

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	August 6, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA-05-18-011989 27 Bridge Street – Amendment to an Approved COFA
APPLICANT:	Jason Broene (Court Atkins Architects, Inc.)
PROPERTY OWNERS:	Mike Nerhaus and Jessica Foley
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Jason Broene (Court Atkins Architects), on behalf of the Owners, Mike Nerhaus and Jessica Foley, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approve the following application:

An amendment to the approved Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the installed brick foundation to remain for the house under construction at 27 Bridge Street in Old Town Bluffton Historic District, and zoned Neighborhood Conservation-HD.

INTRODUCTION: On April 7, 2022, the HPC approved a COFA-HD with conditions for construction of a 4,120 SF 1.5 story single-family residence and a 1,188 SF Carriage House at 27 Bridge Street. The Final Plan was stamped by Town staff on July 10, 2023.

Since the initial COFA approval, there have been Staff-approved amendments to change windows from double-hung to a casement operation and to add a wood front porch railing (September 3, 2024), as well as a change of roof material from asphalt shingles to 5-V crimp (September 10, 2024).

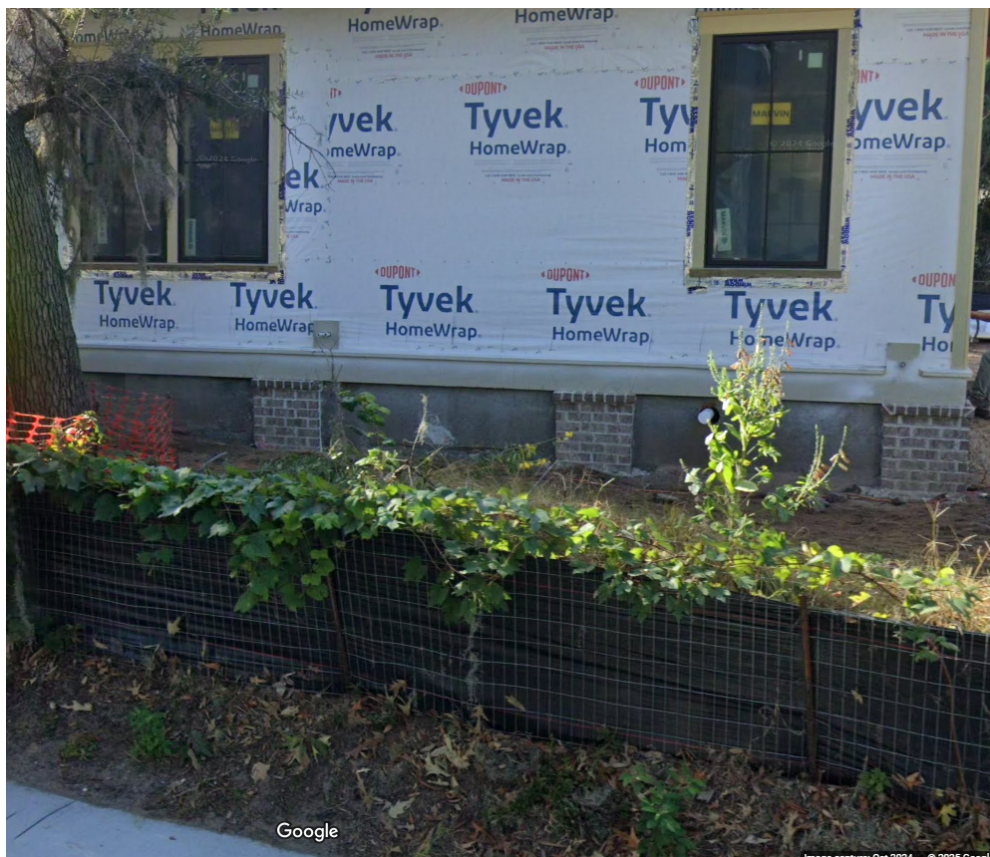
Since September 2024, additional changes have been made or are sought, some of which require review and approval. Shutters are no longer desired (and are not required by the UDO), a side yard service area was expanded and constructed, and a backyard pool will not be installed and is to be replaced with a basketball half-court. The front porch stairs and decking were changed from wood to brick. Additionally, the main structure foundation was changed from a COFA-approved concrete foundation with tabby shell coating to a concrete foundation with the addition of false brick piers and solid brick between the piers. A COFA amendment was not approved for the foundation change prior to installation.

