

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	January 5, 2022
PROJECT:	127 Bridge Street – Restoration and Remodel
APPLICANT:	Ling Graves
PROJECT MANAGER:	Katie Peterson, AICP, Senior Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Ling Graves, on behalf of the owner, Kay Stanley, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

1. **COFA-10-21-015987.** A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the renovation of the Contributing Structures known as the Guerrard's Bluff Barn and Cook's Cottage, and Guest Cottage of approximately 975 SF, in addition to the renovation of the non-contributing garage building of approximately 740 SF and located at 127 Bridge Street, in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, and zoned Riverfront Edge-HD.

INTRODUCTION: There are four existing Contributing Structures and two non-contributing structures located at 127 Bridge Street. The Primary Structure, which was reviewed in 2018 for restoration and remodel is known as the Mercer House (1936).

As a portion of this application, the Guerrard's Bluff Barn (c. 1880), Guest Cottage (c. 1900) and Cook's Cottage (1938), are proposed for restoration.

The structures were identified in the 1996 National Register Nomination as well as the 2008 Historic Resource Survey as significant, and the structures are designated locally and nationally as Contributing Structures within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

The proposal in this application includes the following work:

Guest Cottage (Attachment 5):

1. Replace all siding and corner boards on the structure with new wood board and batten siding (termite damage);
2. Repair roofing as needed (most to remain);
3. Replace door (non-historic);
4. Add new decorative post near the front door; and,
5. Add new brick steps and landing on the South Elevation.

Cook's Cottage (Attachment 6):

1. Repair wood siding where possible and replace in areas where deteriorated beyond repair (see photos for locations of replacement);
2. Clean and repair existing windows; and,
3. Replace front steps.

Barn (Attachment 7):

1. Clean windowpanes and replace trim with same profile;
2. Remove raised floor on the side elevation, which is a newer addition to the structure;
3. Replace roof with new corrugated metal to match existing;
4. Repaint;
5. Repair damaged wood components where possible, replace materials beyond repair (as indicated in photos) in kind.

In addition to the repairs to the Contributing Structures, a renovation of the non-contributing Garage structure has been proposed (Attachment 8). The renovation proposes:

1. The addition of a new dormer on the North Elevation;
2. Replacing the false fixed shutters on the North elevation with windows and shutters;
3. Replacing the existing stairs with pressure treated of the same;
4. Adding a bracketed shed roof over the east elevation garage doors;
5. Replacing the second story door; and,
6. Adding a new door on the ground floor of the South Elevation.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the November 8, 2021 meeting where comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment 9).

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.

It is important to note that the intent of Section 5.15 Old Town Bluffton Historic District of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), is that the Section be user friendly and informative to the residents and the members of HPC and is not intended to discourage creativity or force the replication of historic models. Rather, it is to set forth a framework in which the diversity that has always characterized Bluffton can continue to grow. The Section also defines guidelines for design and materials similar to that used on structures within the Old Town, and it is the charge of the HPC to assess the interpretation of these guidelines as they pertain to applications using the established review criteria.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.18.3 of the

Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic District (HD). The applicable criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.18.3.A. Consistency with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Finding. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation consist of ten standards for rehabilitation supported by additional information provided in the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. For this application, all ten of the Standards for Rehabilitation apply to three of the buildings, which are Contributing Structures in the Bluffton Historic District. Overall, Town Staff finds that these standards have been followed for the restoration work proposed for the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage as described below:

- Standard 1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

Finding. The renovation to the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage is to prevent them from deteriorating and allow them to continue to be used. As such, this will require some changes to the buildings; however, the changes to the spaces and spatial relationships will be minimal and all of the new interventions will be concealed on the interior.

- Standard 2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Finding. The proposed renovation of Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage will require minimal changes to the remaining distinctive materials, features, and spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property and will restore some of those features that are currently compromised.

- Standard 3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

Finding. The proposed renovation to Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage does not include changes that create a false sense of historical development as the materials will be replaced with the same material as existing only in areas where the material has deteriorated beyond repair.

- Standard 4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

Finding. The proposed restoration/renovation of the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage does not propose substantial modifications to the building which has incurred very few changes since its initial construction in the early 1900s. As such, the restoration/renovation work will pay homage to the preceding design and enhance the remaining structures.

- Standard 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Finding. The restoration/renovation of the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage seeks to retain and preserve materials, features, finishes and construction techniques where possible while still allowing for upgrades to the building and site.

- Standard 6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

Finding. The Applicant has stated that, when possible, the materials will be retained; however, some elements are currently beyond repair and must be replaced. Through photos of the existing conditions, these areas have been highlighted. The new features are to match the old in design, informed by historic photographic evidence. Should further replacement be needed, the Applicant must bring additional information to Town Staff to ensure it is in keeping with the intent of any approval provided through this review.

- Standard 7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Finding. The proposed work does not include chemical or physical treatments that may damage historic materials.

- Standard 8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

Finding. No known archeological resources will be disturbed during the proposed activities. Should such items be discovered, Town Staff shall be notified.

