

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 11, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA-03-24-019447 71 Bridge Street New Construction: Single-Family and Carriage House
APPLICANT:	Ed Johns, Jr. (LowCountry Custom Built Homes)
PROPERTY OWNERS:	Julie and Jim Llewellyn
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Ed Johns, Jr., on behalf of owners, Julie and Jim Llewellyn, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the construction of a 2-story main residence of approximately 3412 SF and a 2-story Carriage House of approximately 1196 SF located at 71 Bridge Street in Old Town Bluffton Historic District and zoned Neighborhood Conservation-Historic District (NCV-HD).

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant has proposed the construction of a 2-story single-family structure with a detached 2-story Carriage House. The proposed primary structure, of approximately 3412 SF is characteristic of a Center Hall House. Vehicular access to the property will be via an access easement on the adjacent property, 73 Bridge Street.

The primary structure will be constructed on piers and will include a full-façade front porch. The main mass of the house will be under a side-facing standing seam gable roof. The roof includes a large central dormer underneath a front-facing gable roof that includes two smaller dormers on either side. A large shed-roof on the rear elevation will cover a second-floor porch. Additional first-floor covered porches will be located on the Left (East) elevation, the Rear (South) elevation, and the Right (West) elevation. The Right elevation will have multiple wall projections for the interior stairs, a kitchen nook, and a small porch.

The Carriage House will be constructed on a slab with the main mass underneath a front-facing gable to include shed dormers on both sides of the roof. An exterior staircase on the Rear elevation will provide access to the second-floor uncovered porch and residence. A lean-to roof over an unenclosed space is proposed on the Right elevation.

Materials for both buildings will include Hardie lap siding with 7" exposure and standing seam metal roofs.

The service yard for the primary structure is not shown. For the Carriage House, the service yard must be relocated to a location other than underneath the porch per the Town's Building Safety department as a fire in this location would cut off the only access to/from the second story.

A brick, pierced fence is proposed along the Bridge Street frontage, as well as a portion of the western property line (Attachments 4 and 7, survey and landscape plan, respectively). A detail of the fence is shown on Attachment 4 but is not to-scale. While the UDO permits brick fences, it is not a representative fence type in Old Town Bluffton as brick was not a locally sourced material and expensive. The application of brick has tended to be more limited in Old Town, such as in piers, chimneys, stairs and, to an even lesser degree, porch columns. Use of brick fencing began after Old Town's era of historic significance (1945): The brick fence at Church of the Cross was constructed in the 1960s. More recently, in the past eight years, brick fences have been constructed at two properties on Calhoun Street.

This project was initially presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for Concept Plan review on December 16, 2024. As multiple changes were required and suggested, a second HPRC meeting was held on March 10, 2025. The March comments are provided in Attachment 8. The Landscape Plan must be updated to reflect the most recent plans (Attachments 6 and 7). Further, there are some discrepancies for identified materials between the Project Analysis sheet and the plans that must be resolved.

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 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.
- b. *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 a proposed single-family structure and Carriage House add to the district and helps provide completeness to the neighborhood and overall district.

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

- a. *Findings.* Town Staff finds that if the conditions noted below are met, the proposed construction will be in conformance with applicable architectural design provisions provided in Article 5:

- 1) **Building Composition:** UDO Sec. 5.15.5.4.c. and UDO Sec. 5.15.5.4. e. state, respectively, that “[b]uilding elements and spaces between them shall be organized into a logical sequential manner” and “[v]ertical rhythms should be established in the façade through alignment of windows, openings, pilasters, and columns.”

On the Left elevation of the primary structure, the middle first-floor window does not line exactly with the second-floor window; further, a column is in front of the window. This placement may be due to an interior ventless fireplace. Additionally, the porch stairs on the same elevation do not align with the porch window. Moving the stairs farther left, towards the middle of the rear porch may improve column spacing.

On the Left elevation of the Carriage House, the ground floor window lacks vertical rhythm with the second-floor windows. Moving the window to the middle of the wall would correct this.

The HPC should determine if the window, column, staircase configuration is appropriate for the beforementioned elevations.

- 2) **Service Yards:** The service yard for the house must be shown. For the Carriage House, the service yard must be relocated from underneath the stairs. Both service yards must be screened in compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F. The service yard area must be large enough to include HVAC units, utilities and receptacles. Utility meters must be screened from public view.
- 3) **Porches:** If any porch is to be screened, all architectural expression (columns, railings, etc.), must be on the outside of the screen (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.E.5.f.
- 4) **Dormers:** Additional information is needed to review the dormer details.

