

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

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| MEETING DATE: | January 7, 2026 |
| PROJECT: | COFA-09-25-019929 8 Blue Crab Street, Lot 49 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 3,741 SF and a 2-story attached Carriage House of approximately 933 SF to be constructed at 8 Blue Crab Street, Lot 49, 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 0.13 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 at the southwest corner of the intersection of Pearl Street and Blue Crab Street, the latter of which 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 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 5). 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 1,918 SF footprint (1,454 SF heated and 464 SF front and rear porches). The attached carriage house will have a 563 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 combination hip/front facing gable roof of standing seam metal, as well as a double-story front porch underneath a partial hip 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 facing Pearl Street. The ground floor will include a double-bay garage, and 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 Hardie board and batten siding at the first story, and Hardie lap siding with 7-inch exposure at the second story. 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 “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 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 second story front and rear porches and rear ground story porch) and pool gate; and, 2) borl trim in various locations (front/rear porch columns, corner boards, sills, drip caps, knee wall panel cap adjacent to the cricket roof at the second story rear porch, and certain elements of the service yard gates). The HARB will require that the proposed composite material shutters be changed to “sturdy wood.” The brackets for the trellis over the garage door and the side wall facing Pearl Street are identified as cedar or “sim” material.

The only service yard will be located in the left side yard, screened by the brick fence on the adjacent property (Lot 50), with two hog board gates. A paver walkway from the service yard to Baiter’s Walk and the rear yard are proposed, and a brick fence will surround the pool in the rear yard.

Elevations and architectural details are provided in Attachment 6. The Landscape Plan is provided as Attachment 7.

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 8.

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 and applicable covenants 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 Hardie board siding are proposed—horizontal lap board and board and batten for the main structure, and shingles for the carriage house. The use of three types of siding on one structure does not reflect simple Lowcountry vernacular architecture. It is recommended that the shingles at the carriage house be changed to board and batten or horizontal lap board 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; 2) at the front porch stairs (a handrail on both sides of the stairs are without pickets); 3) the rear porches and stairs (a handrail on both sides of the stairs are without pickets); 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 at the front and rear porch stairs must include pickets. Additionally, a front porch rail will be required as the porch height is 30" (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 "clad" and "swing." The garage door will be "steel clad/overlay." Door cladding materials must be identified in the door schedule to confirm compliance with the UDO.
- 6) **Gutters:** Half-round 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 is proposed around the pool in the rear yard. The type of brick to be used will be a Savannah Grey-type brick (Attachment 10). UDO Sec. 5.15.6.K. allows "[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 front and rear stairs 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:

- a) Composite material shutters are proposed, but HARB requires “sturdy wood.” Wood complies with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.e.
- b) On the second-story front elevation, two shutters are proposed that are not placed over an opening nor are they operable (far-right wall and middle porch shutters). Shutters must be hinged and operable per Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.b. or be removed.

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 or possibly be boral: 1) cornerboards (detail not provided); 2) drip caps; 3) sills; 4) the cap of the knee wall at the second-story rear porch; and, 5) various gate elements. 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.

1) Landscape Plan:

- a) A total of 18 trees will be removed (a combination of pines, live oaks, water oaks, gum and magnolia) that require mitigation either due to size (eight inches or more in diameter at breast height) and/or species (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.F.). The total number of mitigation trees required is 27 (or 67.5 calipers). Two live oaks (2.5 calipers each) will be planted; however, a larger caliper will help with mitigation. Any 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. Applying the requirements of both Tabby Roads and the UDO, the proposed structures are visually compatible with surrounding buildings, possessing similar characteristics, 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 second floor of the main structure from shingles to board and batten or horizontal lap siding.
2. Provide pickets for the handrail at the front porch stairs.
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 fence height to be no taller than 6'-0" (Per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.K.2.b.).
8. Remove the inoperable shutters on the second floor of the front elevation (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.b.).
9. Provide a corner board detail to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.P.
10. Update the Landscape Plan to show how 25 trees (or 62.5 calipers) will be mitigated (UDO Sec. 5.3.3).
11. 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, vents, 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 Map
3. HARB Approval Letter (12.09.2025)
4. Photos
5. Composite Views
6. Architectural Plans
7. Landscape Plan
8. Response to HPRC Comments (12.09.2025)
9. Manufacturer's Info (Boral, Shutters, Railings)
10. Color Board