

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

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| MEETING DATE: | August 6, 2025 |
| PROJECT: | COFA-05-25-019626 106 Bridge Street Road – New Construction of Single-family House and Carriage House |
| APPLICANT: | Ansley H. Manuel (Manuel Studio) |
| PROPERTY OWNER: | Jeffrey Zehel |
| PROJECT MANAGER: | Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner |

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Ansley Manuel (Manuel Studio), on behalf of the owner, Jeffrey Zehel, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approve the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a 1-story single-family residence of approximately 2,618 SF and a 2-story Carriage House of 1,161 SF at 106 Bridge Street in Old Town Bluffton Historic District, and within the Neighborhood General-HD (NG-HD) zoning district.

INTRODUCTION: The project is located at 106 Bridge Street and will be accessed via a presently unopened 30-foot “ghost road” or right-of-way (Guerrard Avenue) that is owned by the Town of Bluffton. Prior to any disturbance in this right-of-way, including tree removal and installation of utilities, Town of Bluffton approval is required. As the main structure will front Bridge Street, the Guerrard Avenue frontage is considered the side yard. Placement of the house less than the required 10-foot side yard setback acknowledges limitations placed on the lot because of the ghost road, as well as the desire to preserve an 84'-0” live oak with expansive leaders located on the west side of the property.

The proposed 1-story main structure, approximately 2,618 SF, has characteristics of a Vernacular House Building Type but is reviewed as an Additional Building Type because of its size. The front block of the house is located underneath a hip roof and will include a full façade front porch fronting Bridge Street, a portion of which will be screened. From finished floor elevation to the roof ridge of the front block, the height is approximately 23'-9”. Behind the front block is a hyphen that connects to a rear block, which is underneath a hip roof and is approximately 20'-10” tall from finished floor elevation to the roof ridge.

The main house features a tabby shell foundation with horizontal wood louvers, horizontal Hardie board, a 5-V crimp roof, Hardie and wood trim, aluminum clad windows, and wood doors. A brick chimney is also proposed.

A 2-story Carriage House with a hip roof is proposed in the northwest corner of the property, approximately seven (7) feet from the northwest corner of the main structure. The Carriage House will include a residence over a 2-bay garage and an attached 45 SF storage building. The Carriage House square footage is approximately 1,144 SF. The Carriage House is designed to appear similar to the main structure and includes two large dormers on the west and east elevations and an exterior L-shaped staircase at the south elevation that provides access to the second-floor residence. The landing/patio at the second floor is located underneath a pyramidal roof that extends approximately 5'-5½” from the main roof eave into the adjacent yard and is 11'-9” wide from eave to eave. From finished floor elevation to the roof ridge, the Carriage House is approximately 24'-8” tall, which is taller than the main structure.

Per UDO Sec. 4.4.1.A.3., the maximum height of an accessory dwelling is two stories or the height of the primary structure, whichever is less. UDO Sec. 5.15.8.F. requires Carriage Houses to be “clearly incidental to, smaller than, and distinguished from the principal building form.” It is acknowledged that the lot has some development limitations and that some flexibility is appropriate; however, the Carriage House is too tall, has a more complicated roof line than the main house and is located too close to the main house.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) for conceptual review on March 31, 2025 (Attachment 7). The Applicant changed after this meeting and the plan was extensively revised. Because of timing issues related to the project, the revised plans were provided for first view at the May 12, 2025 HPRC meeting, thus written HPRC comments do not exist.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: In its review of this COFA-HD application, Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Section 3.18.3 (COFA-HD, Application Review Criteria), applying the standards and guidelines of UDO Sec. 5.15, Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The intent of the standards and guidelines is, in part, to provide guidance and ensure consistent development without discouraging creativity or forcing the replication of historic models.

The applicable criteria of UDO Sec.3.18.3 are provided below followed by a Staff Finding based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.18.3.B. Consistency with the principles set forth in the Old Town Master Plan.

- a. *Finding.* The application is consistent with the principles set forth in the Old Town Master Plan. The Old Town Master Plan states that “The built environment, in particular the historic structures scattered throughout Old Town, should be protected and enhanced. While it is of great importance to save and restore historic structures, it is just as important to add to the built environment in a way that makes Old Town more complete.”

Old Town Bluffton Historic District is a locally designated historic district. The main structure has been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character of neighboring structures and will enhance the neighborhood by adding architectural variety provided that the conditions noted in #2 of this Section are met and determinations by HPC made. The Carriage House, however, should be reconsidered for the reasons indicated in the Introduction.

- b. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also include the adoption of a form-based code that included architectural standards for structures located within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. These standards are included in Article 5 of the UDO. The new construction will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in #2 of this Section are met and determinations by HPC made.
- c. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also promote preservation and protection of the legacy of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District through additions to the built environment which make Old Town more complete. The addition of the new buildings contributes to the district as well as helps to provide completeness to the neighborhood and overall district.

