

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON BALD HEAD ISLAND COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. We moved to the island (finally!) in 2020 after visiting for 10 years. The reason we chose BHI was the seclusion, nature, and lack of commercialization. I think we need to add an option to the survey that explicitly states nature preservation as a top priority. I am against hotels and the destruction of natural space for more commercialization.
2. I love the idea of a commercial ARC board. I hope it includes at least some folks with commercial building experience. I believe this type of board will help with ensuring commercial development more in tune not only with the rest of the Island's structures but also with the spirit of living in harmony with nature.
<p>3. Just a couple comments on the proposed Commercial Plan...</p> <p>I feel the option of allowing cedar shakes or shingles to be left natural should be removed. There is currently a house on South Bald Head Wynd with an untreated exterior, and it does not fit in with the rest of the island.</p> <p>Also, I feel the list of recommended landscape plants should match the list in the residential guidelines. As listed, the Commercial guidelines are not as comprehensive as the residential guidelines.</p> <p>No other comments at this time. Thanks</p>
<p>4. Here are our comments.</p> <p>1) The recommended height of 45 feet in the draft guidelines is outrageous for Bald Head Island.</p> <p>2) No commercial building should exceed the height restriction currently in force by the ARC for residential buildings.</p> <p>3) There should be a specified limit on the total square footage permitted for any individual commercial building, regardless of the size of the lot on which its built.</p> <p>4) For each square foot of new commercial construction, a ratio of parking spaces should be created on the same commercial lot.</p> <p>5) While steel may be the preferred commercial construction material, any side of a commercial building which is <u>visible</u> from the street or walking path should</p> <p>(Continued)</p>

be covered by attractive, **non metallic** siding materials such as hardy board. Painting is not sufficient.

6) The guideline for exterior building paint should be the same used by ARC for residential buildings. In any event, BLACK should be prohibited.

7) A new committee/entity under BHA (similar to ARC) should be created and assigned the responsibility for approving all commercial construction, together with the authority to fine offenders who violate guidelines, just as they do for residential properties. The BHA entity should have the power to block/revoke any occupancy permit to enforce the guidelines, and assess financial penalties to offenders.

8) A plan must be provided and approved by the governing entity before the removal of any mature plants and trees on a commercial lot. **Removal of Live Oak trees should be strictly prohibited.**

5. Tree removal should not be at builders' discretion, redesign before losing old live oaks.

Only one commercial builder on any board overseeing building/development. Restrictions on building height same as residential.

6. Thank you for issuing the very comprehensive draft of the above guidelines and for seeking owner input. I have just a few comments:

Page 13 and throughout: The reference to building height maxed at 45' may already be present in some of the commercial buildings along Maritime Way. I found the earlier commercial planning 'vision' document which included multi-story commercial buildings at the Harbor/Ferry to be objectionable. If more commercial buildings were to go in there, I would think a lower height would allow for more appreciation of the islands topology and beachfront in that area. In short, tall commercial buildings upon immediate entrance to the island, create the atmosphere of 'come spend your money', not 'come enjoy our island'. Commercial buildings in areas other than the 'commercial district' should have a lower profile, especially near the water.

Page 8 and throughout: There are numerous references to preserving understory, and natural landscape regardless of whether the building activity is for homes or commercial interests. Sadly, there seems to be little regard for these types of regulations, whether there are fines levied or not. More and more you see entire lots cleared leaving a pile of sand out to the roadside. In terms of Public Domain lands, routinely we are now seeing construction vehicles destroy median strips and land adjacent to building lots. South Bald Head Wynd is proof that there is little regard for public domain property. And

who is held accountable for its restoration once destroyed? I believe accountability needs to be designated in these guidelines for destruction of public domain property during the build process.... both contractors and the property owner should be held accountable for its restoration.

Commercial Vehicles: This is a tangential topic but applies mostly to the build and maintenance process. The presence of ICE vehicles on the island has exploded. Many vehicles of varying size and purpose routinely cover the island.. pick-up trucks, panel and box trucks, cars, etc. Many of these vehicles have no signage to identify their purpose or business interest. Since ICE vehicle usage is restricted on the island, **every ICE vehicle should carry identifying signage**. This is also a safety concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

7. We just bought after many years of visiting. Bald Head Island is unique because of the quiet, laid-back atmosphere that only nature can provide. We need to remember to preserve this at all costs. I realize the opportunity cost of not building commercial space is at stake, but the island is unique only because of the lack of widespread commercialization.

