPRINGS

Set on the north shore of Little Traverse Bay in Emmet County, an urban cottage of fresh, contemporary inspiration overlooks the sheltered waters of one of the deepest natural harbors in the Great Lakes and fourth largest on Lake Michigan. From its vantage point near the water's edge in downtown Harbor Springs, the site is one protected from the harsher elements of Lake Michigan by Harbor Point peninsula and stalwart guardian, Little Traverse Lighthouse.

At a glance, this cottage is layered and geometric in line with a clean, textured façade of white and black-trimmed windows, tempered by the warmth of stone and an arched entry at the street level. There is a depth to its form, as outdoor spaces at each level add another chapter to the design—and site—narrative. Designed by White & Liebler Architects, built by the Cottage Company of Harbor Springs, and with interior design by Cottage Company Interiors, this urban cottage is the result of years of planning—and adaptive design and vision—for a site that once housed two hotels and a gasoline station in the historic summer resort town.

“The site itself has quite a storied history. Around the turn-of-the-century, it was the site of two hotels, The Emmet and The New Emmet. During the sixties and seventies it was one of the two downtown gas stations. More recently in the 1980s, it became another hotel called the Nick Adams,” said Rob Mossburg, founder and principal at the Cottage Company.

“Part of our history is starting and operating three national hotel chains. Hospitality and service is naturally in our DNA, so having known that there could be a better lodging product in our beloved community someday, we were always interested in the site and ended up purchasing it,” Mossburg added.

The Cottage Company of Harbor Springs is a family-oriented, multi-disciplinary construction and interior design firm. The company not only provides new construction and remodeling services, but also interior design through its sister company Cottage Company Interiors, which specializes in delivering timeless cottages and homes for clients in northern Michigan and in resort towns across the coun-



try.

In 2007, the Cottage Company acquired the Nick Adams hotel with the initial thought of redeveloping the structure that had fallen into disrepair into The Hotel Janelle and Residences. Named after Mossburg's mother, The Hotel Janelle and Residences was planned to be a luxury boutique hotel with residential units, a full-service restaurant, meeting and banquet space, a spa, and roof-top deck. Based on the state of the original structure, the Nick Adams hotel was torn down in preparation for the new development, which was financed and weeks from breaking ground nearly a decade ago.

“We were on the one-yard-line and in pre-construction mode on two different occasions with the great recession frustrating our most recent efforts. The alternate development plan in the back of our mind was always recreating a development that would have organically developed over time,” Mossburg said. “And that is, two single-family downtown cottages facing the bay and then a mixed-use, period correct building on Main Street containing commercial spaces on the first floor

and residences above.”

Though disappointed the initial vision of bringing The Hotel Janelle and Residences to Harbor Springs would not come to fruition, Mossburg noted the team was equally excited about the alternative design plan. The strategy was one that is inherent to The Cottage Company philosophy of New Urbanism, where planning and development projects are based on how cities and communities have historically been built for centuries. It is a human-scaled design approach that promotes compact, walkable cities and towns with housing, retail, and accessible public spaces within close proximity.

“The boutique hotel was planned as one U-shaped building, as one might expect. It did have a residential component—four residential condominiums—but once focused on this new plan, we broke up the structure into three buildings and then began thinking about what not only would be appealing to the marketplace, but also what might fit well with the current architectural fabric of the city,” Mossburg said. “We enjoy building new

projects that look old, that look like they have been there a while, so we think this particular design, with the assistance of White & Liebler, accomplishes that objective.”

The alternative plan will also house the future headquarters of The Cottage Company. Known as Take Two Condominiums, each unit has a footprint of about 2,200 square-feet with garage access off of Gardiner Street. The comprehensive plan also features two single-family cottages along E. Bay Street facing the harbor. Both the mixed-use building and second cottage are currently under construction.

The nearly 5,800-square-foot urban cottage boasts an additional 1,800 square-feet of outdoor living space with multiple porches and decking, and the Cottage Company first looked to reconcile the existing parking lot and landscape of the property prior to finalizing its design.

“We brought in large amounts of dirt and restored the elevation of the site such that it enjoys a commanding ‘bluff-like’ perch overlooking Little Traverse Bay,” Mossburg said. “It is quite possibly the best downtown location in



northern Michigan.”

With a vision of building an extremely high-quality structure that would ultimately set the tone for the rest of the project, The Cottage Company set to the task of crafting a cottage that took advantage of its position and views, while leveraging advanced building systems and navigating common challenges of material staging and limited parking in a downtown setting.

