



AIA RICHMOND CHAPTER 2007 DESIGN AWARDS MERIT AWARD WINNER

THE BAYFRONT CLUB AT EAST BEACH Norfolk, Virginia CMSS Architects; Virginia Beach and Richmond, Virginia

Project Narrative:

“Every aspect of [the neighborhood] is designed to foster community.” says the development’s website. This new Traditional Neighborhood Development (completed June 2005) on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay is a modern rendition of a traditional seaside community. To bring residents together and cultivate social interaction and a community spirit, the developers included a neighborhood clubhouse for residents to gather. During the course of the project, the designers were challenged to meet the \$1.3 million budget and:

Give residents an opportunity to enjoy access to the beach and views – Since the majority of homeowners in the neighborhood do not have waterfront lots, the clubhouse provides a portal to the beach and bay.

Provide a Facility that is Multi-Functional and Flexible, and Creates a Warm, Inviting Atmosphere – The clubhouse would include a main function room (also available for rental), a conference room, a fitness room, a library, offices and other support facilities for the building and pool area that would encourage residents to gather and interact.

Reflect the Design Aesthetic of Traditional Seaside Neighborhood – The design would not only need to meet the goals of the development team, it would also need to reflect the heritage and history of the area.

SOLUTIONS

Despite its prime real estate value, the development team reserved a prime bay front lot for the community clubhouse. They felt it was important to provide community access to the beauty of the Chesapeake Bay to residents not living directly on the water. To maximize the value of the clubhouse to the community, the design team created a facility that would provide amenities, foster community interaction, and take full advantage of the spectacular view of the bay. The result was a clubhouse complex that surrounds a swimming pool and courtyard. The project was initially programmed as a 2-story building with a 3rd floor “tower room with an exterior walkway”. Initial design studies showed that a one-story solution would be more accessible and flexible for future East Beach residents. The tower room became the iconic “East Beach Tower” which recalls the bygone architecture of Ocean View resort hotels.

The building design evolved into two main pavilions. The West pavilion became the main wing housing the Homeowner Association administrative offices and conference room; the Bay Room; library/meeting room; various support spaces; and public restrooms. The East pavilion, intentionally smaller, houses the fitness room, snack bar, changing rooms, restrooms, and equipment/storage rooms. Two small storage pavilions connected to the main buildings with lattice-work fences define the south edge. The swimming pool is centered in the courtyard between. The pavilion buildings frame the view of the bay for those lounging in the courtyard.



The adjacent Bayfront Green, a public park for East Beach, was intended to allow community events and socials. The Green, coupled with the Bay Room (which can seat 100 for events) and the courtyard, provides the capability to host sizable community activities both indoors and out. A raised promenade along the west side of the building was planned to provide seating for watching events on the Green, or to serve as a performance stage with an audience on the lawn.

Despite its one-story program, the Bayfront Club was designed with a monumental scale that recognizes the building as an important civic structure amidst the two- and three-story homes surrounding it. The exterior of the Bayfront Club pavilions incorporates red cedar shakes, wood trim, end brackets, and Hardiplank® siding. The colors used were inspired by period historic homes and sympathetic with the design vernacular. Although the Bayfront Club is one-story, it has the scale and individuality to be recognized as an important civic building amidst the two- and three-story homes surrounding it. With its watchtower overlooking the bay, the “Tidewater Arts and Crafts” styled building has become the main focal point for the community.

To create a multi-functional facility, the space plan groups the primary gathering area and function space into the main building which has a more formal design and feel. The Bay Room, the main room, is dual purpose: it functions both as a “living room” and social center for the community; a rentable reception room available for weddings and other functions; and a “Town Hall” for the residents of East Beach. To accommodate the banquet function, a catering kitchen and utility room (large enough to store all of the room’s furniture) are located adjacent.



The design concept is a contemporary interpretation of the “Arts and Crafts” style. The movement emphasized simple shapes, strong lines, nature influences, craftsmanship, and preserving the natural quality of materials. With exposed wood beams and trim, a color palette of mustard yellows, burnished browns, smoky blues, rich crimsons, and cream, the design is true to style. The Bay Room and other public rooms are decorated with Mission-style accent furniture, Tiffany lamps, and incorporate other crafts including tile work, stained-glass, and pottery. To underscore the historic vernacular of the neighborhood, the designers framed sepia-toned reproduced local photographs from the early twentieth century to decorate the public areas.

The jury had the following comments regarding the project:

“The designers clearly have a good eye for proportion and color. The design style is carried consistently through the project. As a piece of architecture in the environment the building shows consistent care in its edges, pavements, and details. The project is successfully conscious of creating social spaces.”

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