I am against more commercial development on the island. Let's preserve this beautiful space for generations to come. There is so much development surrounding us on the mainland. Let's enjoy it there and keep BHI preserved. Once it's gone, it will not be the same.

8. There are some general comments and some that are specific to portions of the proposed ordinance.

The basic tenets of the Commercial Guidelines should be as similar to those of the existing Residential Guidelines as possible, even though some movement is underway to update and consolidate the latter. Familiarity with the existing process and techniques will help implementation of non-residential guidelines.

Some explanation should be incorporated or explained as to the role of the existing Zoning Ordinance as it relates to the Commercial guidelines, Surely the existing zoning plays a role in how a piece of land is ultimately developed.

In terms of the development of the ARC that will review non-residential, it is imperative that an architect sit on the Committee. If there is no such volunteer available, BHA should pay for a consulting architect to take that role. Similarly, it is vital that property owners be required to hire a registered to submit plans for all new construction. Experience has shown that to do otherwise is folly and wastes valuable staff and ARC time.

More transparency must be introduced to the review process. Property owners adjacent to a proposed project should be notified about the status of development adjacent to their lot. The site should be posted, and the community can be directed to the BHA office to view potential plans. Property owners should have the ability to listen to presentations about the project and offer comments. It is understood that the ARC deliberations are private.

The non-residential ARC should also have the ability to release the results of their decision quickly, i.e., in a more timely fashion than is currently done in the residential arena. This would go a long way to improving the process, reducing criticism, and ensuring trust in the process. This might require the addition of staff.

A critical move towards improving the system would be to implement (whatever way it can be done including changing ordinances) a direct connection between the Village's Certificate of Occupancy and final sign off by the ARC-non-residential and residential. Without a CO, the project cannot be occupied, and it would facilitate compliance with approved plans. That does not happen now and compliance with an as-built plan is a nightmare, or the applicant returns with numerous field changes that the review body feels compelled to approve,

Some comments about the ordinance itself:

- Any changes/improvements/additions to *existing* commercial development should be subject to the tenets of the new non-residential guidelines.
- It's time for the island to make a policy decision about sidewalks. Existing sidewalks in certain areas of the island are NOT maintained and are crumbling. Do not encourage sidewalks unless the responsibility for their maintenance is defined for all to know and maintenance is required.
- With respect to "rhythm" in the body of the ordinance per Composition- Would this be the place to emphasize the Coastal Carolina Vernacular that is the foundation of architectural style on BHI and is the foundation of the residential guidelines? It should be mentioned somewhere, so that the residential and non-residential theme/rhythm is paralleled.
- What is the rationale for going above 35' in height for structures ANYWHERE on the island? We've already seen the result of that decision in several monstrously out- of- scale non-residential buildings.
- Metal siding should NOT be permitted. The current language is too permissive. At the very least, the language should *discourage* metal siding.
- Guidelines should include drawings depicting certain design elements for clarification.

- Design guidance to avoid large box-like design should be incorporated somewhere in the area of the guidelines that speaks to composition and/or body of the building.
- Re Color and texture: the reference to “traditional” color schemes is vague. Why not emulate the language regarding earthtones that is in the residential guidelines?
- In the description regarding submission of landscape plans, there should be some reference to identifying existing trees on the site as to their retention and protection. The Committee reviewing the draft guidelines suggested creation of a process for tree ID and removal. Submission of accurate tree inventories as soon as a site is under consideration for non-residential development would facilitate this process.

9.

1) We support the development of an oversight board such as the ARC for the development of commercial properties; with the structure being similar to that required of residential properties. (Preapproval of building plans, with an architectural sketch and rendering available for committee and public viewing, tree/undergrowth removal, and continual oversight of maintenance and adherence to BHI guidelines) Most localities have a planning commission that does the screening of new businesses and buildings. They vote and if the measure passes, it goes to the local governing board for final approval. (Village Council.)

