

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

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| MEETING DATE: | September 3, 2025 |
| PROJECT: | Town of Bluffton Historic Resource Survey Update |
| APPLICANT: | Department of Growth Management |
| PROJECT MANAGER: | Glen Umberger, Historic Preservationist |

INTRODUCTION: As described in UDO Section 2.2.6.E.3., the Historic Preservation Commission ("HPC") is responsible for "[e]stablishing and maintaining a system for the survey and inventory of historic resources within the Town of Bluffton." As such, various surveys have been completed over the years: *Historic Resources Survey* (Brown, 1994); *Historical Architectural Survey* (Prescon, Inc., 2001); *Survey of Historic Properties* (Thompson and O'Brien, 2008); and *Town of Bluffton Historic Resources Update* (Brockington, 2019). This project will update these earlier surveys.

In response to a Historic Resource Survey Update RFP (RFP 2025-46), the Town of Bluffton received eight (8) proposals and selected Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. of Austin, TX ("Stantec") to conduct an intensive-level historic resources survey of the Old Town Bluffton local historic district including the Bluffton Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 (Attachment 1). On April 15, 2025, the Town of Bluffton and Stantec, Inc. executed a contract to complete the survey. A kick-off meeting was held with Town Staff in late April 2025 and, in May 2025, Stantec began their work by conducting initial research which included a review of the previously conducted survey data from 2008 and 2019.

THE PROJECT OVERVIEW: This Survey of the historic resources of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District is an important step in preserving our shared story.

By creating a complete, accurate inventory of historic resources in Old Town, we can better protect them, plan future preservation projects, and ensure Bluffton's heritage is honored for generations to come. Knowing what we have is the first step toward making sure it is protected.

Why does this matter? Historic resource surveys help communities in the following ways:

- Protect and maintain their unique character;
- Support heritage tourism;
- Provide historical context for future planning decisions; and
- Build a shared understanding of the community's past.

This survey will focus on properties built in or before 1986 that are still standing. Fieldwork is planned for September 8-12, 2025, and will include photographing buildings, noting architectural details, and mapping properties in Old Town—all from the public right-of-way.

The survey will also include conducting oral histories of long-time Blufftonians which Stantec will complete during the week of September 15. The public has been invited to participate in this project by providing stories, places, people, or events in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District that they believe should be part of the record (Attachment 2). More detailed information about this part of the survey work is included in the *Public Involvement Materials* prepared by Stantec (Attachment 3).

Once the fieldwork has been completed, Stantec will analyze the new data and draft a report and solicit feedback from Town Staff and from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) which oversees Survey activities throughout the State, and which will keep a copy of the completed final report and survey data sheets as archival records. Following the survey's completion, results and recommendations will be presented at the February 4, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Stantec Proposal, March 6, 2025
2. Email Blast to Public, August 19, 2025
3. Public Involvement Materials, June 27, 2025