2. Section 3.18.3.C. The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.

- a. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that if the conditions noted below are met and/or approved by the HPC, the proposed structure will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5:

- (1) **Chimney (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.E.8. and G.3.h.):** A brick chimney is proposed, which is a permitted material. However, the UDO states that for the use of brick, “[w]herever possible, green building materials...including recycled content sheathing, siding composed of reclaimed or recycled material, salvaged masonry brick or block, and locally produced stone or brick” should be used. Information regarding the proposed brick has not been provided for the chimney (or stairs as discussed in 2.a.(3)). The HPC must determine if brick is an appropriate material; if so, the source and type must also be approved. As an alternative, a tabby shell chimney would be consistent with the tabby shell foundation. A detail of the chimney cap must be provided to ensure consistency with the UDO.
- (2) **Columns (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.):** The Carriage House ground floor column material has not been identified. The second-floor columns are pressure-treated wood, as are the columns in the main house. Columns must be wood (termite resistant), painted or natural, cast iron, concrete with smooth finish, brick, stone, steel or tabby unless otherwise approved by the HPC.
- (3) **Railings (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.d.):** Stair and railing details have not been provided for the main house or the Carriage House other than an indication that all main house stair treads will be brick. It appears that the base may be concrete with a tabby coating. Details must be provided for each staircase.
- (4) **Windows - Configuration (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.3.b.):** For the main house, fixed windows are proposed on the Right and Rear elevations, which is not a permitted configuration. These windows must be changed to a casement operation unless otherwise approved by HPC.
- (5) **Windows – Size (UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.3.& 4.):** Window size is not dictated by the UDO; however, individual building features, such as windows, “must be proportional to other features of the building as well as the overall building form.” Further, “interruptions and variety into the wall plane to create interest and variety” must be incorporated.

On the Right elevation of the main house, there are four window sizes. As no more than three window sizes per elevation is the standard for Old Town, the bathroom window in the rear block (“D”) should match the windows in the kitchen (“C”). For the Carriage House, the Front elevation is devoid of windows, and the Rear elevation second-story appears blank without a window. The HPC should determine if the window fenestration as proposed is appropriate.
- (6) **Shutters (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.):** Shutters are proposed to be pressure treated wood. When shutters are proposed, they should be used on all windows that can accept shutters. For the main house, there are windows on the Right and Rear elevations that could accept shutters. All shutters must be operable and include shutterdogs. A shutter detail must be provided.
- (7) **Underpinning (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O.):** The main house foundation will be CMU wall coated with tabby shell and include wood louvered vents underneath each window and between porch piers. These vents are not required by the UDO and appear unnecessary where there are no piers.
- (8) **Carriage House:** As noted in the Introduction section, the Carriage House is located too close to the main house, is too tall, and the roof line appears too complicated in comparison to the main house. The HPC should determine if the Carriage House as proposed is appropriate.

3. Section 3.18.3.D. Consistency with the nature and character of the surrounding area and consistency of the structure with the scale, form and building proportions of the surrounding neighborhood.

Finding. The mass and scale of the main structure is appropriate for its location and the architectural detailing, with revisions to address the items in #2 above, will be sensitive to the neighboring properties. However, the mass and scale of the Carriage House appears disproportionately larger than the main house.

4. Section 3.18.3.H. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

Finding. The Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete except for the applicable items in #2.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: It is the charge of the HPC to assess and interpret the standards and guidelines set forth in the UDO as they pertain to applications using the review criteria established in the UDO and to take appropriate action as granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2. Town Staff finds that with the conditions noted below, the requirements of Section 3.18.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance have been met and recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the application subject to the following conditions and determinations:

Conditions:

1. Prior to any disturbance of the Guerrard Avenue right-of-way, including but not limited to tree removal and utility installation, Town of Bluffton approval must be obtained.
2. Provide the source and type of brick proposed to be used for the chimney and stair treads if determined to be appropriate by HPC.
3. Provide the chimney cap detail.
4. Identify the Carriage House ground floor column material, which must be wood (termite resistant), painted or natural, cast Iron, concrete with smooth finish, brick, stone, steel or tabby to conform with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2. unless otherwise approved by the HPC.
5. Provide details for each staircase to show proposed materials (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.d.).
6. Change all fixed windows on the main house to casement windows unless approved by HPC (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.3.b.).
7. Change the bathroom window in the rear block ("D") of the main house to match the kitchen window ("C").
8. Provide operable shutters on all windows on the main house that can accept them and provide shutter details to show material and shutterdogs in compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.

Determinations:

Determinations from the HPC are needed regarding the appropriateness of the following elements related to the Carriage House:

1. The location of the Carriage House in relation to the main house.
2. The height of the Carriage House.
3. The roofline of the Carriage House.

4. The lack of window fenestration of the Front elevation and second-story Rear elevation of the Carriage House.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACTIONS: As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2, the Historic Preservation Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Approve the application as submitted by the Applicant;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted by the Applicant.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location & Zoning Map
2. Application & Narrative
3. Photos
4. Surveys & Utility Plan
5. Site & Landscape Plans
6. Drawings
7. HPRC Comments 03.31.2025