2) Am NOT in favor of any additional metal structures...in our opinion we have too many now and it has been our experience, they do not fare well from winds during hurricanes.

3) Any new building should have a ratio of building size to number of parking spots available to prevent parking on Wynds and limiting access of emergency vehicles.

4) Who decides when we have enough home décor shops or restaurants? With several non- profits on island, we certainly do not wish to see them compete with new businesses to the detriment of both.

5) With increased commercial development comes the possibility of additional ICE vehicles. Is there a cap on the number the island can accept? How many ICE vehicles can a business have? Are there guidelines in place to deny an ICE vehicle for a particular business?

10. We have owned property on BHI from 1988 to the present. We find the movement towards increased commercialization alarming. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on your draft. Our overall concern is that once BH loses the ability to attract people who appreciate the island for what it has always been – an isolated get-away spot, quietly living in harmony with nature and not devoted to a culture of shopping or of being entertained with loud outdoor gatherings or staged events – it will be forever lost.

Several areas of the draft raise questions for us. One is the inequity of the 35' vertical restriction on residential buildings and 45' for commercial. Existing property owners have complied with the 35' restriction for decades; why change it for a commercial building? That seems unfair.

Another area that needs serious attention is the ICE vehicle issue. New, massive commercial development will only increase the number of construction-related ICE vehicles on our little roads. What is the current ICE vehicle to golf cart ratio? Is there any plan to cap that percentage? With extensive commercialization that number will increase as more and potentially larger vehicles will be needed to distribute goods to these businesses. Is there a point when driving a golf cart doesn't seem like much fun anymore? Is the issue of ICE vehicle/golf cart coexistence being adequately addressed?

While we currently have three defined commercial areas, is it possible that more areas in the future will receive that designation? Do property owners have any voice in that decision?

Additionally, a few specific points from the draft:

p. 7 "Gateway" program: Is there any effort to create an information center to relate the history of BH and the need to respect its ecoculture to the arriving tourist who may be over for a day trip or to the newcomer who wishes to enjoy all BH has to offer?

p. 8 Public Space: This section refers to porches, decks, patios, terraces to provide merchandise display, outdoor seating, etc. Is there any attempt to control the emphasis on outdoor merchandising/commercialization especially at the harbor, which, as you point out, is the "gateway" to the island and sets the tone for the visit?

p. 9 General Building Design/Form & Massing: "Large buildings should be modulated...". Is there any limit on how many "large" buildings are enough?

p. 10 Specific Building Requirements/Materials. The phrasing indicates that

“metal storefront glass” is not “encouraged” but neither does it say that it will be denied. On that same page the stipulations are that “aluminum storefront doors” will be approved only if “glass” has been approved. Sounds like a way to end up with a very ugly building.

p. 12 Lighting (Exterior): After outlining extensive exterior lighting restrictions to protect our wildlife, the draft indicates that TV/electronic equipment may be placed on exterior decks, porches, etc. as long as it is shielded from view by neighbors etc.; this must be a joke. Sound travels and there seems to be no restriction on that.

In short, thank you for making the effort to establish controls on the ever-changing commercialization of BH. We hope that your committee will develop a plan that will preserve the character of BHI.

11. Thank you to the committee for the considerable time and attention given to this endeavor. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

There are several references to understory clearing , clearing trees, shrubbery, and landscaping. I am concerned that suggestions will go unacknowledged. I fear that many developers would rather cut and clear as they wish and pay a fine later. Old growth and understory take years to reestablished. I would like to see more emphasis on protecting the environmental aspects of the island. If possible I think clearing and other landscaping alterations should be supervised work. Too often I hear that the crew doing the work ‘didn’t know’ what the guidelines state. Likewise for new plantings. They should be as natural as possible. If it is not growing here naturally, it should not be added.

I would like to see a lower building height especially in the marina and the conservancy area. A height equal to residential guidelines would be sufficient and complimentary to the islands topography.

Steele buildings may be a commercial standard off island but, they do not fit the island’s style. It is sad a few already exist on the island. There are many other non metallic options (hardy plank for one) to choose that are attractive and quality materials.

The paint color guideline should be the same or very near to the residential choices. I think the library of colors should be varied to avoid a cookie-cutter appearance to the developments.