

The Elements of Design

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The Elements of Design for the Homes at Bull Point

I. Introduction

Bull Point is a pristine 700-acre peninsula that extends over two miles into the salt-water marshes of the Huspah Creek, with access to the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean. Massive live oaks, magnolias, interior lakes, islands and salt-water marshes provide a sanctuary for numerous native and migratory species of wildlife including deer, herons, osprey, Canadian geese and others.

Rich in history and unspoiled surroundings preserved for hundreds of years, and with a past steeped in centuries of Low Country lore, Bull Point is the perfect blend of local tradition and natural beauty. Preservation of the property in its undisturbed and natural state remains the primary focus of the Bull Point development.

The Elements of Design were devised to complement and safeguard the natural legacy and serenity of Bull Point, by providing parameters for design that evoke the indigenous styles of the region and the Low Country Coastal Vernacular.

II. Purpose

The Elements of Design are not intended to be an all inclusive history lesson or rule book, rather they are intended to further define and supplement, not replace, *Section 1.D.5* of the existing *Bull Point Architectural Review Board Guidelines*, by serving as a guide for the intended architectural design direction and image of the homes at Bull Point. The characteristics and traditions of the local vernacular are underscored by *The Elements of Design* in order to produce a style that is appropriate for the region, that respects the history of the region, and that creates a cohesive and complementary community language that integrates with the existing landscape. These local traditions also inherently lend themselves to the contemporary revival and practice of sustainable design, through use of passive cooling techniques and environmentally friendly indigenous materials.

The Elements of Design are also not intended to limit or confine the owner and architect to one specific style; rather, the intention is to encourage multiple traditional styles that are historically prevalent in the region and found in cities such as nearby Beaufort, Savannah to the south and Charleston to the north. These traditional styles are intended to reflect those of the region and may include neoclassical and traditional styles such as Georgian, Federalist, Colonial and Victorian as well as rural Low Country. Many of the basic characteristics and elements listed are common amongst the regional traditional styles and the authenticity of each particular style should be maintained through the detailing of these elements.

Each owner and their architect should become familiar with these guidelines, as well as the underlying historical precedents and surrounding regional influences in order to understand and insure these elements combine to create a structure of rustic elegance, timeless beauty and understated charm.

Styles that are not traditionally prevalent nor historically appropriate for the region, such as Modern, Post Modern, International Style, Prairie School, single story Ranch Style and Mediterranean, as well as Log Cabins and Prefabricated Homes are specifically not allowed. The appropriateness of style is at the discretion of the Bull Point Architectural Review Board.

Please note that due to contemporary construction techniques, materials and building systems, authentic materials, methods or details may not always be appropriate or cost effective, therefore contemporary solutions and interpretations, using historic precedent as a basis, are allowed. Any contemporary interpretations of details or use of materials will be reviewed by and at the discretion of the Bull Point Architectural Review Board.

III. Basic Characteristics of Low Country Vernacular in the Southern Coastal Tradition

Vernacular refers to buildings whose design is based on an informal local tradition rather than by a particular style or individual designer. The Low Country tradition is one of practical solutions and applications that are a response to the local climate, the natural conditions of the site, the resources of the region and the history of its inhabitants. While the style has evolved over time, the basic elements remain simple, understated, and unobtrusive, and the materials are typically indigenous materials: simple, native, and natural.

Each of the following historical components or characteristics is functional and essential to the rural, low density Low Country home as well as other traditional styles of the region and should be integrated into the design of each new home. Listed below each characteristic of Massing, Plan, Porches, Roof, Exterior Wall, Openings and Foundation is the historical basis of each design component and its application within the guidelines.

A. Massing

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated basic Palladian principles of symmetry, balance and proportion. The home often included detached auxiliary use buildings such as a kitchen, carriage house or guest quarters or attached secondary masses or porches. These homes evolved over a period of years, expanding with uses and incorporating elements reflecting the additions and alterations to the structures.

The massing of multiple detached buildings also allowed for orientation and integration within the features of the existing landscape.

