

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	March 4, 2026
PROJECT:	COFA-09-25-019628 6 Blue Crab Street, Lot 50 Main Residence and Carriage House (New Construction)
APPLICANT:	William Court (Court Atkins Group)
PROPERTY OWNER:	Blue Crab Bluffton, LLC
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant requests that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approve the following:

A Certificate of Appropriateness-HD (COFA-HD) to allow the construction of a new 2.5-story main house (an Additional Building Type) of approximately 3,846 SF and a 2-story attached Carriage House of approximately 884 SF to be constructed at 6 Blue Crab Street, Lot 50, in the Tabby Roads Development within Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The property is zoned Neighborhood General-HD (NG-HD). (See Attachments 1 and 2 for application and location/zoning map.)

Note: This application was initially heard at the January 7, 2026 HPC meeting but was tabled to allow the Applicant an opportunity to revise the plan to address the multiple conditions in the initial staff report, as well as other items discussed at that meeting. See Attachment 7 for the Applicant's response to each item.

INTRODUCTION: The subject property of 0.12 acres is located in Tabby Roads, a private community with an approved development plan that includes private covenants that regulate building size and setbacks, as well as certain architectural features. All buildings require approval from the Habitat and Architectural Review Board (HARB). The HARB approval letter is provided as Attachment 3.

Lot 50 is located mid-block on the south side of Blue Crab Street between Wild Spartina Street and Pearl Street. Blue Crab Street serves somewhat similar to an alley; the homes on the north side of Blue Crab front Bruin Road and homes proposed on the south side will front Baiters Walk. Vehicular access to these homes is via Blue Crab Street. Baiters Walk is a pedestrian-only walkway, which the proposed house will front. Directly across the Baiters Walk is a row of six existing townhouses.

The proposed house is one of four homes proposed by the property owner for the half-block on the south side of Blue Crab Street (Attachment 4). Originally planned for townhome development, both the Tabby Roads and Baiters Walk board of directors approved the future development of four single-family detached houses in 2020.

The 2.5-story main structure will have a 1,974 SF footprint (1,486 SF heated and 488 SF front and rear porches). The attached carriage house will have a 540 SF footprint. As the main structure is not characteristic of any of the permitted building types within the NG-HD district, the structure is classified as an Additional Building Type. Setbacks established by Tabby Roads are smaller than those required for the Additional Building Type in the NG-HD district.

The main structure features a cross-gable roof of standing seam metal with three dormers required by Tabby Roads HARB, as well as a double-story front porch underneath a shed roof. A rear yard carriage house is attached to the main structure and will be underneath a standing seam metal gable roof that includes a shed dormer. The ground floor will include a double-bay garage; the second floor is a “bonus room.” Direct access between the main second floor residence and the bonus room will be via a main structure hallway. There will be no external access to the second floor of the carriage house.

Materials on the main structure include smooth Hardie lap-siding with a 9-inch exposure on the ground floor and a 5-inch exposure on the second floor. Hardie lap-siding with a 5-inch exposure is proposed for the carriage house. All windows will be 2-over-2 simulated divided lite casement and are shown to be metal clad wood. Door materials are identified as metal clad wood. The garage door will be steel and “composite overlay”. The chimney will be tabby shell with a tabby bishop’s cap.

Certain proposed materials are not permitted by the UDO and would require approval by the HPC. This includes: 1) powder-coated aluminum railings and handrails (front/rear porch stairs and second floor porch); 2) boral trim in various locations (front/rear porch columns, sills, drip caps, portions of the service yard hog fence, second floor porch knee wall cap); and, 3) composite trim on the garage doors. The materials can be viewed in Attachment 8.

The yard will include a brick fence that will extend from behind the right front elevation of the main structure, adjacent to the eastern property line, and wrap around a proposed pool in the rear yard. The right side yard service yard will be partially enclosed by the fence and include two hog fence gates with louvered boral material. As this fence will also serve as the screen for the service yard on the adjacent property, it must of a height to screen mechanicals and other stored items on that property.

