

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	August 6, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA-03-25-019657 36 Wharf Street Two-story Carriage House – New Construction
APPLICANT:	Jamie Guscio (Kingfisher Construction)
PROPERTY OWNERS:	Kathy Barbina and Tim Harris
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Jamie Guscio (Kingfisher Construction), on behalf of Kathy Barbina and Tim Harris, Owners, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following:

A Certificate of Appropriateness-HD (COFA-HD) to allow the construction of a new 2-story Carriage House of 1200 square feet. The property is in Old Town Bluffton Historic District, and zoned Neighborhood General-HD (NG-HD).

INTRODUCTION: The proposed Carriage House is a 2-story structure under a side-facing gable roof with two shed dormers and will include a second-story residence over a one-bay garage. The ground floor will serve as a combination of garage, and home office and gym with a full bathroom. As one accessory dwelling is permitted per lot, the ground floor space would not be able to serve as an additional residence or short-term rental in the future.

The Carriage House features cementitious lap and board and batten siding, cementitious trim, a 5-V crimp roof, vinyl single hung windows, metal doors and a turned down slab that will include a tabby finish to match the foundation of the main house.

The height of the 2-story Carriage House from finished grade is 30'-5" and the main roof is a combination 5:12 and 10:12 pitches. The Carriage House is proposed to be constructed on a slab foundation of 8-inches. The height of the 1.5-story main structure from finished grade is 31'-3/8" with an 8:12 roof pitch. The main structure was built on a 3'-0" foundation. 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." After Concept Plan review by the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC), the Carriage House height was reduced 1'-0"; however, the structure continues to appear tall for an accessory dwelling and some proportions awkward and

inconsistent with the main structure, such as 2'-0" eaves and placement of windows within the dormer (e.g., farther below the roofline than the main structure dormers), front porch post/column width (6 inches), and an expression line that is of similar height as the lapboard siding. Town Staff requests a determination from the HPC regarding the appropriateness of these proportions.

This project was presented to the HPRC for conceptual review at the April 14, 2025 meeting. (Attachment 8). It was noted that windows in the dormers appeared too small and that the shed roof should be lowered, and that the left side elevation appeared too blank on the second story left elevation. Detailing of the roof over the garage door was requested to view, among other things, the soffit and to confirm wrapping of the header.

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 does not appear entirely 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. To ensure that the proposed Carriage House has been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character of the district, the HPC should determine if the proposed height and proportions are appropriate, as described in the Introduction, and that the items in #2 are addressed.

- 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 proposed as part of this request will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in #2 of this

Section are met, as well as positive determinations of the HPC noted in the Introduction.

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

a. *Findings.* Town Staff finds that if the conditions noted below are met, the proposed Carriage House will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5. Additionally, the HPC must make determinations regarding various building elements.

1) **Height (UDO Secs. 4.4.1.A.3. and 5.15.8.F.):** A further reduction of height to better distinguish the Carriage House as the secondary building on the lot. *A determination by the HPC is sought regarding the appropriateness of the proposed 30'-5" building height.*

2) **Posts :**

a. Per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H., "[c]olumns and porch posts shall be spaced no farther apart than they are tall as measured from the centerlines of the columns ("o.c"). Front porch posts are 10'-0" tall; spacing between the posts is approximately 12'-5¼". Unless otherwise approved by HPC, spacing must be revised to comply with the UDO.

b. Posts are proposed for the front porch that are the same width as the stairwell posts, approximately 6'-0". A wider post—like those used for the main structure (8'-0")—would more substantial and consistent with the posts/columns used for the main structure. *A determination by the HPC is sought regarding the appropriateness of the proposed post width.*

3) **Vent Material:** The material to be used for the vent has not been identified. While the UDO does not specify material for this element, it should be wood or other material that is equal or better quality than traditional materials, as is required for shutters (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.).

4) **Eaves:** Per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.P.1., "[t]he size of the overhang...should be in proportion with the design of the structure." As proposed, eaves would have a 2'0" overhang, which is deeper than the main structure and appears disproportionately wide for the Carriage House. *A determination by the HPC is sought regarding the appropriateness of the proposed eave depth.*

5) **Doors and Windows:** A door and window schedule is not provided with the plans, but the Project Analysis Sheet states that windows will be

vinyl and all doors metal. A door and window schedule must be provided on the Final Plan. Additionally, the placement of the windows within the dormers appears too low beneath the dormer roofline. While the UDO does not include specific language regarding window placement in a dormer, UDO Sec. 5.15.6.E.7. states that “[i]t is important to consider...the height of the dormer in relationship to the scale of the structure.” *A determination by the HPC is sought regarding the appropriateness of the window placement in the dormer, as well as the dormer placement.*

- 6) **Expression Line:** The proposed expression line is of similar height as the lapboard. Per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.G.2.a., “An expression line shall delineate the division between the first story and the second story.” *A determination by the HPC is sought regarding the appropriateness of height of the expression line.*
- 7) **Garage Roof Detail:** Provide garage roof detailing to include the header and soffit.
- 8) **Landscape Plan:** With the Carriage House addition, it must be demonstrated that the lot will continue to have a minimum of 75% tree canopy coverage at time of maturity (excluding rooftops). A Tree Permit will be required, and has been submitted, to remove any tree that is 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height (UDO Sec. 3.22.2.B.3.).

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. Town Staff finds the nature and character of the new construction to be consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding neighborhood if revisions are made to address the applicable items in #2 above and the determinations are made regarding the items noted in the Introduction.

4. **Section 3.18.3.F. The historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the structure, including the extent to which its alteration or removal would be detrimental to the public interest.**

Finding. If the conditions #2 of this report are met and HPC determinations made, the proposed plans would be sympathetic in design to the neighboring historic and non-historic resources; therefore, the Carriage House with the recommended revisions would not appear to have any adverse effect on public interest.

5. **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 with the following determinations and conditions:

Determinations:

Determinations from the HPC are needed regarding:

1. The appropriateness of certain building proportions, including building height, front porch post widths, eave length, window placement in the dormers and dormer placement, and height of the expression line.

Conditions:

1. Show the vent material on the plan, which must be wood or other material that is equal or better quality than traditional materials.
2. Provide a door and window schedule on the plans.
3. Provide garage roof detail to include the header and soffit material.
4. Show that a minimum of 75% tree canopy coverage at maturity will be provided for the entire lot, not to include roofs.
5. A Tree Removal Permit application must be approved to remove trees that are 14" or greater in diameter at breast height (UDO Sec. 3.22.2.B.3.).

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 and Zoning Map
2. Application
3. Narrative
4. As-Built Survey and Site Plan
5. Photos-Existing House
6. Photos-Trees to be Removed
7. Plan
8. HPRC Comments 04.14.2025