



TODAY IN MANSION

# High Life in a Stilted House

ARENA The New Wave of Horror Movies: What Scares Us Now

Rendering by Michael Klausmeier

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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ANNA MARIA, FLA.

The home cantilevers over stilts that are about 12 feet off the ground.



The home is made of poured concrete reinforced with steel rebar; its modernist design is intended to accentuate the fact that it is on stilts. Its height prompted its owners to decide against flood insurance.

## BUILT ON STILTS

Homes reach new heights to defy high wind and waves. Tough construction codes add design challenges; move-in with a forklift

GALVESTON, TEXAS

Some living spaces are more than 25 feet above sea level.



To avoid streets of stilts, homes in the Beachtown community have front doors that rise 3 to 5 feet from the street level, above stoops. Stairs to the main living space are hidden internally in some homes.

BY CANDACE JACKSON

A just-finished waterfront vacation retreat in Longboat Key, Fla. has a contemporary style, is energy efficient and sits on 14-foot-tall stilts, putting its living area 17 feet above sea level.

Homeowners building in flood-prone and coastal areas are increasingly revisiting elevated stilt houses, one of the oldest styles of coastal home design. Following several brutal storm seasons, insurers and regulators are pressing homeowners in vulnerable areas to build sturdier homes that meet updated codes or exceed them. Several of the costli-

est storms in U.S. history, superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina, occurred in the past eight years. According to the American Association of Architects 2013 Home Design Trends Survey for the second quarter of 2013, 37% of architects reported a general increase in requests for hurricane-resistant design, compared with 25% who reported an increase during the same period in 2012.

"It's a huge design challenge," says Chris Leader, the Sarasota, Fla. based architect who says the Longboat Key home is the highest he's ever tackled. The owners, who live primarily in Sweden, paid about \$1 million for the lot and an additional \$500,000 to build the structure, which was elevated to meet local

building codes. During construction, the concrete home was hit by a tropical storm that raised water levels by 5 feet with little impact, says Mr. Leader.

The resurgence of the elevated home leaves many architects grappling with new challenges. Flights of stairs can be difficult for aging homeowners, and from a design standpoint, architects say it can be tricky to make very highly elevated homes have a visual relationship with the ground below, as opposed to looking like just a big box hoisted up on stilts. And then there's what to do with the often unattractive unused open space left below.

In June, architect Jody Beck of Traction Architect-Please turn to page M6

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

# Built on Stilts: Elevating Beachfront Houses



Continued from page M1

ture completed a beachfront home for her extended family in Anna Maria, Fla., about an hour south of Tampa. Made of poured concrete reinforced with steel rebar, the home cantilevers over stilts that are about 12 feet off the ground and 15 feet above sea level.

Ms. Beck says her home's modernist design is intended to accentuate the fact that it is on stilts, drawing cues from early elevated homes by the famed architect Le Corbusier. Exposed materials emphasize the home's structure, and the space underneath the home has been outfitted with an outdoor shower and swing for her kids. The home's elevation prompted her and her relatives to decide against insuring it for floods.

On Maui's North Shore, Roger Claypool spent nine years and roughly \$11 million building a 3,250-square-foot structure on top of 11-foot concrete columns, elevating the house 17 feet above sea level—high enough to withstand tsunami surges and allow a semi-truck to drive underneath. The elevation meets local building codes

**NEW ELEVATION** Architect Jody Beck said she designed the Anna Maria, Fla., home for her extended family using cues from early elevated homes by Le Corbusier. Ms. Beck, left, with husband Ross-Alan Tisdale and kids Robin, left, and Jonah, right.