Contemporary Application:

- Main mass to be a minimum of 1-1/2 story on the front elevation. The 1-1/2 story mass may be a vaulted, single volume space or it may incorporate a separate ½ story or attic space above. The interior of the ½ story or attic space is not required to be finished out or occupied, however the exterior should give the appearance of a finished space by use of dormer windows or other means.
- Use secondary masses or detached buildings to break down scale and proportion and to integrate with or orientate within the existing landscape, particularly for larger homes, for example, detached garages are encouraged as a means to break down the overall scale.
- The roof pitch and form, as described further under the heading “Roof” should be strongly considered as part of the overall massing.

B. Plan

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated a central floor plan layout in response to the hot and humid climate. The practical configuration and orientation of the central plan allowed airflow through the house and captured breezes to promote a natural, passive cooling effect.

Contemporary Application:

- While historically correct, the central plan may not be necessary with modern climate control but it is still encouraged in order to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the design

C. Porches

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated porches as a means to increase the amount of available living space while providing natural shade and cooling for the interior. These porches may have been secondary masses or incorporated into the main mass, and located on the front, side or back of the home. The front porch also held a highly significant role in Southern culture by providing an area to greet visitors and socialize with neighbors.

Well-proportioned columns and handrails were essential details for the design and character of any traditional porch.

Contemporary Application:

Porch

- A front porch is required on all homes and must be a minimum of 8'-12' deep, one or two stories high and a minimum 50% length of the main mass.
- A side or rear porch is encouraged or may be required in some instances, depending on home site configuration as defined under *Distinctive Characteristics*.
- Side and rear porches may be screened or include windows.
- Acceptable porch ceiling materials include exposed rafters, tongue and groove decking, beaded board or batten plywood.
- Acceptable porch flooring materials include brick or tongue and groove decking.

Columns

- Columns may be round or square within acceptable historic proportions.
- Acceptable column materials include wood or approved synthetic material.

Handrail

- Rails and balusters may be round or square within acceptable historic proportions.
- Acceptable rail and baluster materials include wood or approved synthetic material.

D. Roof

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated a high-pitched roof to shed rainwater, and deep overhangs to provide shade and cooling. The home may have included a dual pitched roof to integrate a secondary building mass or an attached porch. The high-pitched roof, along with the use of dormer windows, also provided increased livable space within the roof structure.

Contemporary Application:

Roof

- All roofs to be 8:12 to 12:12 pitch (except at porches, dual pitched roofs and secondary masses).
- Acceptable roof materials include 5V crimped, standing seam metal or copper and architectural shingles.

Soffits

- Soffits may be exposed rafters, enclosed rafters or boxed soffit.
- Acceptable soffit materials include exposed rafters, tongue and groove decking, beaded board or batten plywood.

Dormers

- Dormers are encouraged along with high-pitched roof to increase livable space and light and add interest to roof lines.
- Dormers may be gabled, hipped or shed.

Chimneys

- Chimneys are encouraged, where appropriate, to add interest to the roofline.
- Acceptable materials include brick, smooth finish stucco or tabby to match the foundation material.

Gutters

- Gutters to be half round galvanized or copper gutters or drip edge with round galvanized or copper downspouts or chains. Vinyl or plastic are not acceptable.

E. Exterior Walls

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated indigenous materials in construction. Wood was readily available, highly versatile and therefore the material of choice in the form of framing, siding or shingles.

Contemporary Application:

- Homes are not limited to wood frame construction, and may include the use of steel, concrete or concrete block framing provided the finished exterior materials meet all other requirements.
- Acceptable exterior wall materials include horizontal wood or fiber cement board siding; vertical board and batten or shingle for the main element. Alternate materials will be considered on an individual basis.
- Molded brick, smooth stucco or tabby may be acceptable provided the building forms and other elements meet the design requirements.
- Molded brick, smooth stucco or tabby may be used as accent material at the foundation and chimney
- All mortar to be white mortar and all joints to be rubbed finish.

F. Openings

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country home typically incorporated vertically proportioned window and door openings in order to promote ventilation and cooling. Operable shutters served multiple practical purposes by providing privacy as well as protection from the natural elements.

