

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	January 7, 2026
PROJECT:	COFA-09-25-019927 4 Blue Crab Street, Lot 51 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-story main house (an Additional Building Type) of approximately 3,800 SF and a 2-story attached Carriage House of approximately 886 SF to be constructed at 4 Blue Crab Street, Lot 51, 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.)

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, with conditions, is provided as Attachment 3.

The lot 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 attached townhouses.

The 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-story main structure will have a 1,952 SF footprint (1,488 SF heated and 464 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-hip roof of standing seam metal, 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 pyramid roof that includes a rear dormer facing Blue Crab Street. 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 5-inch exposure on the ground floor, and Hardie board and batten (2X) on the second floor. Hardie shingle-siding is proposed for the carriage house.

All windows will be 2-over-2 simulated divided lite casement and are shown to be “clad” with no reference to the specific cladding material or manufacturer. Door materials are identified as mahogany and “clad” without reference to cladding material or manufacturer. The garage door will be steel and “clad overlay.” The chimney will be tabby shell with a flat tabby shell cap.

Some 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 front/rear second-story porches and rear first-story porch) and pool gate; and, 2) boral trim in various locations (front/rear porch columns, cornerboards, sills, drip caps, and certain service yard fence/screen elements). The HARB will require that the proposed composite material shutters be changed to “sturdy wood.” The brackets for the shed roofs over the garage door and the side man door are identified as cedar wood or “sim” material.

The right/eastern side yard will include a brick fence that will be adjacent to and erected along most of the property line (but not on the property line). A brick paver path and service yard are also proposed in this side yard; the service yard will include two hog fence gates. As the fence will also serve as the screen for the service yard on the adjacent property, the service yard fence must be of a height that will effectively screen mechanicals and other items to be stored. A second service yard is located in the left/western side yard and will include two hog fence gates. A brick paver path is also proposed.

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

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee (HPRC) for Concept Plan review at the October 13, 2025 meeting. HPRC comments are provided as Attachment 7.

The Tabby Roads Habitat Architectural Review Board (HARB) provided comments dated December 9, 2025 (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. Conditions follow the order in which they are provided in the UDO.

- 1) **Building Walls:** Three types of Hardieboard siding are proposed—horizontal lap board and board and batten for the main structure, and shingles for the carriage house. While these styles are permitted, the use of three types of siding on one structure does not reflect simple Lowcountry vernacular architecture. It is recommended that the shingles used on the carriage house structure be changed to board and batten or

horizontal lap siding as shingled wall cladding is atypical of Old Town Bluffton.

- 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. A determination for use of this material is required.
- 3) **Railings and Balusters:** Railings and balusters are proposed to be powder-coated aluminum in the following locations: 1) at the second-floor front porch (with picket balusters); 2) at the front porch stairs (a handrail on the right side of the stairs without pickets); 3) the rear porches and stairs (with picket balusters); and, 4) the pool gate enclosure. 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.

Handrails in the front porch stoop must include pickets, and the handrail should be repositioned to be in front of the innermost column to be in arm's reach. Additionally, a porch rail will be required as the porch height is 34" (a railing is required at 30").

- 4) **Windows:** Windows are identified only as "clad." UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.a. requires windows to be wood, aluminum, copper, steel, vinyl, wood clad or fiberglass. Window cladding material must be identified in the window schedule to confirm compliance with the UDO.
- 5) **Doors:** Doors are identified as mahogany and "clad." The garage door will be "steel clad/overlay." UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b. requires doors to be wood, metal, or metal-clad. Door cladding materials must be identified in the door schedule to confirm compliance with the UDO.
- 6) **Gutters:** Gutters will be installed but the gutter material and gauge are not identified in the gutter detail. Per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.J.2.c., gutters must be copper, galvanized steel or aluminum, 14-18 gauge.
- 7) **Fence:** A brick fence/wall is proposed adjacent to the right elevation property line, the service area, and around the pool in the rear yard. The type of brick to be used as not been identified. The UDO permits "[w]herever possible, green building materials...including...salvaged masonry brick or block, and locally produced stone or brick." Non-

salvaged or local bricks have been permitted elsewhere in Old Town that is similar to Savannah Grey brick, a greyish brown tumbled brick. This same or similar brick should be used for the fence, and also in the front and rear stoop at the main structure. The driveway and sidewalk pavers will be a combination of the colors below:



