

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 11, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA 01-25-019522 15 Meriwether Court (Lot 1) – New Construction
APPLICANT:	BFL Builders
PROPERTY OWNER:	BFL Builders
PROJECT MANAGER:	Sam Barrow, Senior Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Barry Bryant, of BFL Builders, requests approval of the following application:

COFA-01-25-019522. A Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District, to allow construction of a 2-story single-family residence of approximately 1,637 SF and an attached 2-story Carriage House of approximately 840 SF located at 15 Meriwether Court, Lot 1, in the Landon Oaks Development. The property is in Old Town Historic District and is zoned Neighborhood General-Historic District (NG-HD).

INTRODUCTION: The single-family detached house and Carriage House are proposed to be constructed on a .174-acre lot that includes a 30-foot drainage easement that runs along the rear property line and the top of the bank for Verdier Cove. The property also includes a large oak tree (34-inches in diameter at breast height or DBH) that the Applicant seeks to preserve. Because of these development constraints, the Applicant applied for and was granted approval of a variance by the Board of Zoning Appeals on December 5, 2023 (ZONE-11-23-018631), to reduce the required side yard setback requirement from 10-feet to five feet for the construction of either a Cottage or Additional building type. The reduced setback will allow the house to be constructed farther from the oak tree.

The house has attributes of a Vernacular House, including a side-facing gable, but is 2-stories in height and has a partial-length front porch, and is reviewed as an Additional Building Type. In addition to the primary structure, a 2-story Carriage House is proposed that will be attached to the house by a covered screened porch underneath a shed roof. The Carriage House will include an unfinished accessory dwelling unit above a 2-bay garage.

Both the main residence and attached carriage house will have side-facing gabled roofs with architectural asphalt shingles, and board and batten siding. The front elevation of the main structure features a porch extending half the length of the house with hog-fence style metal railing. A two-story wall projection is proposed on the left elevation that will include a single-

hung window or the ground and second floors. The house will be on piers (concrete masonry units with a tabby stucco coating) to protect the root structure of the 34-inch Live Oak.

The Carriage House will be connected to the main structure by an enclosed screened porch. The porch will be built on piers, similar in appearance to the main structure, and have exterior access at the front elevation via stairs. The Carriage House will be constructed on a concrete slab and features a wall dormer on the front and rear elevations underneath a standing seam roof. Access to the second floor will be via an external staircase at the rear.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the May 5, 2025 meeting and comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment 9).

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 main structure and Carriage House are 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 proposed main structure and Carriage House 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) **Building Walls:** Exterior walls are proposed to be board and batten siding, and horizontal siding; however, specific finish material is not provided on the plan set (but identified as 2x6 dimensional lumber on the Project Analysis sheet and cement fiber siding in the Narrative). Both wall materials are consistent with the UDO but the exact material(s) must be indicated.
- 2) **Railings and Balustrades:** Details are provided only for the main structure front porch, which is proposed to have pressure treated wood and hog pen railing. As hog pen is not a material permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H., the HPC will need to determine its appropriateness. Railing details must be provided for the exterior Carriage House staircase and for the handrails of the front porch stairs, including dimensions, to ensure compliance with the UDO.
- 3) **Windows:** The placement of windows at the Rear Elevation of the main structure, as well as at the East Elevation of the Carriage House (not directly underneath the gable), and West Elevation of the main house (varying heights for the single hung and fixed windows) is inconsistent with the UDO, which emphasizes alignment and rhythm of building features. Building elements and the spaces between them shall be organized into a logical and sequential manner, and vertical rhythms should be established in the façade through alignment of windows (UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.4.).
- 4) **Doors:** The material for the garage doors is not provided. Doors may be wood, metal or metal-clad. The UDO Administrator may approve of the use of Wood Composite material for doors provided the door will be consistent with the character of the Historic District and that the materials used are of equal or better quality than traditional building materials. Provide garage door material to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.
- 5) **Corners and Water Tables:** Corner board and water table details have not been provided. Details must be provided to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.N.

- 6) **Foundation:** It appears that the Carriage House will have a retaining wall in the rear yard. If this is correct, any exposed wall should match the tabby-coated piers proposed for the main structure.
 - 7) **Skirting and Underpinning:** The louvered skirting must be a minimum of one-inch behind the face of each pier. Provide a detail to show placement to ensure compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O.
 - 8) **Service Yards:** The service yard shown underneath the Carriage House staircase must be moved as the Bluffton Township Fire District and Town Building Safety will not approve mechanical and other stored equipment underneath the staircase. In case of a fire in the service area, the only access to and from the second floor would be impeded. The relocated service yard must be at least three feet from the property line. Further, service yard details for the relocated yard must be provided, as well as for the service yard proposed behind the main structure. Details must be consistent with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.9.
 - 9) **Trees and Landscaping:**
 - a. A tree canopy of 75% lot coverage, not including roof tops, must be provided for sites less than one (1) acre, and canopy coverage calculations shown per UDO Sec. 5.3.7.G. As several trees are 14-inches or more at diameter at breast height and proposed to be removed, a Tree Removal Permit will be required (but cannot be issued without an approved, stamped COFA-HD application).
 - b. A foundation planting area at least 8 feet wide shall be provided along the front foundation of the main structure. The foundation planting shall incorporate a mixture of trees, shrubs, and ground covers per UDO Sec. 5.3.7.E.A.
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 main structure and Carriage House 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 structure, 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. Provide the specific wall material(s) (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.G.3).
2. Provide railing details for the exterior Carriage House staircase and for the handrails of the front porch stairs, including dimensions (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H).
3. Revise location of windows on the Rear and West elevations of the main structure and the East elevation of the Carriage House for improved vertical and horizontal window placement (UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.4.).
4. Provide garage door material (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.)
5. Provide corner board and water table details (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.N).
6. If a retaining wall is proposed that will have an exposed wall, the wall must be tabby-coated to match the tabby-coated piers to be used for the main structure.
7. Provide a detail to show that the louvered skirting is a minimum of one-inch behind the face of each pier (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.O).
8. The proposed service yard underneath the Carriage House staircase must be relocated and shown on a revised plan, to include screening details. Screen details for the service yard in the rear of the main structure must also be provided (UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.9.).

9. On the Landscape Plan, show that a minimum of 75% tree canopy coverage at maturity, not including roof tops, will be provided (UDO Sec. 5.3.7.G.).
10. Revised Landscape Plan to show a foundation planting area at least 8 feet wide to be provided along the front foundation of the main structure. The foundation planting must incorporate a mixture of trees, shrubs, and ground covers (UDO Sec. 5.3.7.E.A.).
11. A Tree Removal Permit will be required. Trees cannot be removed until an approved, stamped COFA-HD is issued.

Further, Town Staff seeks a determination from the Historic Preservation Commission regarding:

1. Whether the “hog fence style railing” is an appropriate material. Sheet A4.1 depicts “hog fence style railing” on the North Elevation along the front porch. UDO Section 5.15.6.H.2 allows painted or natural wrought or cast iron as permitted Railing and Baluster materials. The proposed material consists of zinc-primed, powder coated steel welded into mesh panels.

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. Location and Zoning Map
2. Final Application
3. Narrative
4. Site Photos
5. Survey
6. Proposed Elevations
7. Landscape Plan
8. Tree Removal Plan
9. HPRC Comments