



MEMORANDUM

TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Glen Umberger, Historic Preservationist
RE: Recommendation for the Demolition and New Construction of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage (76 Bridge Street) (DP-10-24-019422)
DATE: February 5, 2025
CC: Kevin Icard, AICP, Director of Growth Management

BACKGROUND: At the request of the Town of Bluffton Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), Town Council adopted an ordinance at their April 9, 2019 meeting that amended the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Article 3 Application Process and Article 5 Design Standards to allow the HPC to review Public Projects and provide comment to the UDO Administrator for consideration. Additionally, Town Council revised the Town of Bluffton Process Table by resolution to incorporate the review and recommendation of Public Projects by the HPC with the final review authority to remain with the UDO Administrator.

The Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage, a Contributing Resource to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, located at 76 Bridge Street has been owned by the Town of Bluffton since December 2020. The structure has been vacant since the time of Mrs. Hooks' death in 2002 and exhibits a condition of neglect. The documents in this application are for the proposed demolition of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage and the construction of a new structure to allow for its reuse. Note that approval of this application shall not remove the "Contributing Resource" designation from the property.

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Meadors, Inc., on behalf of the Town of Bluffton, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend that the UDO Administrator approve the following application:

DP-10-24-019422. A Public Project to allow for the demolition of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage, a Contributing Resource, and the construction of a new structure, using as much salvaged historic materials as possible, to be located at 76 Bridge Street, in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and zoned Neighborhood General-HD.

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant has proposed to demolish the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage, which was designated a Contributing Resource to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District in 2008, and to construct a new structure in its place to resemble the residential cottage in its earlier historic configuration for a new commercial use with public restroom facilities located in the rear. A new low-profile ramp to allow for ADA access will be added to the rear elevation. Any historic materials that can be salvaged will be reused in the construction of the new structure (see Attachments 2 and 3).

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 UDO, as amended April 9, 2024 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 principles set forth in the *Old Town Master Plan* and *Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan*, “Blueprint Bluffton.”
 - 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 Unified Development Ordinance. The work proposed as part of this request is in conformance with those standards.
 - b. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan states that the Town should actively work to acquire properties for green space to further complete the green network through Old Town. While the Contributing Resource is not specifically green space, it is located on a parcel adjacent to the Huger Cove that will be used as public space, which specifically helps to complete the goals listed in the Plan.
 - c. *Finding.* *The Comprehensive Plan*, “Blueprint Bluffton” dated November 2, 2022 states that “A survey of the property and master plan will be undertaken in FY-2023 to determine the best use of the property and accordingly, with this Application, this goal has been 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 the proposed work conforms with the other applicable provisions provided in Article 5.
3. Section 3.18.3.D. Demonstration of a compatible visual relationship between new construction and existing buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces.
 - a. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that nature and character of the work is consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding neighborhood. The mass and scale are appropriate for the location and the architectural detailing is sensitive to the neighboring properties.
4. Section 3.18.3.H. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.
 - a. *Finding.* The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.
5. Section 3.18.5.B. The demolition of a Contributing Resource is detrimental to the integrity and status of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District as its significance is embodied by its contributing resources.

- a. *Finding.* Town Staff finds that the based on the history of the resource and the reason of the request (3.18.5.B.1.a.), the report submitted by Meadors, Inc. as part of this application (3.18.5.B.1.b.), the evidence that demolition is required and that there is no other reasonable alternatives to demolition exist in this present situation (3.18.5.B.1.c.), the work proposed satisfies this requirement.

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., Town Staff finds the application meets the requirements of Section 3.18.3 of the UDO and pursuant to Section 3.24.3.C., recommends that the HPC makes a recommendation to the UDO Administrator to approve the application.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACTIONS: As described in UDO Section 5.15.1.C., Old Town Bluffton Historic District Intent, the regulatory requirements, design guidelines and materials are “not by any means intended to discourage creativity or force the replication of historic models” [r]ather ... to set forth a framework in which the diversity that has always characterized Bluffton can continue to grow.” It is the charge of the HPC to assess the interpretation of these guidelines as they pertain to applications using the established review criteria.

As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E. of the UDO, the Historic Preservation Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Recommend the UDO Administrator approve the application as submitted by the Applicant;
2. Recommend the UDO Administrator approve the application with HPC comments; or
3. Recommend that the UDO Administrator deny the application as submitted by the Applicant.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application
2. Narrative
3. Plan & Elevations