

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 11, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA 04-25-019700 135 Bridge Street – New Construction
APPLICANT:	Tom Parker Jr. (PDG Architects)
PROPERTY OWNER:	Brenda Dunaway
PROJECT MANAGER:	Sam Barrow, Senior Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Tom Parker Jr, of BFL Builders, requests approval of the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District to allow construction of a Center Hall House of 5,240 SF and two Carriage Houses of 800 SF and 1,198 SF located at 135 Bridge Street. The property is in Old Town Historic District and is zoned Riverfront Edge Historic District (RV-HD).

INTRODUCTION: The request is to construct a new main residence with two carriage houses: Carriage House #1 will be attached to the main residence by a hyphen and serve as the primary bedroom suite; Carriage House #2 will be attached by a breezeway and serve as a garage/carport with a second-floor unfinished space.

The new construction will replace a house that was destroyed by fire in December 2024. Prior to its destruction, the previous structure was legally nonconforming as to its location as it was partially within the 150-foot setback/buffer required from the State's Office of Coastal Resource Management Critical Line per the Town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO Administrator ruled that the new house could be rebuilt partially within the setback/buffer as the footprint of the house and the carriage house connected by the hyphen would be smaller than the original house and set back somewhat farther from the Critical Line (Attachment 4).

The main structure is 2.5 stories on a tabby stucco foundation, clad with cementitious fiber siding underneath a hip standing seam metal roof bookended by two pyramidal roof forms. The roof will also include a shed-like dormer with a series of three windows with two larger dormers at each end. The Bridge Street elevation features a center porch underneath a standing seam hip roof with posts wrapped in cypress, a brick foundation, as well as brick steps and wing walls.

The left elevation features a brick chimney with bishop's cap, a louvered service yard screen and a covered entryway. The rear elevation features a full-length screened porch with brick columns on the first floor, a partial screened porch with cypress wrapped columns on the second floor, two pyramidal roof forms at both ends of the main roof and a shed dormer with a series of three windows located in the center of the main roof. A second chimney is proposed.

The hyphen connecting Carriage House #1 will have a tabby stucco foundation to match the main structure with a series of 2'8x8'0 double-hung windows and Hardi-paneling. The Carriage House will have a brick foundation, brick walls and a pyramidal standing-seam metal roof. The use of brick for wall cladding is not typical of Bluffton's vernacular architecture but is permissible when brick is salvaged or locally produced.

A covered breezeway on the Left elevation will connect the main house to Carriage House #2. The breezeway will have a standing seam metal roof that is virtually flat (1/2:12) and atypical of breezeways found elsewhere in Old Town.

Carriage House #2 is designed to appear similar to the main house architecturally and materially. It will include a 2-car garage and a carport that will also include a screened service area. Wall cladding is mostly Hardie material with a brick base. An enclosed projection on the Right elevation will house the stairwell to access the second floor.

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 Houses 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 Houses 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) **Service Yards:** Service yard details are not shown and must be provided to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.

2) **Roofs:**

- a) Roofing material for the main structure and carriage house is identified only as “standing seam metal roofing.” Metal roofs can consist of galvanized, copper, aluminum or zinc-alum finish materials (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.J.2.a).

- b) The breezeway roof is flat with a pitch of ½:12. While the UDO does not specifically cite roof configurations for breezeways, it does state that rooflines should be “simple, utilizing gables, hips and sheds.” Increasing the pitch of the roof could create a gable roof, but it may also cause the long expanse of breezeway and the connecting buildings to appear excessive and less residential. A determination of the appropriateness of this pitch is requested of the HPC by Town Staff.

- 3) **Building Walls:** The source of the brick to be used for Carriage House #1 walls must be identified. The use of brick for wall cladding is not typical of Bluffton’s vernacular architecture but is permissible when brick is salvaged or locally produced (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.G.3.). Old Carolina Savannah Grey brick is shown for the chimney.

- 4) **Railings:** Powder-coated aluminum railings are proposed, which is not a permitted material. Permitted railing finish materials include wood, painted or natural wrought or cast iron (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.H.2.d).
- 5) **Doors:** The screen porch door on the first floor, and the “guest deck” door are shown to be Azek material. Permitted materials are wood, metal and metal-clad per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.
- 6) **Windows:**
 - a. An oval fixed glass window is proposed on the Bridge Street elevation. Windows are required to be oriented vertically and must be rectangular or square per UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.1.b. and 3.a. and cannot be fixed (as noted below).
 - b. Fixed glass windows are proposed in the front dormer (the series of three windows) and on the rear second floor elevation underneath the pyramidal roofs. The UDO does not permit fixed window operation, only single-and double-hung, casement, industrial, and tilt. Fixed frame windows of no more than 36 square feet are permitted only within retail storefronts.
- 7) **Shutters:** Shutters on both the main structure and carriage house are proposed to be wood composite. Use of wood composite shutters is subject to the UDO Administrator’s determination. Potential wood composite materials should be consistent with the character of the Historic District and of equal or better quality than traditional building materials (UDO Sec. 5.15.6.M.1.e). They HPC may also make this determination.
- 8) **Trim:** The Project Analysis Sheet indicates that fly ash, a material not permitted by the UDO, is proposed to be used for trim, water tables, corner boards, as well as cornices, soffits and friezes. Cement board is also indicated for soffits (unknown configuration) as shown in the typical wall section on page A.4.0 of Attachment 6. The sections must be updated to show compliance with UDO Secs. 5.15.6.N and 5.15.6.P., including materials and configurations.
- 9) **Landscape Plan:** No trees are proposed to be removed from the existing site (burned trees were previously removed). Extensive landscaping is proposed on in the Bridge Street and May River yards. On the May River side, within 100 feet of the OCRM Critical Line, a site alteration cannot exceed 40% of the area of the lot, and no disturbance can be closer than 25 feet of the Critical Line. The UDO does permit limited removal of vegetation as indicated in UDO Sec. 5.3.3.A. Additionally, development is

limited to pedestrian pathways leading to a dock and must be permeable or semi-permeable paving materials (UDO Sec. 5.5.3.B.1.)

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. Service yard details must be provided to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F.
2. Identify roof material to be used to show compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.6.J.2.a.
3. Identify the local source of the brick to be used for the walls of Carriage House #2, or the bricks will be salvaged. If the brick is neither, the Town Staff requests the HPC to make a determination regarding the appropriateness. A material sample

- for the brick to be applied for the entirety of the new construction should be provided.
4. Revise doors with Azek material to a material permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.2.b.
 5. Change the oval window to a window configuration and operation permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.1.b. and 3.a.
 6. Change all fixed glass windows to an operation permitted by UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.3.a.
 7. Change fly ash trim material to materials permitted by the UDO and provide information to show compliance with materials and configurations (UDO Secs. 5.15.6.N and 5.15.6.P.)
 8. Revise the Landscape Plan to show compliance with UDO Secs. 5.3.3.A. and Sec. 5.5.3.B.

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

1. The appropriateness of the ½:12 pitch for the breezeway.
2. The appropriateness of powder coated aluminum for handrails.
3. The appropriateness of wood composite shutters.

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. Zoning Determination Letter
5. Site Photos

6. Plans
7. Landscape Plan
8. Product Cut Sheets
9. HPRC Comments