UNILOCK

Town Hall Heritage Clay



UNILOCK

Town Hall Heritage Red

- 8) **Shutters:** Composite material shutters are proposed, but the HARB will require “sturdy wood,” which complies with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.e.
- 9) **Trim:**
 - a) Trim work is combination of Hardie and boral, the latter of which is not a material permitted by the UDO. Some details include a notation indicating Hardie “or” boral material. The following are proposed to be boral: 1) cornerboards (detail not provided); 2) drip caps; 3) fascia; 4) top “rail” at second-story rear porch; 5) certain elements of the service yard gates; and, 6) sills. A determination as to the appropriateness of this alternate material is required.
 - b) A corner board detail must be provided to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.P.
 - c) The soffit configuration is not shown. Soffits must be beaded or v-groove, tongue and groove per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.P.
 - d) Tabby Roads HARB requires a water table on the carriage house structure to match the water table of the main structure.
- 10) **Landscape Plan:**
 - a) A total of eight (8) trees will be removed (a combination of pines and live oaks) that require mitigation due to size (eight inches or more in diameter at breast height) (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.F.). The total number of mitigation trees required is 10 (or 25 calipers). One live oak (2.5 calipers) will be planted; however, a larger caliper will help with mitigation. A replacement tree that is a minimum of four (4) inches caliper can be counted as two (2) replacement trees and any replacement tree that is a minimum of six (6) inches caliper can be counted as three (3) replacement trees. (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.G.3.). At

least 80% of the required 75% tree canopy coverage must be hardwoods. If the UDO Administrator determines that any of the required trees cannot be provided on-site, she may authorize the Applicant to pay a fee-in-lieu of planting (UDO Sec. 5.3.8.).

- b) Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Tree Removal Permit will be required as trees with a diameter of 14 or more inches are proposed to be removed from the lot.

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. Town Staff finds that with the conditions 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 and determinations:

Conditions:

1. Change the wall cladding style on the carriage house from shingles to board and batten or horizontal lap siding.
2. Provide pickets for the handrail at the front porch stairs and relocate the handrail to be within arm's reach (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.3.d.).
3. Provide a top rail of 2-3/4 inches for all porch balustrades and provide a front porch balustrade (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.3.d.).
4. Provide the window material, which must be wood, metal or metal-clad and shown in the window schedule (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.a.).
5. Provide the door material, which must be wood, aluminum, copper, steel, vinyl, wood clad or fiberglass and shown in the window schedule (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.).
6. Provide the gutter material and gauge, which must be copper, galvanized steel or aluminum, 14-18 gauge (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.J.2.c.).

7. Revise the height of the brick wall to screen the service yard on the subject property and adjacent property to be no taller than six feet.
8. Provide a corner board detail to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.P.
9. Update the Landscape Plan to show how 9 trees (or 22.5 calipers) will be mitigated (UDO Sec. 5.3.3).
10. Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Tree Removal Permit will be required.

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

1. Boral is an acceptable alternate material for the porch columns, cornerboards, drip caps, fascia, top rail at the second-story rear porch, service yard gate elements (as shown on the plan) and window sills.
2. Powder-coated aluminum is an acceptable alternate material for the porch handrails, porch balustrades, and pool gate.
3. A non-locally produced Savannah Grey brick or similar color is an acceptable brick for the porch stoops and brick fence.

Additionally, the following will be required by HARB:

1. “Sturdy” wood shutters unless an alternative design is submitted and approved.
2. A water table on the carriage house that matches the main structure water table.

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. Vicinity Maps and Photos
3. HARB Approval Letter (11.09.2025)
4. Composite Views
5. Architectural Plans
6. Landscape Plans
7. Response to HPRC, HARB Comments (12.09.2025)
8. Manufacturer’s Info (Boral, Shutters, Railings)
9. Color Board