

Big-Little Cottage Advantages

A new reserve of homebuyer and designer awareness exists for the new technology-driven millennials. There is a trend for smaller and more energy-responsible homes. There are plenty of leftover designs (past inventories), which await refreshed reuse for improved efficiencies in design & maintenance. Home plan websites offer few selections that feature elevated efficiency levels using smaller size layouts (reduced carbon footprint). One surprising new home plan design has addressed this need and is now called “Big-Little Cottages”. Created by designer and Architect Bennett Shuman, AIA, documents and options are available.

The most prominent features of this single family and two-story residence involves planning with multiple options for highly efficient design. The “Big-Little” design plan offers an 1,800 square foot, two-story home with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Imagine, too, that the average U.S. home size is 2,598 sq. ft. (2013), and has been increasing since 1983, while the European counterparts are much smaller at 1,000 sq. ft.

Some of the prime features include:

- (a) optional large master bedroom suite
- (b) optional attached/ detached garage options
- (c) public living spaces with higher ceilings and open views to porches
- (d) interiors designed with furniture layouts in mind, and
- (e) cottage scale with stylish décor

Homeowners who plan to build on small, or perhaps narrow, lots with varying degrees of initial & future budgets can find compatible options. The design can accommodate corner lots, as well. A significant realization exists in the planning of spaces to fit on a smaller lot size. There is an immediate saving in land purchases alone (see above).

The “Big-Little” basic version with the detached garage option(s) will easily fit on 9,000 square feet of land (0.2 acres) which is far less than the NAHB (National Association of Home Builders, & the 2015 US Government Census) reports the average lot size of new homes. An average land parcel for Big-Little would result in significant savings.

The Big-Little design components also implement both passive thermal efficiencies and storm-hardened structural selections equal to coastal wind zones. “Big-Little” also provides for a variety of cladding options and water resistant designs. The documentation process for the “Big-Little” is complete for homeowners who prefer to be their own builder (savings realized) or enjoy the craftsmanship qualities of self-performance (perfection realized).

When comparisons are made between building the “Big-Little” design and purchasing an existing home, the differences become more pronounced. Quality products were selected to maximize the efficiency, durability, and long-lasting appearance of the “Big-Little” home. Stone countertops and splashes, wood trim packages, and wood floors all coordinate the interiors. The interiors are further supported by an open kitchen and great room with exterior views through to the side and rear porch communal areas. The public spaces are zoned away from the private spaces (bedrooms and bathrooms). Interior ceiling areas are high as illustrated by the great room and the open stair to the second level.

An existing home is generally a builder-developed home that represents a popular style of those who have built that home in the past. It becomes trendy and reflective of its authors. New Big-Little homes are well coordinated & compact. The idea is not to simply build big, but to build uniformly smart and efficient with full insulated forms. Insulated concrete form liners (ICF) are comprised of expanded polystyrene and reinforced concrete for wind resistance.

Insulation is uniformly applied to the exterior walls. The Big-Little Cottage supports long-lasting value and can weather storms.

Windows and doors from the “Big-Little” have impact glazing along with thermally isolated framing. There is also insulation glazing and tinting. Insulation levels include roof insulation values of R=38 with secondary radiant barrier insulation. This also provides UV protection foiled along the roof surface. The roof panels have a 50-year rated metal composition shingle. There is an ice & water shield membrane layer beneath for water protection. The concrete paneled soffits are vented and the roof edges are metal-clad for long lasting protection against wood rot. The “Big-Little” concept(s) is a long term investment and will surpass any conventional house plan.

Bennett Shuman, AIA is a licensed architect in multiple states and can be contacted at Big-little.com (the website specializing in smart concepts for residential living) or Bennettshuman.com (the architectural company website) or Bennettshumanaia.com (the investigation and litigation-driven site). The business office is in Pensacola, Florida, (850) 433-8235

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