

Palmetto Bluff gains its first modular home

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Bruce Hayden's custom house is the first in Palmetto Bluff to be built in a factory and trucked to the community. It was installed on his lot in a day with minimal impact to the surrounding environment.

"Looking at the house the next morning (after it arrived), you would have never known that it wasn't built by the conventional, stick-built method," he said. "Palmetto Bluff encourages owners to be 'stewards of the land,' and I wanted to do everything I could to assure the environment was disrupted as little as possible."

Architectural Building Systems, a Bluffton-based modular design/building firm, designed the 1,488-square foot home, handled the review board approvals, installed the foundation, oversaw the factory build and is completing the on-site build-out which will take approximately two months. Hayden is expected to move in Dec. 1.

The factory portion of the house was built in Haven Custom Homes' Ridgeland factory.

The home's custom trim package, which Hayden selected, includes antique, heart of pine floors, quartz countertops, plantation shutters, air-cleaning HVAC system and dual-fuel appliances.

Architects Rob Hull and Joe Hall, founders and co-owners of Architectural Building Systems, have pushed to attain the design and finish level in modular homes that their clients expect. After working for decades in conventional high-end architecture, they founded ABS in 1998 and have been designing and managing projects built off-site ever since.

Construction manager Kent Knapp, who formerly worked for Pulte Homes in Michigan, oversees the on-site portion of the homes the company builds, including landscaping and driveways.

ABS has been recognized with a nomination for one of the Creative Coast Alliance's "Innovation Awards" and a 2007-08 Historic Savannah Foundation Preservation Award for a house built off-site and completed in Savannah's Victorian district.

Hall and Hull, members of the United States Green Building Council, explained that Hayden's house is a good fit with Palmetto Bluff's ongoing commitment to environmentally friendly practices.

"Doing as much as we can in the factory environment saves on waste and theft of building materials and alleviates the need for subcontractors to drive to the site using

gas, polluting the air and disrupting the areas surrounding the build site," Hull explained.

Modular homes are protected from the elements during construction, reducing the risk of mold and mildew.

Palmetto Bluff's beauty, in conjunction with the square footage regulations for his lot, prompted Hayden's purchase in the Lowcountry community.

"Palmetto Bluff is one of the only planned communities that allows a house of 1,400 square feet and doesn't require a golf membership," he said.

William Peacher, president of the Palmetto Bluff Real Estate Company, explained that diversity of home types and lot sizes always has been one of Palmetto Bluff's guiding concepts.

"In every riverside community, like Beaufort or Savannah, you'll see a mixture of grand homes with more modest-size houses adjacent to them or across the street," he said. "This doesn't hurt the real estate values at all, if the homes are tastefully designed and project the image that the community is trying to accomplish," he added.

Palmetto Bluff

Palmetto Bluff's maximum and minimum square footage requirements are determined on a lot-by-lot basis, depending on the lot size as well as the neighborhood.

In today's uncertain economic climate, ABS has seen a dramatic trend toward clients requesting smaller houses and an increase in townhouse, duplex and apartment construction.

"Bruce Hayden is a great example of this trend," Hull said. "He travels all week and spends approximately one week out of the month at his home office. It's just (him) and his dogs. He wanted a small house with upper-end finishes and architectural integrity -- a good value for his money."