





Price Point

Stylish floor plans from Flatfish Island Designs gives customers an affordable option in custom home building

By ROB YOUNG » Photos by JIM SOMERSET





(opposite) The Hewitt's dining room with views into the kitchen and foyer. (above) Hewitt master bedroom and bath.



THROUGHOUT THE DECADES, Herlong & Associates has displayed a deft eye for architectural detail and interior design. The firm's work dots the landscape of the Lowcountry, their homes situated near the seas, marshes, saltwater channels and ocean. In representing their clients, they've also come to represent the region.

Lead by principals Steve Herlong and Jim Henshaw, the company has collaborated with hundreds of developers, builders and homeowners, gaining intimate knowledge about the ways in which people live, rest, work and entertain within their homes. Such experience has given Herlong & Associates a unique understanding regarding the challenges of home building on the South Carolina coast – and how to best confront and overcome potential problem areas.

In many ways, Flatfish Island Designs serves as a natural derivative of the company's broad experience designing finely crafted custom homes. The company provides finely detailed and devised home plans for purchase. Herlong, Henshaw, and their team began Flatfish in April 2009 as an offshoot of the architecture firm. "We had been focusing on truly customized work for a long time," Henshaw says. "When the economy started to slip, we thought it would be a good idea to diversify by creating a design alternative that wasn't quite as custom or site specific, but could provide flexible design options to more people."

Simply put, Flatfish offers attractively rendered architectural design and luxury,

minus the monetary and scheduling investments required for truly customized home plans. Flatfish's designs range from snug cottages and cheery bungalows to spacious, extravagant open floor plans.

"On a custom design with Herlong & Associates, we'll specify things based on our numerous meetings with the owner, and based on our experience building homes in this environment. The drawings and specifications are at a very high level," Henshaw says. "With a Flatfish home, the home owner is typically working directly with their builder to specify materials, interior trim and finishes to achieve a certain price point."

Pick a Plan, Any Plan

Flatfish's collection of house plans includes beachfront, coastal, creek, cottage, river and bungalow builds. The website, www.flatfish-islanddesigns.com, houses the individual plans, renderings and designs. Bearing titles such as "New Plymouth Perch," "Reedy River Overlook" and "Waccamaw Retreat," the spaces range from 965 square feet to more than 4,000 square feet, covering two to five bedrooms and one to 5½ bathrooms.

Henshaw has found that the most ideal models comprise roughly 2,400 to 3,200 square feet, rather than the 4,000-plus square foot homes. "It is a growing trend for homes to be in this square foot range, especially in the demographic that has discovered Flatfish as a design alternative. Once you start getting to a certain size, the design starts getting a bit more compli-

cated," Henshaw says, "and typically those clients are going to need something a bit more customized."

The most popular designs include the "Glossy Ibis," a four-bedroom, 4 ½-bathroom, Southern-style coastal cottage containing rustic shingles, wraparound porches on three sides and a screened-in porch in the rear. The bungalow facilitates easy movement, flowing freely from the entry hall to the kitchen and living room. The ground floor hosts a large master suite and guest suite, with the additional guest rooms and den on the second floor.

Pitts and Megan Hewitt own one of the "Glossy Ibis" homes in the Old Village of Mount Pleasant. As a builder, Pitts Hewitt quickly grasped the home's finer points. "The kitchen and dining area is one of our favorite areas, and the master bathroom is nicer than a spa bathroom. It's really well laid out," he says.

The exposed rafter tails, shiplap siding and trim detail added to the beach cottage aesthetic. The schedule and cost were the other selling points. "We were able to complete the Flatfish design and move in within seven months. The project just flew by," Hewitt says. "The price points are still reasonable, and we built our home two years ago. I recommend Flatfish to everyone; I push it pretty hard."

"Tugaloo Breeze," and "Santee Tide," are two other popular plans, generally favored because of their open-floor plans. "Tugaloo Breeze" benefits from its large



living area, cozy fireplace, wet bar and large kitchen with island seating, as the four-bedroom, 3½-bathroom build enjoys maximum efficiency and space. The home also makes a fine first impression with its gabled entranceway and covered porch, leading to the entry foyer and formal dining area. The first floor holds the private master suite, his and hers walk-in closets and a striking master bath. The wraparound porch, accessible from the kitchen, living room and master suite, presents gorgeous views on two exposures.

is simply impossible. At the same time, more reasonable or cheaper options often involve cutting corners, resulting in soulless design and cookie-cutter house plans.

Flatfish makes possible the building of tailored homes, which are within the means of typical home owners. The work is purposeful, focusing on collaboration and integration to best promote comfortable livability.

“With Flatfish, the cost of getting a great design is relatively low because these designs have already been thought through,”

to their clients before we meet them.”

Approximately 80 percent of Flatfish’s business is conducted within Charleston, including James Island, Mount Pleasant, Wadmalaw Island and Edisto Beach, demonstrating the company’s strong rapport with area builders. “Local builders see us as local and they know if they need to, they can bring us in to talk to the home owners as well, to see what designs would best fit their property.”

Firms such as Structures Building Company praise Flatfish’s work and portfolio.

“With a Flatfish home, the home owner is typically working directly with their builder to specify materials, interior trim and finishes to achieve a certain price point.” — Jim Henshaw

“Santee Tide” is a deluxe plan, checking in at 5 bedrooms and 4½ bathrooms. The media room, large kitchen area, and covered porch in the rear of the first floor are particularly enticing. “Once people view these designs, floor plans or renderings on our website, they can relate and see themselves living in these homes,” Henshaw says.

Practical Measures

Still, Flatfish’s greatest quality likely relates to affordability. Great design typically requires great cost, due to the time involved in designing and documenting a truly custom home on a unique site. Unfortunately, for many consumers, the price point

Henshaw says. “The biggest thing it typically saves is time, and time equals money. If there are no changes to be made to the design, the home owners can often have it in their hands the next day.”

Diverse Clientele

Flatfish has attracted a diverse group of consumers comprised of home owners and home builders. “At Herlong & Associates, it’s typically the home owner coming to us to design their house inside and out. At Flatfish, it’s not just home owners who are coming to us,” Henshaw says. “We’re getting a lot of business from developers and builders who are able to present the designs

Structures, as headed by Steve Kendrick, specializes in high-quality, green-built homes and remodel projects in downtown Charleston, Daniel Island, Mount Pleasant, Kiawah Island and other areas. The company won 2007 and 2009 Builder of the Year Awards from Guild-Quality, a reputable, third-party surveying company.

“Steve Kendrick and Structures Building Company have utilized Flatfish since we started,” Henshaw says. “He approaches his prospective clients with the idea that our firms can provide any level of service depending on their budget and time constraints.”



(opposite) Hewitt front elevation, and kitchen.
(above) The Pylant's dining room and kitchen area.





(top) Pylant living room.
 (this page, left) Pylant front elevation;
 (right) The Pylant family.
 (opposite) The screened in porch is perfect for entertaining.



Flatfish's combination of functionality and curb appeal tend to win over clients, Kendrick acknowledges. The company's professionalism and cost-effective approach also facilitate relationships. "They've really got a unique style – just a great coastal cottage style," Kendrick says. "Plus, the price is better. The timeline is better. That benefits

everybody. I've never had anything but good experiences working with Steve, Jim and their entire team."

Flatfish aims to keep it that way, Henshaw says. "It's simply a great way to provide good residential design to more people, and with a flexibility that appeals to a wide array of homeowners and builders alike." ■

Resources

Flatfish Island Designs
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Herlong & Associates
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Structures Building Company
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