

PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	August 27, 2025
PROJECT:	1271 May River Road Preliminary Development Plan
APPLICANT:	Sharan Pyari Patel
PROJECT NUMBER:	DP-06-25-019806
PROJECT MANAGER:	Dan Frazier Planning Manager Department of Growth Management

REQUEST: The Applicant, Kathleen Duncan of J.K Tiller Associates, Inc. on behalf of property owner Sharan Pyari Patel is requesting approval of a Preliminary Development Plan application. The project consists of the construction of a 5,259 SF mixed use building and a 1,200 SF carriage house with associated infrastructure (Attachment 1).

INTRODUCTION: The property is zoned Neighborhood General – Historic District (NG-HD) consists of approximately 0.34 acres identified by tax map number R610 039 000 0557 0000 located north of May River Road west of Goethe Road within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND: This application is for a preliminary development plan located within the Neighborhood General – Historic District (NG-HD) Zoning District and as such is subject to the standards set forth in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The subject property is currently a non-conforming asphalt parking lot (UDO Table 4.3).

The Applicant proposes the construction of a 5,259 SF two and one half (2.5)-story mixed-use building referred to as the “Professional Building.” The building is designed with potential for office/service, retail business, personal service establishment, professional office, or medical office use with two residential units on the second story and the half story above. In addition, a 1,200-square-foot, two-story mixed-use carriage house is proposed, which will include a residential dwelling unit on the second floor. The project also includes associated parking, utilities, and stormwater infrastructure. Tenants are to be determined (Attachment 3).

The site includes a Magnolia (6” DBH) and two (2) Live Oak (10” & 14” DBH). The Applicant proposed the removal of the 6” Magnolia and 10” Live Oak and the planting of one (1) Southern Live Oak and one (1) Dahoon Holly. As proposed, the site plan will meet the tree canopy and open space requirements. However, the proposed landscape plan does not meet UDO Section 5.15.7.D.2, requiring a visual buffer between public right-of-way and off-street parking area to be a minimum of 42 inches in height and 50% opacity.

Per UDO Section 5.15.7, based on the proposed site plan, fifteen (15) parking spaces are

required, which include nine (9) total spaces for the residential dwelling units, six (6) total spaces for the commercial units. The Applicant is proposing eleven (11) parking spaces in addition to four (4) on-street spaces.

The parking requirements and regulations are subject to review and adjustment by the UDO Administrator (UDO Section 5.15.7.A). While the overall parking meets the requirement for the proposed development, Staff is concerned that the parking requirements for the existing and proposed uses are not being met. Some of the current parking being used by the existing commercial uses is being displaced by the proposed development.

The Applicant provided a traffic assessment with their application which proposes shared overflow parking for the adjacent Bluffton Market property (Attachment 4). Should a shared access agreement be required, an easement must be in conformance with UDO Section 5.15.G and recorded with Beaufort County.

The subject parcel is within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and will require a Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic District (COFA-HD) reviewing landscaping, lighting, and architecture at time of final development plan approval. The Applicant has moved forward with this process and the application was reviewed at the May 27, 2025, Historic Preservation Review Committee meeting.

Staff comments on the Preliminary Development Plan were reviewed at the July 23, 2025, Development Review Committee meeting (Attachment 5). The Applicant provided a response to comments and revised site plans on July 30, 2025 (Attachment 6 and 3).

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Planning Commission shall consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.10.3.A of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Preliminary Development Plan. The applicable criteria are provided below followed by Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.10.3.A.1. Conformance with the applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.

Finding. The subject property is located within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and therefore is subject to the standards set forth in the Town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Finding. The UDO Administrator will review and adjust the parking requirements and regulations for the subject and adjacent properties, as needed, to address Staff's concerns (UDO Section 5.15.7.A).

Finding. The Applicant does not provide a visual buffer between public right-of-way and off-street parking area a minimum of 42 inches in height and 50% opacity (UDO Section 5.15.7.D.2).

2. **Section 3.10.3.A.2.** The proposed development shall be in conformance with any approved Development Agreement, PUD Concept Plan, PUD Master Plan, Subdivision Plan, or any other agreements or plans that are applicable.

Finding. The proposed development is not within any PUD, Development Agreement, or Subdivision Plan.

3. **Section 3.10.3.A.3.** If the proposed development is associated with a previously approved Master Plan, then the traffic and access plans shall adhere to the previously approved traffic impact analysis or assessment, where applicable. If an application is not associated with a previously approved PUD Master Plan, then a traffic impact analysis shall be required at final development plan submittal.

Finding. The proposed development is not within any approved Master Plan or PUD.

Finding. The Traffic Assessment concludes that the development provides shared overflow parking for the adjacent Bluffton Market property. Should a shared access agreement be required, an easement must be in conformance with UDO Section 5.15.G and recorded with Beaufort County.

4. **Section 3.10.3.A.4.** The proposed development must be able to be served by adequate public services, including, but not limited to, water, sanitary sewer, roads, police, fire, and school services. For developments that have the potential for significant impact on infrastructure and services, the applicant shall be required to provide an analysis and mitigation of the impact on transportation, utilities, and community services.

Finding. Letters from the agencies providing public services will be required at time of Final Development Plan submittal per the Applications Manual.

5. **Section 3.10.3.A.5.** The phasing plan, if applicable, is logical and is designed in a manner that allows each phase to fully function independently regarding services, utilities, circulation, facilities, and open space, irrespective of the completion of other proposed phases.

Finding. The project is proposed to be completed in a single phase.

6. **Section 3.10.3.A.6.** The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

Finding. The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: The Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to the application as authorized by Section 2.2.6.C.5 of the UDO:

1. Approve the application as submitted;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted.

RECOMMENDATION: Should the Planning Commission choose to approve the application with conditions, Town Staff finds that the following conditions should be met prior to final development plan approval to be in conformance with UDO Section 3.10.3.A:

1. The UDO Administrator will review and adjust the parking requirements and regulations for the subject and adjacent properties, as needed, to address Staff's concerns
2. Provide an updated Landscape Plan providing a visual buffer between public right-of-way and off-street parking area a minimum of 42 inches in height and 50% opacity at time of Final Development Plan review.
3. Provide a shared access easement recorded with Beaufort County prior to Final Development Plan approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application and Project Narrative
2. Vicinity Map
3. Survey, Civil and Landscape Plan Set 07 30 25
4. Traffic Assessment
5. DRC Comments and Original Site Plans 06 11 25
6. Response to DRC Comments 07 30 25