

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



**STAFF REPORT**  
**Department of Growth Management**

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	May 6, 2026
<b>PROJECT:</b>	COFA-12-25-020072 204 Bluffton Road (Lot 8) – New Construction
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Thomas Michaels, Jr. (SM7 Design, LLC)
<b>PROPERTY OWNER:</b>	204 Bluffton Road, LLC
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

**APPLICATION REQUEST:** The Applicant, Thomas Michaels, Jr. (SM7 Design, LLC) on behalf of the owner, 204 Bluffton Road, LLC, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approve the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District to allow the construction of a new 3-story 3,978 SF Main Street Building at 204 Bluffton Road. The property is in the Promenade development in Old Town Historic District and zoned Neighborhood Core-Historic District (NC-HD).

**INTRODUCTION:** The 3-story mixed-use building, with a footprint of approximately 1,326 SF and total square footage of approximately 3,978 SF, is designed as a Mainstreet Building type (Attachment 7).

The building will be located underneath a hip roof. The first story will be clad with brick. The second and third stories will be clad with Hardie horizontal lap siding. Trim, including soffits, will be cementitious material.

The front elevation includes three stories of porches with a length of approximately 75% of the building width. The ground level porch will be supported by two 1'-2" wide brick columns that frame the storefront entrance. The second and third story porches will have 1'-0" wide wood columns and powder coated aluminum railings. The third-story porch will be located underneath a metal shed roof with exposed rafter tails and 6x6 wood brackets.

Porches will also be located on the rear elevation underneath a metal hip roof with exposed rafter tails and the same columns and railings as the front elevation. The ground floor porch will be a service area screened by horizontal wood louvers. The left elevation will include a staircase to separate second-story residential entrances. The landing will be located underneath a hip roof that will be supported by two wood columns. The area underneath the landing will be screened with wood louvers.

Overall, the building is reflective of the vernacular characteristics of Bluffton, as well as the Calhoun Street Promenade, with architectural volume and styling. The Calhoun Street Promenade Owners' Association Architectural Committee has approved the plan (Attachment 10).

This project was initially presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the January 26, 2026 meeting and comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment 4). A second conceptual review with HPRC was held on March 23, 2026 as the initial HPRC comments were numerous.

**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. 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 amendments will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in #2 of this Section are met.

**2. Conformance with the approved Final Development Plan, Subdivision Plan, and any other agreements or plans that are applicable.**

- a. *Finding.* This lot was previously approved with the September 1, 2010, development plan for the Calhoun Street Promenade. Amendments since that time have not affected this lot, and neither will the COFA-HD.

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

- a. *Findings.* The following findings include items that do not appear to comply or that require a determination of appropriateness from the HPC.

**(1) Columns:** UDO Section 5.15.6.H.1.a. requires that columns and porch posts be spaced no farther apart than they are tall as measured from the

centerlines of the columns and posts. The front porch columns ( $\pm 11'-1"$  tall and  $\pm 17'-6"$  wide), as well as the second and third-story porch posts ( $\pm 10'-4"$  tall and  $\pm 17'-6"$  wide;  $\pm 8'-2"$  and  $\pm 17'-6"$  wide, respectively) do not comply with this requirement. Likewise, the rear service area and porch posts are also farther apart than tall ( $\pm 11'-0"$ ,  $\pm 10'-3"$  and  $\pm 8'-2"$  tall and  $\pm 13'-9"$  wide), as well as the posts at the staircase landing on the left elevation ( $\pm 9'-8"$  tall and  $\pm 11'-0"$  wide). The HPC must determine if the beforementioned column and porch posts widths are appropriate.

**(2) Railings:** UDO Section 5.15.6.H.2.d. requires railings to be made of wood (termite resistant), or painted or natural wrought iron. Powder coated aluminum is proposed for front and rear porch railings, balusters and handrails. The railing at the stairwell landing is identified as both powder coated aluminum and wood "rails and pickets." A railing detail has not been provided nor has a cut sheet to confirm the dimensions required by UDO Sec. 5.16.6.H.3.d. will be met. A determination must be made on the appropriateness of the use of powder coated aluminum as a substitute material.