- Standard 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Finding. The restoration/renovation of the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage do not involve the construction of new additions or related new construction. The material being replaced on the exterior is deteriorated beyond repair and will be replaced with material to match existing.

- Standard 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Finding. No additions are being proposed to the historic structures. The new materials to be installed are to match the historic in material, design, and visual appearance. The new construction proposed as the addition to the existing non-historic garage will not be visible from the May River or Bridge Street.

2. 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."

The Applicant proposes to restore the exterior of two Contributing Structures within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The proposed restoration/renovation work will provide an opportunity to protect the history of the structures by remediating their currently deteriorated physical condition and making it safe for use.

- a. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also included 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 Unified Development Ordinance. The new construction proposed as part of this request will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in Section 2 of this report 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. Rehabilitating these historic structures for reuse with minimal impact to the historic integrity of the materials will provide an opportunity

to preserve the legacy of the site in Bluffton while upgrading it to be functionally adequate for current needs.

3. 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) Section 5.3.3. River Buffer. All vegetation, ground cover, understory trees and shrubs, and overstory trees shall be retained throughout the entire buffer. Removal of the existing vegetation shall only occur to accommodate views by selectively trimming and landscaping one-third of the total buffer zone area between a height of 2 feet and 10 feet measured from the adjacent grade, provided that no more than a maximum contiguous area measuring 75 feet in a horizontal distance parallel to the Critical Line is selectively trimmed and landscaped at any one location, separated by a matching undisturbed buffer. Selective landscaping shall include native understory and groundcover plantings that do not require chemical treatment for survival or maintenance.

The Landscape Plan indicates that existing vegetation in front of an existing brick wall is to be removed within the 100' Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) buffer area. Additional information must be submitted for review prior to the removal of any landscaping as no more than one-third of the buffer area may be selectively cleared.

- 2) Section 5.15.6.I. Windows and Doors. Doors are permitted to be Metal or Metal-Clad. Except in the case of a Contributing Structure, the UDO Administrator may approve of the use of Wood Composite material for doors provided the UDO Administrator determines that the door will be consistent with the character of the Historic District and the materials used are of equal or better quality than traditional building materials. The Garage, a non-contributing structure, proposes the use of a fiberglass doors. The door materials must be revised to a permitted material.
- 3) Section 5.15.6.P. Cornice, Soffit, and Frieze. Rough sawn wood, plywood and aluminum are not permitted materials for soffit or cornice detailing. The dormer at garage detail shows the use of plywood in the soffit. The soffit material must be revised to be a permitted material.

4. Section 3.18.3.D. Consistency with the nature and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Finding. Town Staff finds that the retention and restoration of the historic structures is consistent and harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. The buildings will retain their position on the site and the vernacular character of utilitarian outbuildings on the site.

5. Section 3.18.3.E. Consistency with the preservation of the existing building's character and architecture.

Finding. The restoration/renovation of the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage propose to retain as much of the historic structure as possible and to replace those features which have been lost or faded over time. The proposed work will enhance and preserve the existing building's character and architecture.

6. Section 3.18.3.F. Impact on 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. The Applicant seeks to restore/renovate the Guerrard's Bluff Barn, Guest Cottage and Cook's Cottage to allow for continued use. The intent of the proposal is to preserve the existing materials and replace/repair elements with like-for-like material only as needed. The restoration/renovation of these buildings is in the public's best interest as they are Contributing Structures and are some of the only remaining examples of accessory units of this type of architecture within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

7. Section 3.18.3.G. For an application to demolish, either whole or in part, any Contributing Structure, the Historic Preservation Commission shall consider:

- a. The existing and historical ownership and use and reason for requesting demolition; and
- b. Information that establishes clear and convincing evidence that:
 - i. The demolition of the structure is necessary to alleviate a threat to public health or public safety; and
 - ii. No other reasonable alternatives to demolition exist; and
 - iii. The denial of the application, as a result of the regulations and standards of this Section, deprive the Applicant of reasonable economic use of or return on the property.

1. *Finding.* The application does not propose demolition, so this criterion does not apply.

7. Section 3.18.3.H. 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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: It is the charge of the HPC to assess and interpret the standards and guidelines set forth in the Unified Development Ordinance as they pertain to applications using the criteria described in the previous sections 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 and considerations:

1. Per Section 5.3.3. no clearing may take place in the required 100' ORCM River Buffer. Additional information must be submitted for review prior to the removal of any landscaping as no more than one-third of the buffer area may be selectively cleared.
2. Per Section 5.15.6.I. the proposed doors for the Garage must be revised to be wood, metal or metal clad or a wood composite material which is to be brought back before the HPC for their determination on the appropriateness of the material.
3. Per Section 5.15.6.P. the plywood soffit material on the Garage must be revised.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location Map
2. Zoning Map
3. Application
4. Site and Landscape Plans
5. Guest Cottage Plans and Photos
6. Cook's Cottage Plans and Photos
7. Guerrard's Bluff Barn Plans and Photos
8. Garage Plans and Photos
9. HPRC Comments