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MAINE HOME + DESIGN

SMALL SPACES

GOING MODULAR IN BOOTHBAY

A 900-SQUARE-FOOT BIDDEFORD POOL RETREAT

REACH FOR PEACH: THIS SWEET SHADE IS MAKING A COMEBACK

+ STEP INSIDE
A PORTLAND DESIGN WRITER IN HIS REALM

MAY 2023

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DESIGN THEORY | DANIELLE BETTS & JULIEN JALBERT
PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRENT BELL

Perfect Prefab



President Danielle Betts & architect Julien Jalbert of Knickerbocker Group

ON INTRODUCING A NEW LINE OF HOMES TO MAINE

“The housing demand in destination and waterfront communities like ours far exceeds availability and affordability for our much-needed workforce. We want to use our talents as an employee-owned company to significantly impact the number of housing options for Mainers throughout the entire state.”



3D VISUALIZATION BY STUDIO57

MH+D ASKS BETTS AND JALBERT TO TELL US MORE.

Q. It's no secret that there's a housing shortage here. I'm thrilled to hear about Knickerbocker Group's new prefab homes. Can you tell us a little about the design process?

A. Knickerbocker Group's prefabricated pods are completely designed and built in Maine. Ninety-five percent of the home is completed in our indoor fabrication facility. Then the pod is delivered and placed on a foundation, with only minimal finishing work required on-site.

This method saves a significant amount of time and money. We estimate our prefab pods can be delivered in approximately half the time it would take for an equivalent home to be built on-site. Our craftspeople build the pod in our controlled facility, gaining efficiency by limiting customization and leveraging the power of volume purchasing.

Q. What was the driving force behind introducing these prefab pods?

A. Knickerbocker Group is well known for designing and building beautiful homes on premier properties throughout Maine. Our firm is a leader in Maine's home industry and has an established reputation for quality—not only in product but in execution—drawing from our 45-year history of delivering homes. Our company's mission and values center on our love for Maine: its people, its communities, and its environment. As such, we recognize there is more we can do to support housing solutions within the great state in which we live.

In 2022 it was projected that 65,000 to 75,000 new homes will be needed over the next decade to meet the demand of Maine employers alone. Then add in the high demand for those



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moving here for the first time looking for homes and land. It is clear that Maine, like the nation, is in a housing crisis.

Our design-build innovation team strategized how to “build better,” seeking a creative solution that would have a responsive impact on the quantity and quality of Maine housing. With the launch of our prefab arm, we are now offering living spaces designed and built to be a cost-effective housing solution for as many Maine residents and property owners as possible. By making our prefab pods sustainable, with renewable resources and net-zero-ready, we are also protecting the environment of the state we love, while positively contributing to Maine’s architectural legacy.

Q. What are the prefab pods made of? Are they energy efficient?

A. Knickerbocker Group’s prefab pods are made from as many renewable materials as possible, sourced as close to home as we can find them. We consider natural, sustainable, healthy, and low-maintenance aspects in all building materials.

Our prefab buildings are extremely energy efficient. This is due to their high-R-value insulation, air-sealed building envelope, triple-pane windows, and limited thermal bridging.

Q. Can you take us through the design of the two prefab pod options?

A. We designed our prefab pods to allow you to “live big in a small space.” Each home has the following considerations for comfortable and modern living: open kitchen, living, and dining areas; full bathroom with linen storage; washer and



PHOTO: SARAH PRAK

dryer; kitchen with full-size appliances, including a dishwasher; private bedrooms with hanging and drawer storage; work-from-home office area; indoor-outdoor connectivity; and outdoor living spaces.

These design elements allow our pods to include all the comforts and conveniences of a larger home, while economizing space to maintain overall cost efficiency.

Additionally, our living spaces are designed to grow with you over time, offering flexible housing solutions for whatever stage of life you're in. For clients who require more space, we can connect a 500-square-foot unit to our 800-square-foot unit (or connect two of either unit) to increase living space. One

pod can be used as a primary home and the second as a guest home or as an income-producing accessory dwelling unit or home occupation space. Each unit can be paired in unique ways to meet our client's lifestyles and needs.

Q. What is the difference between a Knickerbocker Group prefab home and a Knickerbocker Group custom or predesigned home?

A. All homes are built with the same level of Knickerbocker Group quality and care. The difference in each of our three offerings—custom, predesigned, prefabrication—is the level of [client] modification. **MH+D**



MH+D IS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH ACCLAIMED ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHER TRENT BELL ON HIS ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, AND PHOTOGRAPHY PODCAST. TO HEAR BELL'S CONVERSATION WITH BETTS AND JALBERT, PLEASE VISIT [TRENTELL.COM/PODCAST](https://trentbell.com/podcast)