**(3) Windows:**

- a. UDO Section 5.15.5.F.4.e. states that "[v]ertical rhythms should be established in the façade through alignment of windows..." UDO Sec. 5.15.6.I.1.b. also provides that the window openings should be oriented vertically. Both the right and left elevations include four different window types that mostly lack vertical alignment and appear to have random placement from the exterior, unlike the windows in the adjacent buildings at 202 and 206 Bluffton Road. However, as these elevations have limited public view, the HPC may consider the appropriateness of window placement in these elevations.
- b. The window material is not identified in the plan set but is shown as "Glastra" material on the application project analysis sheet, which references a brochure (Attachment 9). Glastra, according to the brochure, is "a proprietary hybrid of fiberglass and UV stable polymer." While fiberglass is a permitted window material, Glastra is a hybrid and will require a determination of appropriateness by the HPC.
- c. All windows must be labeled by type.

**(4) Doors:**

- a. The door material is not identified in the plan set but is shown as "Glastra" material on the application project analysis sheet, which references a brochure (Attachment 9). Glastra, according to the brochure, is "a proprietary hybrid of fiberglass and UV stable polymer."

While fiberglass is a permitted door material, Glastra is a hybrid and will require a determination of appropriateness by the HPC.

- b. The door at the service yard has a single-lite, which is inconsistent with four-lite doors used elsewhere on the building, including the adjacent door. This door should be changed to four-lites.
- c. All doors must be labeled by type.

**(5) Roof Material:** A metal roof (“pre-weathered galvalume”) is proposed for the porches and staircase landing; the configuration has not been identified. UDO Sec. 5.15.6.J.3.a. requires the configuration to be standing seam or 5-V crimp with 24-inch maximum spacing with panel ends exposed at the overhang.

**(6) Porch Ceilings:** The porch ceiling for the front and rear porches will be a v-groove configuration, but material has not been identified. A side porch detail has not been provided to identify either the material or configuration. A v-groove configuration should be provided for all porches, as well as a consistent material such as pressure-treated wood or cementitious board,

**(7) Brick Veneer:** The Color Board (Attachment 8) shows that “Old Georgetown” brick is proposed. Additional information is needed to determine the manufacturer of the brick to verify the color. “Old Georgetown” manufactured by General Shale is a red /orange brick that atypical of the area. “Georgetowne” brick is similar to Savannah Grey, a brown, tumbled brick.

**(8) Electric Meters:** Electric meters are proposed to be placed on the rear wall at the service area. Based on recent experience with meters in Old Town, the meter location may be required to be moved by the utility company. If an alternate location is required, meters must be screened.

**(9) Right-of-way (ROW) Encroachment:** The walkway connection to the public sidewalk and landscaping in the ROW will require a ROW encroachment permit from the State of South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). Additionally, any State signage to be relocated will require written proof of approval from SCDOT.

- 4. 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.* The mass and scale of the structure is appropriate for its location and the architectural volume and detailing sensitive to the neighboring properties.

## 5. 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.

**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 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 subject to the following conditions and determinations:

### **Conditions:**

1. Revise the plan to show all windows by type.
2. Revise the plan to show a service area door that matches the adjacent four-lite door.  
Revise the plan to show all doors by type.
3. Revise the plan to show a standing seam or 5-v roof configuration.
4. Revise the plan to show porch ceilings with pressure-treated wood or cementitious board.
5. Revise the plan to show railing details.
6. Identify the brick manufacturer and specific brick to be used for the front porch columns and first-story wall cladding.
7. If electric meters must be relocated, they shall be screened with landscaping or other screening method as determined by the HPC.
8. Provide a ROW encroachment permit for any work within the Bluffton Road right-of-way.

**Determinations:** The determinations below must be considered for their appropriateness. If not acceptable, the HPC must provide an alternative or deny the request.

1. The proposed widths of all columns and posts that are farther apart than they are tall.
2. The use of powder-coated aluminum for the porch railings, balusters and handrails.
3. The use of Glastra material for windows and doors.
4. The placement of windows in the right and left elevations.

**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. Application
2. Location and Zoning Map
3. Lot Survey
4. Narrative & HPRC Comments Response
5. Photos
6. Conceptual Rendering with Adjacent Buildings
7. Architectural and Landscape Plans
8. Color Board
9. Window and Door Brochure
10. Promenade Approval Letter