

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	February 4, 2026
PROJECT:	COFA 08-25-019913 28 Wharf Street Main Residence (Remodel & Addition) Carriage House (New Construction)
APPLICANT:	Malcolm Claxton
PROPERTY OWNER:	JRA Holdings, LLC
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, 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 renovation and minor expansion of an existing 1-story house of approximately 1,157 SF to 1,508 SF and construction of a new 2-story detached Carriage House of approximately 768 SF located at 28 Wharf Street in Old Town Historic District and zoned Neighborhood General-Historic District (NG-HD).

INTRODUCTION: The subject property includes an existing 1-story house that, according to Beaufort County property records, was built about 1960. The house features stucco-coated exterior walls on a vented pier foundation and includes a covered partial façade front porch underneath a hip roof.

The proposed plan would preserve the house and expand it by approximately 473 SF from the front façade, including an approximately 122 SF covered porch. The structure has characteristics of a Medium House building type but exceeds the maximum footprint of 1,300 SF by approximately 200 SF. Therefore, the main structure is reviewed as an Additional Building Type.

The main structure will continue to have a vented pier foundation, but the roof style will change to a front-facing gable with shed roof extensions at the front and rear gables. The structure features Hardie horizontal lap siding, Hardie trim, wood columns, and 2-over-2 single hung/awning vinyl windows with wood shutters.

The Carriage House will be a 2-story structure underneath a side-facing gable roof constructed in the rear of the main structure. A residential unit will be located over a single

bay garage and be accessed via an exterior staircase. The Carriage House features materials that are consistent with the main structure and will have a combination of Hardie horizontal lap siding and board and batten siding, as well as wood doors and a metal (aluminum) garage door. The shed roof over the garage will be 5-V crimp supported by pressure treated wood brackets.

A new oyster shell driveway will be installed at the north side of the property which will require the relocation of existing utilities. A conceptual landscape plan was provided but must be updated to show the relocated utilities, existing trees, any trees to be removed, as well as compliance with applicable sub-sections of UDO Sec. 5.3. to include foundation plantings for the main structure (UDO Sec. 5.3.7.E.).

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the September 29, 2025 and December 22, 2025 meetings and comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment X for most recent comments).

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 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.”

Old Town Bluffton Historic District is a locally designated historic district. The proposed expansion of the existing structure and new construction has been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character of the neighboring structures and the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

- 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 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. *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) **Meter Screens:** In place of meter screens, the use of appropriate landscaping to screen the meters at the main structure and carriage is recommended to serve as a “softer” screen and to allow better access for servicing.
- 2) **Porch Skirting and Vents:** The infill material between the porch piers is not identified on the plans but may be Hardie board (as noted on the COFA application). Clarification is needed. Vents to be used in the panels are proposed to be louvered aluminum or steel. While the UDO does not specify required materials, metal vents are not characteristic of Old Town Historic District (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O.). The HPC is requested to make a determination of appropriateness regarding this material.
- 3) **Eaves:** Enclosed eaves are proposed for the main structure and carriage house. Hardi board beaded soffits are proposed for the main structure; “cedar milled vented soffit[s]” are proposed for the carriage house and the configuration is not noted. The carriage house soffit should match the main structure soffit.
- 4) **Carriage House Wall Cladding:** A combination of horizontal lap siding and board and batten is proposed. As the carriage house is a small structure, it is recommended that the board and batten siding be changed to horizontal lap siding.
- 5) **Trees and Landscaping:** The landscape plan does not include an existing tree survey, show trees that may be removed, nor does it demonstrate compliance with the foundation plantings required by UDO Sec. 5.3. The Landscape Plan must also demonstrate 75% tree canopy coverage at maturity.

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 remodel and new construction to be consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding neighborhood. The mass and scale are appropriate for the location and the architectural detailing, with revisions to address the items in #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. If the conditions #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 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. Replace the wood panels with appropriate landscaping to screen the meters.
2. Identify the material for the infill panels between the porch piers.
3. Change the carriage house soffit to match the main structure soffit.
4. Change the board and batten siding on the carriage house to horizontal lap siding.
5. Provide a revised landscape plan that includes a tree survey, trees to be removed, compliance with required foundation plantings, and demonstration that 75% tree canopy coverage at maturity will be provided (UDO Sec. 5.3).

Additionally, the HPC is requested to make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the following:

1. Metal foundation vents at the main structure.

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. Location Map
3. Photos
4. Survey and Site Plan
5. Architectural Plan
6. Landscape Plan
7. Manufacturer's Cut Sheet
8. HPRC Comments 12.22.2025