

# Development Team Seeks To Prove That Preservation and Profit Can Go Hand in Hand

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When they began their careers as residential developers in 2002, Gregg Bayard and Curry Wadsworth had two goals that met two of their personal convictions: to create affordable housing and to create developments with conservation easements.

Their initial project addressed the first goal. The pair just completed the 144-unit affordable housing development Montgomery Landing Apartments, on west 57th Street and Montgomery Street, with the nonprofit 501-c-3 company Parallel Housing.

The pair is now pursuing the second goal through its for-profit company Salt Creek LLC, with the development of Barbour Pointe, which the developers are calling a "conservation community" and hope will showcase "responsible coastal development" and demonstrate that developers can still make money while applying a sustainable resources approach to development, says the project's broker, Harvey Gilbert, principal of Gilbert Realty Co. LLC.

"The development team of Barbour Pointe intends to clearly demonstrate that the implementation of a sustainable and conservation-oriented community does not necessarily diminish the financial return of a well-orchestrated development," he said.

The land use plan for Barbour Pointe, designed by Bill Dempsey and Dempsey Land Design, preserves 40 percent of the total land in the development in a permanent conservation easement and institutes sustainable development principles including minimizing site and soil disturbance, preservation of as much of the site in its natural condition as possible, including a large number of old-growth trees; and utilizes green development and construction practices.

It will feature 35 single-family homes on about 18 acres of a 38-acre tract at the southern end of Derrick Inn Road about a mile south of U.S. Highway 17 in Chatham County. The plan preserves about 20 acres of salt water marsh on the tract in a permanent conservation easement.

Bayard said he and Wadsworth decided to work on sustainable building developments because "it's the right thing to do."

"It's respect for the environment and proper natural resources management," he said. "We got to the point where we were tired of people talking about what should be done, and we wanted to show that the principles we believe in can be done."

Bayard said he and Wadsworth were initially concerned whether building Barbour Pointe the way they wanted would be financially feasible, but that Gilbert helped them to understand the market and the potential for rate of return on the development.

"Any time you put another layer of restriction or expense on a project, you always have to ask yourself, well this is great, but if we build this, will anyone come," Bayard said. "Your conviction has to tell you you're not doing this to squeeze every last penny out of the project, but you're willing to leave something on the table in return for doing the right thing."

Bayard, Wadsworth and Gilbert believe, however, that people will indeed buy homes in Barbour Pointe once they

see the natural beauty of the property and its waterfront access.

"The wild card for us is we have a piece of property that has extensive shoreline and deep-water access, and that allows us the margin to take the risk," Bayard said. "It's on a pristine piece of coastal marsh, and we're only 10 miles from downtown Savannah."

The tract includes 1,400 feet of shoreline along Salt Creek, a tributary of the Forest River, and a 50-foot-wide peninsula that extends 600 to 700 feet into the creek, Bayard said.