“The City of Harbor Springs, our neighbors, and all of our trade partner teams have been wonderful to work with and understanding of these challenges,” Mossburg said.

Its location, as is inherent to waterfront properties, played a driving role not only in the amount of outdoor programming, but also its interior spatial layout. Mossburg said one of the first watershed decisions one has to make in terms of layout in a downtown location where width of lots are limited and the position is focused toward the water, is determining where the master suite is placed.

“Is it going to be a first-floor master bedroom, or second? A second-floor master affords the opportunity to make the prime real estate on the first floor the living, dining, and kitchen areas, or the proverbial great room space,” Mossburg said. “Then the second-floor prime real estate can be the master bedroom area, both of which face the water.”

In the Urban Cottage, the master bedroom and bathroom are located on the second floor as well as a secondary bedroom with a view of the water through intentional cut-outs in the design of the residence. The cottage also features an elevator to provide access and longevity to the master bedroom, and a garage tucked behind the home with a fifth bedroom, or bonus room, located above it. Other spaces include a den with full bathroom on the first floor—in the event a main floor bedroom is desired—a fully furnished lower level, and a rooftop deck complete with a fireplace, kitchen, and elevator access with a panoramic view of Petoskey to Charlevoix.

For Kelly Konoske, president and head of interior design at Cottage Company Interiors, the goal of the project was to create someone’s dream vacation home that was a comfortable and inviting getaway inspired by its setting.

“We wanted to design space that complements the water views as was true to the aesthetic. Inside, our color palette feels fairly neutral with soft blue and green hues that are reminiscent of the city park out front and the impossible blue water viewed from most every room. Variety in the form of textures played an important role for interest,” Konoske said.

“I think it is a modern, grown-up take on a traditional cottage. There is that element of what might have been drawn from our historical favorites, in a sense, but used in a different way that makes it more modern or fresh,” Konoske added.

The textured, white exterior carries into the interior, dissolving the traditional boundaries of indoor and outdoor space. Interior walls reflect cohesion and texture, adding a depth to



the neutral palette. Extensive millwork and tile—a Cottage Company hallmark—can be found on floors, walls, and ceilings throughout the two-story home where oversized, bold lighting fixtures add a dramatic statement. The indoor-outdoor relationship is furthered by the amount of glasswork and the touches of wicker, greenery, and use of natural fabrics.

“The patio outside the great room was purposely constructed lower and low-rise furniture used, so easy viewing of the bay is attainable. We used swivel chairs to follow the sun or the view and we were conscious of the cohesiveness in terms of materials too,” Konoske said. “There is an abundance of wood and other natural materials including 100 percent natural New Zealand wool carpet and stone. Virtually every floor, ceiling, and wall is covered with wood or tile.”

From the millwork and hardware to tile and lighting, the interior design of the Urban Cottage is meant to represent the next generation of cottage for the company. A geometric-inspired

tile pattern on the floor of the master bathroom is complemented by white-tiled walls, allowing the boldness of the black-and-white standalone tub and custom glass partition to stand in stark relief; yet it is tempered through the use of light wood cabinetry and suspended light fixtures.

The contrast is also repeated on the lower level in the kitchen as well, where a dark CornuFé range and range hood, hardwood flooring, and white cabinetry, walls, ceiling, and waterfall countertop come together in a modern, yet warm manner. Starburst-like light fixtures with geometric surround float above the island, adding intimacy and layer to the space.

“This structure is extremely energy-efficient and only the highest quality materials and finishes were used,” Mossburg said. “This is certainly not your average spec cottage.”

Though Urban Cottage was designed and planned for market sale, Mossburg noted his wife, Vee Mossburg, founder of Cottage Company Interiors, has fallen in love with the cottage and on the chance it does not sell soon,

the Mossburgs will be calling it their personal home.

“There is so much about this place we love. We may be biased, but I’m not sure there is a more unique or better location in northern Michigan,” Mossburg said. “Literally out your front door is Lake Michigan, your boat, and all of the quaint shops, restaurants, and recreation Harbor Springs has to offer.”

For Konoske, the sense of place of not only the cottage and its property—complete with natural spring—but also the community itself is what makes the project distinctive.

“Design is inspiration. It is where form and function and beauty meet. I think it is a process of seemingly separate elements that come together in cohesion. I like to think of it as a puzzle,” Konoske said. “Creating separate pieces or elements that are seemingly unrelated, but when they are put in their rightful place, they work together to form a visually beautiful and comfortably living piece of art.”