

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	July 5, 2023
PROJECT:	5824 Guilford Place, Lot 14 – New Construction: Commercial Office
APPLICANT:	Pearce Scott Architects
PROJECT MANAGER:	Katie Peterson, AICP, Senior Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Pearce Scott Architects, on behalf of the owner, Larry Page, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

1. **COFA-04-23-017854.** A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the Construction of a new 2-story commercial office building of approximately 2,888 SF and a Carriage House of approximately 1,200 SF to be located at 5824 Guilford Place, in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, Lot 14 in the Stock Farm Development, and zoned Neighborhood General- HD.

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant is proposing the construction of a commercial office building of approximately 2,888 SF in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and Carriage House of 1,200 SF. The proposed primary building is a two-story structure featuring a hip roof, with a hip roofed porch which wraps nearly three sides of the first story. There is a small, infilled area on the first floor of the right side, and a two-story side addition on the left elevation. The structure combines characteristics of several building types, and therefore, is reviewed as an Additional Building Type in accordance with the allowable building types for the Neighborhood General-HD zoning district. In addition to the primary structure, the Applicant has proposed a Carriage House structure of approximately 1,200 SF, which meets the design standards for a Carriage House Building Type. Both structures feature 3/4" beaded cypress wood siding, standing seam roofs and share architectural detailing through their columns, railings, windows and trim.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the May 1, 2023 meeting and comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment 6).

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.

It is important to note that the intent of Section 5.15 Old Town Bluffton Historic District of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) is that the Section be user friendly and informative to the residents and the members of HPC and is not intended to discourage creativity or force the replication of historic models. Rather, it is to set forth a framework in which the diversity that has always characterized Bluffton can continue to grow. The Section also defines guidelines for design and materials similar to that used on structures within the Old Town, and it is the charge of the HPC to assess the interpretation of these guidelines as they pertain to applications using the established review criteria.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.18.3 of the UDO in assessing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic District (HD). The applicable criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s) 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 is 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.”

The Applicant proposes to construct a new commercial office structure and Carriage House within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, a locally and nationally designated historic district. The buildings have been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character of the neighboring historic structures, so their addition to the architectural diorama will both protect the integrity of the existing historic structures and enhance the neighborhood by adding architectural variety.

- 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 item 2 of this Section are met.
 - c. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also promote preservation and protection of the legacy of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District through additions to the built environment which make Old Town more complete. The addition of the proposed commercial office structure adds to the district as well as helps to provide completeness to the neighborhood and overall district.

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

a. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that the design of the primary structure falls within the category of Additional Building Type as allowed in the Neighborhood General- Historic District per Section 5.15.5.C. Additional Building Types are permissible. As has been past practice, the Town Staff requests the Historic Preservation Commission review and make a final determination regarding the appropriateness of the Additional Building Type.

b. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that if the conditions noted below are met, the proposed addition will be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5:

1) Section 5.3.3. Replacement of Protected Trees. A tree canopy with a minimum of 75% lot coverage, not including roof tops, shall be provided where land disturbance is proposed for sites less than one (1) acre. Tree canopy is the mature canopy of any existing trees to be saved, including trees located within a required buffer, together with the mature canopy of proposed replacement trees. An exhibit showing the canopy coverage for the site must be provided, as not enough information was provided to complete the review.

2) Section 5.3.7.E. Foundation Plantings. Except when a build-to line or minimum setback identified in this Ordinance makes the provision of foundation plantings impractical, a foundation planting area at least 8 feet wide shall be maintained around all structures. The foundation planting shall incorporate a mixture of trees, shrubs, and ground covers in order to soften the building façade. As requested during the conceptual review at HPRC, the existing landscaping must be shown on the plan to ensure adequate plantings have been retained or replanted.

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. The mass and scale of the structures are appropriate for their location and the architectural detailing, with revisions to address the items in section 2 above, will be sensitive to the neighboring properties.

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. The Applicant seeks approval for the construction of new structures in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. If the conditions section 2 of this report are met, the proposed plans are sympathetic in design to the neighboring historic and non-historic resources; therefore, the structures, with the revisions noted, will have no adverse effect on 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 incomplete. As the property is located within the Stock Farm development, a letter of approval from the Stock Farm ARB is required prior to approval. The Applicant has provided a copy of comments from the ARB. The Landscape Plan and Grading Plan must be revised to reflect the ARB's comments and a letter of approval from the ARB provided prior to issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

From measurements taken June 28, 2023, the sidewalk is approximately 6 feet from the existing fence line. The site plan/landscape plan/grading plan, which all appear to use the 2017 survey, shows the sidewalk approximately 8 feet from the fence. It appears the existing fence may have been relocated closer to the sidewalk during the May River Streetscape improvements in late 2019. The Applicant will need to work with staff to ensure grading proposed will not result in a complete loss in Streetscape Foundation Plantings or impact the sidewalk while maintaining positive drainage. It is Staff's recommendation that the entire structure be moved 5 feet towards the rear of the property to eliminate the need to relocate the fence, plantings or modify the drainage at the front of the lot.

As there are several trees 14 inches in diameter at breast height or greater being proposed for removal, a tree removal permit is required.

Finally, as this is a commercial structure, it must be noted that any proposed signage will need to submit a Site Feature – HD Application for review and approval prior to installation. No signs are reviewed as a portion of this application.

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. Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Tree Removal Permit is required.
2. Per the Applications Manual, approval from the Stock Farm POA is required prior to approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness- HD.

3. Per the Applications Manual, any proposed signage requires separate Site Feature-HD approval.
4. Per UDO Section 5.3.3., a canopy coverage exhibit must be provided for review.
5. As requested during the conceptual review at HPRC, the existing landscaping must be shown on the plan to ensure adequate plantings have been retained or replanted.
6. The Applicant must work with staff to ensure grading proposed will not result in a complete loss in Streetscape Foundation Plantings or impact the sidewalk while maintaining positive drainage.
7. It is recommended that the primary structure be relocated 5' towards the rear property line to eliminate the need to relocate the fence, plantings or modify the drainage at the front of the lot.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location and Zoning Map
2. Application and Narrative
3. Site Plan & Elevations
4. Landscape Plan
5. ARB Letter
6. HPRC Report