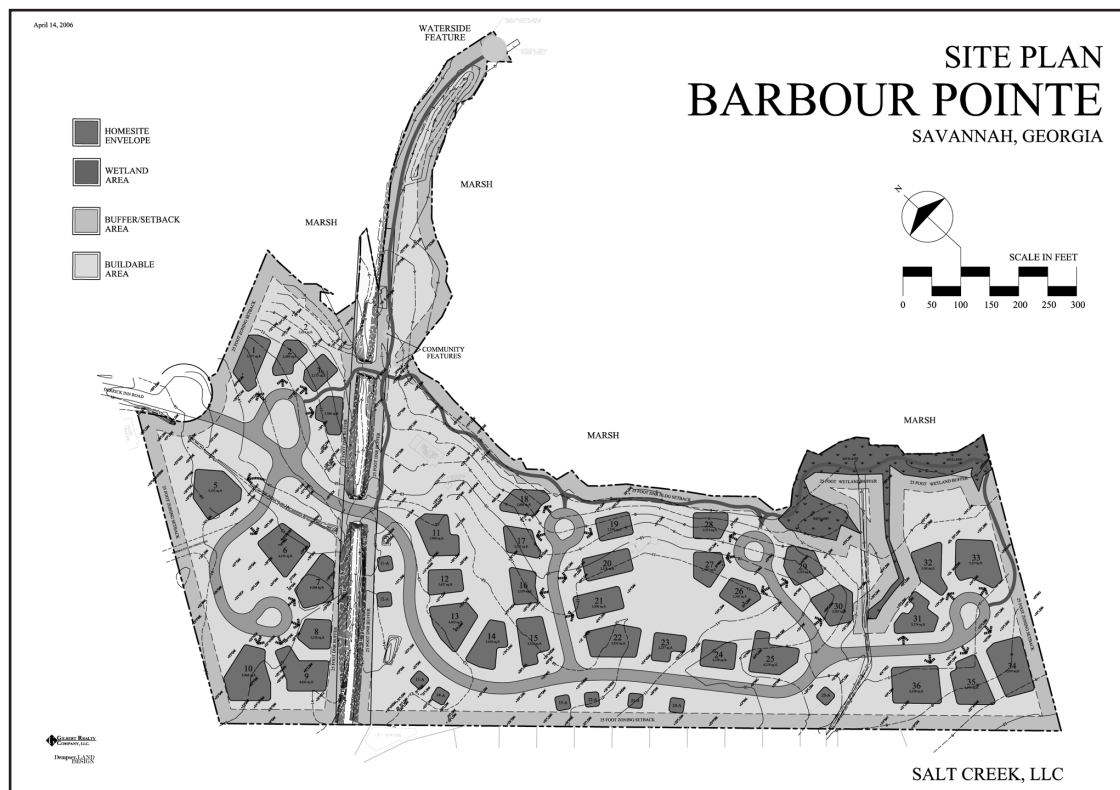
For starters, in their sustainable building plans, the developers are working to become the pilot development for the new Coastal Region EarthCraft Communities for sustainable site development. EarthCraft is a program of Southface, the Atlanta-based nonprofit that promotes sustainable energy homes and workplaces through education, research, advocacy and technical assistance. Homes in Barbour Pointe will also have to meet EarthCraft Homes construction standards, which include Energy Star energy standards as only one of its sustainable components.

The developers are offering a unique ownership model to homebuyers. Though the homes will be single-family, ownership will be more similar to that of a condominium association. A buyer will own the house from the walls in, but the land will be owned in common by all the homeowners and will be placed in a permanent conservation easement.

"So it prevents homeowners from getting together and deciding, 'Let's build 40 percent more development out here,'" Bayard said.

Homeowners will buy an "envelope" of land in which they can build a home of up to 2,200 square feet. Each homeowner will have a 10-15 foot zone around the house in which they will have more land usage rights than the rest of the common space. For instance, a

homeowner can put out a grill, and neighbors will not be able to use it. They will also be able to plant trees and vegetation within their "envelope," but will have to choose from a list of approved choices that require no artificial



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watering once they have taken hold to meet one of the development's sustainable building standards of zero landscaping.

"Zero scraping is really looking at water use," Bayard said. "Everything you see in the wild is zero scraping material, which has evolved with its environment."

The land use plan neatly tucks buildable envelopes into existing stands of mature specimen trees, which will allow the developers to preserve all but a handful of trees on the site.

The development's entire road system will be built with pervious materials and allow the installation of a closed geothermal heat-exchange loop system beneath it to allow installation of ground source heat pumps. Homeowners will have to heat and cool their homes using these pumps. Bayard quoted statistics showing that a geothermal heat pump used in conjunction with Earth Craft construction produces an annual combined heating and cooling bill of \$200 to \$300 for a 1,500-square-foot house.

The developers expect to break ground on Barbour Pointe in late summer. Bayard said Gilbert estimated buyers for the envelopes will be about one-third individuals who buy for investment, one-third builders who build on spec, and one-third homes custom-built for the homeowner. Bayard said they are not sure yet whether they will place a limit on the number of envelopes a builder can buy.

"But we're not real anxious to mass-sell stuff," he said.

He thinks the development will be built out within 18 to 24 months.

The green building movement has been slowly getting a foothold in Savannah. Melaver Inc. recently unveiled a monument at Abercorn Common to commemorate the shopping center as the first in the United States to receive certification from the Green Building Council as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) development. And last summer, the developer and design team of Forum Group and Lott & Barber Architects of Savannah started work on Lakeview Village and Residences at Lakeview Village, the first project in the Southeast to use green-building practices in residential planning and architecture. That development is being designed and built according to LEED standards and was also the first project in the area to participate in and seek certification from Southface's EarthCraft House Multi-Family Development.