As shown in the October 2024 Google Street View photo on the next page, false brick piers were constructed. When inspecting the service yard expansion earlier this year, Town staff discussed the inset area between the piers with the builder prior to the solid brick

installation. Staff indicated that that brick in a pierced/open bond configuration would be acceptable, as would wood louvered panels to comply with the UDO. The inset area was later finished with solid brick, contrary to the discussion and the UDO requirements.

Solid brick foundations are not characteristic of residential buildings within Old Town and are not permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O. Permitted inset materials are brick lattice, horizontal or vertical wood lattice and wood louvered vents, to give the appearance of a raised foundation. As installed, the false piers are now virtually indistinguishable from the inset area.

When Town Staff noticed that brick had been installed, Staff notified the Applicant and explained that Staff could not approve the installation. Therefore, approval of the brick foundation as constructed is sought from the HPC by the Applicant.



In addition to the foundation change, this COFA amendment includes a revised Landscape Plan that shows the addition of the half-court, fencing that was not previously proposed, and revised landscaping, including an expanded area of concrete and crushed shell instead of sod. It should be noted that revisions to the Landscape Plan are identified as “Permit Set,” which is incorrect. Town Staff has *not* approved the revised Landscape Plan dated July 8, 2025.

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, New Construction and Alterations), 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 predictable and compatible development and architecture without discouraging creativity or forcing the replication of historic models.

To maintain the character of Old Town Bluffton Historic District, alterations shall be consistent with the standards, criteria and guidelines developed for the District. Per UDO Sec. 3.18.3.A., the HPC shall consider the criteria below in its consideration of the COFA-HD application. A Staff Finding is provided for each.

1. Consistency with the principles set forth in the Old Town Master Plan and Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan.

- a. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives 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.

A form-based code was adopted by the Town to ensure that new buildings within Old Town are architecturally and materially consistent with Bluffton's vernacular. The foundation as constructed is not consistent with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O. as described in the Introduction of this report.

- 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 amendments will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in #2 of this Section are met.

2. 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 amendments will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5:

- 1) **Foundation (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O.):** The foundation of the main house was constructed with brick piers and insets of solid brick between the piers. Brick insets must have an open bond/pierced pattern to comply with the UDO. *The HPC must determine if the solid brick inset pattern is appropriate.*
- 2) **Fence Height:** The Landscape Plan shows that a fence is proposed around a portion of the lot perimeter. Two fence types are proposed. In the front and side yards, the fence will be a 3'-6" tall wood post fence with hogwire. In the

rear yard, a 6'-0" tall wood louvered privacy fence is proposed. The Landscape Plan shows a 6'-0" *minimum* height for the privacy fence; the word "MIN" must be removed as it is the maximum height.

- 3) **Impervious Surface:** As the revised Landscape Plan shows additional impervious surface, the Town's Stormwater and Watershed Management Division must approve the Landscape Plan.

3. Demonstration of a compatible visual relationship between new construction or alterations and existing buildings, streetscapes and open spaces. A compatible visual relationship must be generally of a similar structural mass, scale, height, proportion, directional expression of the principal elevation and rhythm of spacing, as applicable.

Finding. If the conditions #2 of this report are met, the proposed plans are sympathetic in design to the neighboring historic and non-historic resources; therefore, the amendments, with the recommended revisions, would have no adverse effect on the public interest.

4. Compliance 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.

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 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 with the following determinations and conditions:

Determination:

A determination from the HPC is needed regarding:

1. The appropriateness of the solid brick foundation as installed. If determined that it is not, an alternate material and/or configuration must be indicated.

Conditions:

1. The height of the privacy fence must be no taller than 6'-0" and shown as the maximum height on the Landscape Plan.

2. The Town's Stormwater and Watershed Management Division must approve the revised Landscape Plan.

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
3. Narrative
4. Plans (Amendment)
5. Landscape Plan (Amendment)
6. Initial COFA Approval 09.23.2024