

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	October 1, 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).

Note: This application was heard at the August 6, 2025 HPC meeting and tabled by the Applicant to allow for the preparation of a revised Final Plan to address the concerns of the HPC, including but not limited to building height, eave width, post width, window placement, expression line size and placement, ceiling height and tree removal.

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 was reduced from 30'-5" to 28'-5" and the main roof continues to be a combination 5:12 and 10:12 pitches. The carriage house is proposed to be constructed on a slab foundation of 8-inches, but the porch foundation is unclear. The height of the 1.5-story main structure from finished grade is 31'-3/8" with an 8:12 roof pitch. 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.” The reduced height of the carriage house conforms with this requirement.

Most concerns raised at the August 6 HPC meeting have been addressed, including: 1) eaves have been reduced from 2'-0" to 1'-4" and are similar to the main house; 2) 6-inch porch posts have been redesigned as 8-inch columns; 3) two windows have been added to the right/south second story elevation, which was previously blank; 4) the expression line between the first and second floors is better distinguished with a greater width; and, 5) the ceilings for the first and second stories have both been lowered by one foot.

The porch foundation remains unclear. The front elevation suggests an 8-inch slab, but the right and left elevations show only a partial slab or step that is less than 8-inches. The porch columns appear to be located at grade and are spaced farther apart than they are tall.

Concern was expressed at the August 6 HPC meeting that two trees (a 12" DBH gum and 40" water oak) would be removed. It was mentioned that the water oak exhibited cracks. A Tree Removal Permit has been submitted for both these trees and third tree (a 15" DBH laurel oak) in the side yard of the main house. The permit has not yet been approved as additional information is needed and the COFA is not yet approved. The submission includes the applications and photos only—an arborist's report was not provided to verify the health of the 40" water oak. A tree removal plan and landscape plan were not provided with the COFA as is required.

This project was presented to the HPRC for conceptual review at the April 14, 2025 meeting. (Attachment 8).

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 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 porch foundation must be clarified and a landscape plan provided as noted in #2.

- 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.

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.

- 1) **Porch Foundation and Columns:** The porch foundation must be correctly shown, and columns must not overhang the porch (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.3.f.). Additionally, the spacing of the columns cannot be farther apart than they are tall as measured from the centerline of the columns (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.1.a.). The column height is approximately 9’-3” and the spacing between columns is more than 12’-0”.
- 2) **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 with the plan.
- 3) **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 landscape plan must be provided to demonstrate compliance (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.G.1.).

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.

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, 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 appear to not adversely affect the 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 conditions:

1. Correct the porch foundation and design the porch columns to be no farther apart than they are tall and to not overhang the porch foundation (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.).
2. Provide a door and window schedule on the plans.
3. Show that a minimum of 75% tree canopy coverage at maturity will be provided for the entire lot, not to include roofs (UDO Sec.5.3.3.G.1.).

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. Drawings (Revised 08.14.2025)
7. Photos-Trees to be Removed
8. Tree Permit (with additional photos)
9. HPRC Comments 04.14.2025