



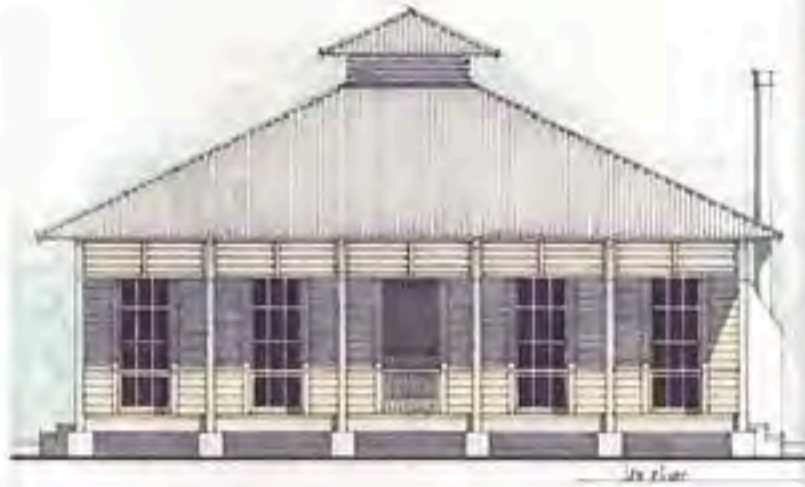
Thinking Inside the Box

There's no simpler building form than your basic box. We challenged four architects to make the most of it.

By: Jenny Sullivan

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Southern Soul



GEORGIA PEACH: Lew Oliver's prim one-story cottage is clad in lap siding with a corrugated metal roof. The front elevation alternates pencil posts (which stand on their own piers) and ribbon windows to create a nice rhythm and balance.

Credit: Lew Oliver

Lew Oliver

Whole Town Solutions
Roswell, Ga.

www.wholetownsolutions.com

<http://lewolivernest.com>

FOCUS: Custom homes and cottage stock plans designed as building blocks for walkable communities

Lew Oliver's response to our challenge draws on multiple Southern vernacular influences. To avoid visual interruption of the cottage's symmetrical façade, Oliver pushed the porch stairs off to either side and kept the veranda low to the ground—a move that allowed an open shelf rail in lieu of the enclosures required by code for porches taller than 30 inches above grade.

For all its good looks, this house isn't adorned for the sake of aesthetics alone. The skinny windows and reflective metal roof are centuries-old devices used to mitigate heat gain and capture cross breezes. Similarly, the porch blocks out direct sun while providing a buffer between public and private zones. And the rooftop cupola serves as a passive ventilation device.

The house is also thrifty in its use of materials. "A square envelope requires the least amount of exterior skin, and it allows a hipped roof, which is one of the simplest and most efficient roof forms to build," Oliver explains. "Right now the front windows are drawn at 9 feet, but you could eliminate the bottom pane and shorten the schedule to 6-foot windows, which would allow you to use stock windows."

Charming in its low country references, the design also takes some contemporary turns. "Instead of a traditional chimney, I did an exposed metal flue off to one side, knowing that more flue replaces nowadays are prefab," Oliver says. "Plus, we are starting to see more wood stoves. I wanted to express that in an honest way."

Put These Plans to the Test

The four prototypes in this story are thoughtful ideas, but do they actually pencil out? Go ahead—run some numbers on the plans and specs, and tell us whether they have practical applications in your market. We'll publish your estimates and comments on our website at <http://go.hw.net/InTheBox>.



Credit: Lew Oliver

1 The kitchen's location in the rear of the plan allows direct interaction with the back patio and grilling area. Large windows and French doors flood the prep areas with sunlight, reducing the need for artificial lighting.

2 The open plan creates long sight lines from the front porch all the way through to the back patio. These elongated views make the interior spaces feel larger.

3 The parking solution is a hybrid. An enclosed garage accommodates one car, while a covered carport provides space for a second. Take that second car out, and the covered area—which is paved in the same material as the adjacent patio—creates an extended outdoor entertainment space.

4 For ventilation, Oliver borrowed a strategy dating back to the atrium homes of ancient Rome. A central vent shaft (in this case, modernized with a quiet attic fan) draws air through the windows and up through the core of the house, releasing hot air out of the cupola. The bonus of this design feature is that it allows 11-foot ceilings.

5 Oliver considered how this house would relate to its neighbors. The setbacks specify an 11 foot 4 inch side-yard clearance between buildings. The front façade is set back about 12 feet, but the social porch is just 2 feet from the sidewalk