Contemporary Application:

Windows

- Windows to be double hung or casement and vertically proportioned to promote natural ventilation/cooling. Symmetrical window patterns should be used with shorter windows on the upper levels.
- Muntins to be simulated or true divided lite
- Acceptable window materials include wood or clad.

Doors

- Front doors must be panel wood doors. Transoms and sidelights are encouraged.
- Side and rear doors may be French doors.

Dormers

- Refer to *Roof* above.

Shutters

- Shutters must be sized to fit, raised panel or louvered, with operable hardware.
- Acceptable shutter materials include wood or approved synthetic material.

G. Foundation

Historic Basis:

The traditional Low Country house typically incorporated a raised foundation to promote ventilation and cooling as well as protection from flooding and insects. Many homes incorporated the use of brick, smooth finish stucco or tabby in the foundation construction.

Contemporary Application:

- The foundation is required to be raised a minimum of 24" to a maximum of 60" from front finished grade to finished floor. The raised foundation and crawl space will also emphasize the front elevation and allow easy access to building systems
- Acceptable pier finish materials include brick, smooth finish stucco or tabby
- Acceptable infill materials between piers include ¾" wood lattice, louvered wood vents or brick lattice.

IV. Distinctive Characteristics

The design of each home for Bull Point is to incorporate *The Basic Characteristics* as noted above. In addition to these basic characteristics, the Bull Point criteria are further divided into 6 distinctive characteristic categories based on home site location or orientation. These distinctive characteristics address additional and specific design requirements as they relate to the surrounding home sites, public right of way and natural features.

A. Tidal Home Sites

(Homes with direct access or single-sided, 90-degree views of the tidal waters and marshes)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade with allowable 3rd level cupola or tower element to enhance water view.
- In addition to the front porch, a porch is required on the water view side and must be a minimum of 8'-12' deep, one or two stories high and a minimum 50% length of the main mass.

B. Island Home Sites

(Homes with direct access or multi-sided, 180-degree plus views of the tidal waters and marshes)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade with allowable 3rd level cupola or tower element to enhance water view.
- In addition to the front porch, a porch is required on the water view side and must be a minimum of 8'-12' deep, one or two stories high and a minimum 50% length of the main mass.

C. Lake Home Sites

(Homes with direct access or views of the interior lakes)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade.
- In addition to the front porch, a porch is required on the water view side and must be a minimum of 8'-12' deep, one or two stories high and a minimum 50% length of the main mass.

D. Dual Front Interior Home Sites

(Homes with multi-sided exposure to public right of way)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade.
- In addition to the front porch, a porch is required on the public view side and must be a minimum of 8'-12' deep, one or two stories high and a minimum 50% length of the main mass.

E. Interior Home Sites

(Homes with wooded views)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade.

F. Split Level Home Sites

(Homes with substantial grade elevation change between the front and back of the home)

Additional Requirements Include:

- Minimum 1-1/2 to 2 levels above front grade (2-1/2 to 3 level appearance above rear grade) with allowable full height walk out foundation at rear of home. Foundation level may be slab on grade with habitable space.
- The main floor elevation is required to be raised a minimum of 24" to a maximum of 60" from front finished grade to finished floor.

V. Landscaping

Great care has been taken at Bull Point to preserve the natural beauty of the surrounding environment. In turn all home designs are required to maintain the integrity and beauty of the property primarily through the use of existing trees and plant cover. Additional landscaping will be required for privacy and screening of unsightly elements such as service yards. This additional landscaping should incorporate native species appropriate to the surrounding area.

Formal gardens may be included as part of an interior courtyard landscape plan or the immediate area directly surrounding the home.

Refer to the *Bull Point Architectural Review Board Guidelines* for further information and requirements.

VI. Summary

All items and content referenced in this document are intended to evoke an image of the traditional vernacular architecture of the region. The content of this document will be used by the Bull Point Architectural Review Board as a basis for the aesthetic review of each home site design submitted, and is also intended to assist the home owners and designers by serving as a guide for the architectural design process. All designs, preliminary and final, are subject to review and approval by the Bull Point ARB. Refer to the *Bull Point Architectural Review Board Guidelines* for further information and requirements regarding design and submission requirements.

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