Elevations and architectural details are provided in Attachment 5. The Landscape Plan is provided as Attachment 6.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) for Concept Plan review at the October 13, 2025 meeting.

The Tabby Roads Habitat Architectural Review Board (HARB) approved the revised plans, including the composite shutters (Attachment 3).

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.

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. 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 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.”

The addition of new structures that comply with the Unified Development Ordinance allow for a more complete built environment within Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

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 or otherwise approved by the HPC, the proposed main structure and carriage house will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5.
- 1) **Porch Railing:** As the front porch height is 31-inches, a porch rail will be required per the International Residential Code and must match the second-story porch railing, as well as comply with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.
 - 2) **Columns:** The 10-inch columns are proposed to be wrapped in boral material. UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.a. requires columns to be wood, painted or natural wrought or cast iron. Boral has been approved elsewhere in Old Town for some trim work, but not for columns. The HPC must determine if this is an appropriate alternative material.

- 3) **Railings and Balusters:** Railings and balusters are proposed to be powder-coated aluminum in the following locations: 1) on the second-story porches; 2) at the front and rear porch; 3) at the front stairs; and, 4) the rear porch and stairs. UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.d. requires railings to be balusters to be wood (termite resistant), painted or natural wrought or cast iron. Powder-coated aluminum has been approved for other residential properties in Old Town, but the HPC must determine that it is an appropriate material as it is not permitted by the UDO.
 - 4) **Doors:** The garage door will be “steel structure/composite overlay.” The composite material is not specified on the plan. UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b. requires doors to be wood, metal, or metal-clad. A determination as to the appropriateness of the composite overlay is required.
 - 5) **Trim:** Trim work is combination of Hardie and boral, the latter of which is not a material permitted by the UDO. The following are proposed to be or possibly be boral: 1) corner boards; 2) drip caps; 3) dormer fascia; 5) sills; and 6) the top “rail” at the second-story rear porch. A determination as to the appropriateness of this alternate material is required.
 - 6) **Landscape Plan:** A total of 13 protected trees will be removed (a combination of live oaks, water oaks, gum and magnolia) that require mitigation due to size (8-12 inches in diameter at breast height) (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.F.). The total number of mitigation trees required is 13 or 32.5 caliper inches which must be a minimum of 12 feet tall and have a tree canopy at maturity equal to the mature tree canopy of the trees to be removed (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.F.3.). As one live oak at four (4) caliper inches will be planted and count as two trees, 11 trees (27.5 caliper inches total) must be mitigated. If the UDO Administrator determines that any of the required trees cannot be provided on the site, she may authorize the Applicant to pay a fee-in-lieu of planting (UDO Sec. 5.3.8.).
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. The proposed structures are visually compatible with surrounding buildings, possessing similar characteristics, including such as mass, scale, and height.

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 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.

Conditions:

1. Provide a front porch railing that is consistent with the second-story porch railing style, as well as UDO Sec. 5.15.6.E.5.c.
2. Provide 11 trees (or 27.5 caliper inches) on the site to mitigate the total loss of trees to be removed (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.F. If the UDO Administrator determines that mitigation trees cannot be provided for on the site, a fee in-lieu of planting may be required per UDO Sec. 5.3.8.

Determinations: The determinations below must be considered. If not acceptable, the HPC must provide an appropriate alternative.

1. Boral for the porch columns, corner boards, drip caps, fascia, knee wall cap, service yard gate elements (as shown on the plan) and sills.
2. Powder-coated aluminum for the porch handrails and balustrades.
3. Composite material as an “overlay” for the garage doors.

Note: Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Tree Removal Permit will be required to remove trees that are 14 inches or more in diameter at breast height.

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. Application & Narrative
2. Location Map and Photos
3. HARB Approval Letter (01.28.2026)
4. Composite Streetscape View
5. Architectural Plans
6. Landscape & Site Development Plan
7. Response to HPC Conditions and Comments (01.07.2026)
8. Manufacturer’s Info (Boral, Railings)

9. Color Board