- 5) **Columns:** The Project Analysis sheet indicates that PermaCast® columns (fiberglass) are proposed, which is not a permitted column material. Columns must be wood (termite resistant), concrete with smooth finish, brick, stone, steel or tabby per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.a.
- 6) **Balustrade:** The Project Analysis sheet indicates that wood will be used for railings, balusters and handrails, which is permitted by the UDO. This material must be shown on the plan and include dimensions for the top rail (required to be 2-¾”), as well as the spacing between balusters (4” to 5” on-center) as indicated in UDO Sec. 5.15.5.H.3.d.
- 7) **Doors:** The Project Analysis sheet indicates that steel and wood will be used for exterior doors, which complies with the UDO. All exterior doors must be labeled on the plan to confirm proposed material and operation shown in the door schedule. The door schedule must identify the material for the French doors.
- 8) **Windows:** Vinyl windows are indicated on the Project Analysis sheet. All windows must be labeled on the plan to confirm proposed material and operation shown in the window schedule. It appears that fixed windows are proposed for the Carriage House dormer windows. Fixed windows are permitted only for storefronts (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.3.b.). Permissible operations are single-hung, double-hung, casement, industrial and tilt.
- 9) **Roofs:** A standing seam metal roof is proposed but the type of metal has not been identified. Acceptable materials include galvanized, copper, aluminum and zinc-alum and must be identified. (UDO Sec. 5.15.5.J.2.a.)
- 10) **Fences and Walls:** A detail of the fence is shown on Attachment 4 but is not to-scale. The maximum permitted height for the front yard fence is 42 inches, and the pillar must be taller (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.K.2.). The brick panel between the piers should have additional piercing or openings.
- 11) **Shutters:** The Project Analysis sheet indicates that wood shutters will be used. This material must be shown on the plans.
- 12) **Wall Section Through the Eave Detail:** An updated wall section through eave detail is needed as there are discrepancies between the plans, the wall section provided, and the Project Analysis sheet. For example, the foundation on the plan shows piers with sand finish stucco and louvered hog pen underpinning of unknown material but the foundation on the wall details is shown as tabby stucco. Also, the water table and drip cap are shown as Azek material while the Project Analysis sheet shows Hardie

material. All details must be consistent and comply with UDO Sections 5.15.6.N., O. and P.

13) Landscape Plan.

- a. The Landscape Plan must be revised to match the most recent plans.
- b. A tree canopy with a minimum of 75% lot coverage, excluding rooftops, must be provided. Provide updated canopy coverage calculations to ensure the 75% lot coverage is met (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.G.).
- c. A Tree Permit will be required to remove trees that are 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height (UDO Sec. 3.22.2.B.3.).

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. If the conditions noted in #2 of this report are met, a compatible visual relationship will be demonstrated with surrounding properties, streetscapes and open spaces.

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 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. The service yard for the main structure must be included, and the service yard must be relocated from underneath the Carriage House stairs. Both service yards must be screened in compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.
2. If any porch is to be screened, all architectural expression (columns, railings, etc.), must be on the outside of the screen (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.E.5.f.).

3. Provide dormer details.
4. Change the column material to a material that is permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.a.
5. Provide the material to be used for the railings, balusters and handrails and show the dimensions for the top rail (2- $\frac{3}{4}$ "), as well as the spacing between balusters (4" to 5" on-center) as required by UDO Sec. 5.15.5.H.3.d.
6. Label all exterior doors on the plans to confirm proposed material and operation shown in the door schedule, and identify the material for the French doors. (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.)
7. Label all windows on the plans to confirm proposed material and operation. If fixed windows are proposed for the Carriage House dormer windows, they will need to be changed to an operable window type permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.3.b.
8. Identify the roof metal to be used to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.J.2.a.
9. Provide a fence detail that includes scale and dimensions to show that front yard fence will be no taller than 42 inches.(UDO Sec. 5.15.6.K.2.). Consider additional piercing or openings for the brick panel between the piers.
10. Show the shutter material to be used on the plans.
11. Provide an updated wall section through the eave detail for the main structure that matches the elevations. All details must be consistent and comply with UDO Sections 5.15.6.N., O. and P.
12. Update the Landscape Plan to match the most recent plans.
13. Show updated tree canopy calculation to show that a minimum of 75% canopy coverage at tree maturity will be provided (UDO Sec. 5.3.3.G.).
14. A Tree Permit will be required to remove trees that are 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height (UDO Sec. 3.22.2.B.3.).

Further, Town Staff requests a determination by the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the following:

1. The window, column, staircase configuration on the Left elevation of the main structure.
2. The window configuration on the Left elevation of the Carriage House.

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 & Zoning Map
2. Application
3. Narrative
4. Survey
5. Photos
6. Plans
7. Landscape Plan
8. HPRC Comments 03.10.2025