

In South Florida, finding land with any elevation is a rarity. So when a site perched on a historic coral bluff in Coconut Grove became available, general contractor Sean Murphy couldn't believe his eyes. He snapped it up without hesitation and enlisted father-and-son team architect Bill Taylor and architectural designer Jeremy Taylor to create a unique residence for his family.

It was a familiar partnership: Bill had worked with Sean and his father, general contractor Thomas P. Murphy Jr., on many homes over the years, including Sean's previous Coral Gables house. "I've known Sean since he was probably 8 years old, and I met Tom back in the 1980s when we were both just starting out," Bill recalls. "I consider it a badge of honor that the second generation would even entertain working together."

This latest collaboration began with "an unusual piece of property," the architect observes, noting the lot rises from 7 to 17 feet above sea level. The challenging grade change allowed for a six-car, drive-through garage at the base of the structure, with a two-story residence cantilevering above to capture views of Biscayne Bay. Constructing the basement level required cutting through the site's keystone, a two-fold move: The excavation produced slabs the team repurposed as retaining walls inside the garage as well as steps and paving in the garden, forging a deep connection to the environment. "It feels like the house is carved into the earth," Sean quips. Reinforcing this idea are the lush grounds by landscape designer Matthew Lewis, who emphasized native plantings such as gumbo limbo, sea grape, buttonwood, beautyberry, coco plum and wild coffee. "The mood we sought was a true return to nature," Lewis muses.

The architecture presents a similar aura: The house forms a C-shape around a central courtyard, an arrangement that shields traffic noise while embracing a stand of 150-year-old oaks. These ancient trees informed the floor plan, window placement and materials palette, including the exterior's cream stucco. "We weren't after a bright, stark white," Bill notes. "We wanted it to feel candlelit at night." Coral stone and abundant wood complement the façade, while expansive sliding

glass doors further blend the structure into the surrounding vegetation. They also connect the main living area to the lanai, a gathering spot outfitted with decking, ceiling panels and angled vertical louvers crafted from ipe.

Inside, the dwelling channels a 1970s aesthetic reminiscent of Coconut Grove's bohemian era, when artists and musicians flocked to the area. "There were these hip venues that were very Floridian," Bill remembers. "You feel that in the home's louvers and in the openness of the outdoor terraces." As their third project together, the family's longtime designer, Jeffrey Lamb, leaned into that mood with brass and bronze hardware and lighting, custom wood screens that divide spaces such as the living area and foyer, and a mix of woven textures and bold prints, including a patterned chenille sofa in the family area. Portrayed in copper, brown, emerald, burnt orange and apple green, the interior conveys the owners' preferred midcentury look with a natural bent. "The idea was to make the outside come inside," Lamb says. "You feel like you're in a tree house."

Echoing this sentiment, the materials selection leans natural, including the kitchen's marble backsplash and a powder room wrapped in marble slabs streaked with reds, taupes and golds. "It brought everything together," the designer observes. The neutral-toned primary bedroom takes a hiatus from color and pattern for a serene effect, aided by calming views of the outside greenery captured through the home's abundant glass walls. And where nature isn't seen, Lamb thoughtfully placed artworks he and his clients have collected over two decades of working together, like a metal sculpture anchoring the dining area's earthy red wall.

Elevated in every sense, the project allowed the collaborative team to craft a design that stands out. "It has oaks, stone and a bluff—so much to work with," Bill reflects. "It's fun, inspiring and so different from the rest of Miami." ■

**Architecture:** Bill Taylor and Jeremy Taylor, The Taylor & Taylor Partnership, Inc.  
**Interior Design:** Jeffrey Lamb, Jeffrey Lamb Interiors  
**Home Builder:** Sean Murphy, Coastal Homes  
**Landscape Architecture:** Matthew Lewis, L&ND

# Higher Ground

A RARE ELEVATED SITE IN COCONUT GROVE INSPIRES  
A MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAM TO CREATE A RESIDENCE ROOTED IN ITS ENVIRONMENT.

WRITTEN BY DAN HOWARTH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TROY CAMPBELL





To delineate the living area, Hollywood Woodwork crafted walnut screens with burnished-brass inserts. Sharron Lewis Design Center covered the sofa and matching armchairs in Romo materials. A marble coffee table by Twin Stone centers the silk carpet from Designer Rug Center.

Previous page: Split-face Florida keystone from CGA Stoneworks joins off-white stucco elements on the back exterior of the residence, connecting the house to its locale. Tropical plantings by landscape designer Matthew Lewis frame the structure.



An Omexco wallcovering backs the dining area's Silas Seandel sculpture from Michel Contessa Antiques. Milo Bauchman chairs in a Holly Hunt print encircle the table from Skylar Morgan Furniture. Travertine flooring from Opustone flows under the Julian Chichester cabinet.

Opposite: Imperial Stone enveloped the powder room in dramatic marble slabs from Opustone. Hand-blown glass Cerno pendants from 1stdibs illuminate the space, outfitted with a Dornbracht faucet from Ferguson Home.

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—JEFFREY LAMB





Upholstered in a Nobilis pattern, the family area sectional corners a B&B Italia coffee table. Visual Comfort & Co. pendants oversee the kitchen's Oggetti stools. Molteni&C cabinetry complements the marble backsplash and countertops by Imperial Stone and Modern Aire range hood from Ferguson Home.

**Below:** Romo fabrics appear on the primary bedroom's armchairs, bed and Marsh Industries draperies. A bronze-and-glass Holly Hunt pendant counters a marble Twin Stone side table and silk carpet from Designer Rug Center.

**Opposite:** Rock Star Pools & Waterfalls conceived the backyard pool, accented with Gloster lounges. CGA Stoneworks supplied the Florida keystone surround that leads to the pool house.

