

PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Growth Management Department



MEETING DATE:	October 22, 2025
PROJECT:	Amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 – Design Standards - Accessory Buildings
PROJECT MANAGER:	Angie Castrillon Planner

INTRODUCTION: As set forth in Section 3.5.2 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), "an application for a UDO Text Amendment may be initiated by a Town of Bluffton property owner, Town Council, Planning Commission, or the UDO Administrator when public necessity, convenience, State or Federal law, general welfare, new research, or published recommendations on zoning and land development justifies such action."

REQUEST: The UDO Administrator requests that the Planning Commission recommend approval to Town Council of certain text amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 – Design Standards, Design Standards – Accessory Buildings.

BACKGROUND: On August 12, 2025, Town Council held a workshop to consider potential amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Article 5 – Design Standards: Accessory Buildings. Council directed Staff to provide additional opportunities for the Planning Commission (PC) to review and offer feedback prior to further action.

Workshops on this topic were previously held with both the Planning Commission and the Historic Preservation Commission; however, no clear consensus emerged due to varied perspectives. In April 2025, staff facilitated a Town Council workshop during which Council provided general direction to guide future standards.

In response, staff developed a proposal to establish clear and practical regulations for carports as a distinct building type. The intent is to create flexible, context-sensitive standards that support neighborhood character, particularly within the Historic District, while ensuring functionality and compatibility with existing development patterns.

The proposal outlines considerations related to overall intent, design and compatibility, functionality and use, lot and zoning factors, and construction standards. Key elements include regulating scale and placement to ensure carports remain subordinate to principal structures, allowing flexibility for different lot configurations, encouraging screening where appropriate, and requiring compliance with applicable building codes.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: When assessing an application for UDO Text Amendments, Town Council is required to consider the criteria set forth in UDO Section 3.5.3, Application Review Criteria. These criteria are provided below, followed by a Finding.

1. **Section 3.5.3.A.** Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or, if conditions have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, consistency with the overall intent of the Plan, recent development trends and the general character of the area.

Finding. The proposed amendments are consistent with Comprehensive Plan.

2. **Section 3.5.3.B.** Consistency with demographic changes, prevailing economic trends, and/or newly recognized best planning practices.

Finding. The proposed carport amendments support best planning practices by regulating size, placement, and materials to maintain neighborhood character and manage stormwater impacts.

3. **Section 3.5.3.C.** Enhancement of the health, safety, and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.

Finding. The proposed amendments support the general welfare of the Town and its residents.

4. **Section 3.5.3.D.** Impact of the proposed amendment on the provision of public services.

Finding. The proposed amendments have no relationship to this criterion.

5. **Section 3.5.3.E.** The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

Finding. The application complies with all applicable requirements of the Applications Manual.

NEXT STEPS:

UDO Text Amendment Procedure	Date	Complete
Step 1. Planning Commission Public Hearing and Recommendation	October 22, 2025	✓
Step 2. Town Council – 1st Reading	December 9, 2025*	
Step 3. Town Council Meeting – Final Reading and Public Hearing	January 13, 2026*	

*Tentative

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Sec. 2.2.6.C.4 of the UDO, the Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Approval of the application as submitted;
2. Approval of the application with amendments; or
3. Denial of the application as submitted by the Applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Growth Management staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed Text Amendments to Town Council as submitted.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Amendments