

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	October 4, 2023
PROJECT:	1268 May River Road – Addition/Remodel: Contributing Resource, Office Use
APPLICANT:	Shifting Tides LLC
PROJECT MANAGER:	Katie Peterson, AICP, Senior Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Shifting Tides LLC, on behalf of the owner May River Project LLC, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

1. **COFA-06-23-018141.** A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the renovation of the Contributing Resource, known as Nathaniel Brown's Cottage, to include enclosing the rear porch, replacing windows, renovating the front porch, and adding a side patio with ramp, and the renovation of the CMU Carriage House Structure to include removing the shed-roof side addition, and replacing windows and updating the structure. The site is located at 1268 May River Road, in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District and is zoned Neighborhood General- HD.

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant has proposed the renovation of the one-story, single-family structure known as Nathaniel Brown's Cottage. The structure is characterized by its brick masonry, wood detailing in its gables, low front porch and windows with horizontal lite patterns. The building was first surveyed in the 2008 Historic Resources Survey of Bluffton (Identified as 1268 May River Road, Site #046-0047), and subsequently resurveyed in the Town of Bluffton Historic Resources Update (July 2019).

On August 9, 2022, a Site Feature-HD (SFHD-08-22-2057) was approved to replace the existing asphalt roof with the same, using Landmark Asphalt Shingles in the color Weathered Wood. On October 31, 2022, work beyond the scope of the Site Feature and associated building permit was found to be in progress, including exterior work in the form of window replacement and framing on the rear porch, and a stop work order was issued. The work proposed in this application is intended to bring the structure, as currently exists, into compliance with the Unified Development Ordinance and maintain the historic integrity of the structure.

The Applicant proposes to replace the existing porch columns with 4x4 wood posts in the same location with a 2x4 horizontal guard rail to maintain the opening pattern of the historic porch. They have proposed soffit repairs using plywood to match the existing material in several locations identified on the architectural plans. They have proposed to replace the windows which were installed without Town

approval with Andersen 400 Series Tilt-Wash double-hung windows which maintain the historic window lite pattern. The historic windows removed from the structure were damaged beyond repair and cannot be reused.

The Applicant has proposed to enclose the rear porch using board and batten siding from the accessory structure's lean-to and detailed with trim work where the columns were to maintain the visual opening pattern on the porch. New brick steps on the rear porch have been proposed to the rear, to allow the drive aisle to be wider between the two structures. A new front and left side porch have been proposed using wood pickets and underpinning to differentiate from the historic portion of the porch.

On the non-contributing accessory structure, the Applicant has proposed to remove the shed roofed side addition of the structure, retaining the CMU block portion of the structure. New windows, including a glass garage door, to maintain the openings as they currently exist.

This project was presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for conceptual review at the June 17, 2023 meeting and comments were provided to the Applicant (See Attachment 4).

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 UDO 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.

- a. *Finding.* This criterion is only applicable to Nathaniel Brown's Cottage, not the accessory structure. Town Staff has reviewed the ten Standards for the Contributing Resource as follows:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Finding. The Applicant proposes to change the use of the property to office. While this is not the historic purpose of the structure, the changes required for this use are minimal and Staff finds this Standard has been met.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Finding. The renovations proposed retain the features and special relationships of the historic structure. While repairing the historic windows would have been preferred, as they are no longer on the site, the windows proposed will help retain the historic character of the structure. All other historic material is proposed to be retained except for the soffit material where there is damage and replacing the 2x4 columns with 4x4 columns. Town Staff finds this Standard has been met.

3. Each property shall 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 architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Finding: The proposed modifications do not create a false sense of historical development, and do not add conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings. Town Staff finds this Standard has been met.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Finding. Town Staff finds the work proposed to under this application does not destroy features which may have acquired historic significance in their own right and this Standard has been met.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

Finding. Town Staff finds that the changes proposed to the structure do not remove distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques and this Standard has been met.

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

Finding. The Applicant proposes repair soffits, replace windows which are no longer at the site, and leave most of the historic material in place. Town Staff finds this Standard to have been met.

7. *Deteriorated 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. No chemical or physical treatments which may cause damage to the structure have been proposed. This Standard has been met.

8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

Finding. No digging is proposed. Should any archeological resources be discovered during the project, Town Staff must be notified to determine if any mitigation measures are needed.

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. Town Staff has found that the proposed enclosure of the rear porch and new side porch is differentiated slightly from the old with the proposed material and is compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features and protects the historic integrity of the property and its environment and, as such, this Standard has been met.

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. Town Staff has found that the rear porch being enclosed and the porch addition to the primary structure have been designed in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic resource would be unimpaired, as such, this Standard has been met.

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. 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."

The Applicant has proposed minimal repairs to the main mass of the structure, leaving the brick, wood paneled gables, and much of the eaves intact. Repairing the soffit in kind, installing windows which match the historic pattern, and repairing the porch, the historic nature of the structure will be enhanced and allow for its reuse as a commercial site. It currently sits vacant. The renovation and remodel have been designed to be sympathetic to the architectural character structure, so the proposed changes will both protect the integrity of the existing historic structure and enhance the neighborhood by allowing it to be occupied.

- 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 construction proposed as part of this request will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in item 2 of this Section are met.

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 5.15.6.I. Windows and Doors. The Applicant has proposed the Andersen 400 Series Tilt-Wash Double Hung Windows with the horizontal lite pattern to match the historic windows which are no longer in the building. The product guide does not show the ability to configure the muntins in this manner, however, the Applicant has indicated they will be able

to special order. Should the window configuration in this product be unable to meet the configuration shown on the Architectural Drawings, the Applicant will need to bring alternate window information to Town Staff for review and approval prior to installation.

2. 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 Applicant proposes the use of plywood to repair areas of the soffit that are damaged. While plywood is not a permitted material, the soffit material on the existing is plywood and Staff recommends approval of a deviation from the permitted soffit materials.
4. 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 renovation to be consistent and harmonious with that of the surrounding neighborhood. The mass and scale of the structures are appropriate for their location and the architectural detailing will be sensitive to the neighboring properties.

5. Section 3.18.3.E. Preservation of the existing building's historic character and architecture;

Finding. This Standard has been met. See Secretary of Interior Standards above for additional information.

6. 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. The Applicant seeks approval for the renovation of a Contributing Resource. By renovating the structure to allow for its continued use, using designs sensitive to the character of the structure and district, the proposed plans are sympathetic in design to the neighboring historic and non-historic resources; therefore, the proposed construction will have no adverse effect on the public interest.

7. Section 3.18.3.G. For an application to demolish, either in whole or in part, any Contributing Structure, the Historic Preservation Commission shall consider: 1. The existing and historical ownership and use and reason for requesting demolition; and 2. Information that establishes clear and convincing evidence that: a. The demolition of the structure is necessary to alleviate a threat to public health or public safety; and b. No other reasonable alternatives to demolition exist; and c. 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;

Finding. The Applicant seeks to demolish the enclosed shed roof addition on the non-contributing structure but does not propose demolition of the Contributing Resource.

8. 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.

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 condition 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. Should the window configuration of the Andersen 400 series be unable to meet the lite pane configuration shown on the Architectural Drawings, the Applicant will need to bring alternate window information to Town Staff for review and approval prior to installation.
2. The HPC must determine the appropriateness of the use of plywood for the soffit repairs, which matches the existing soffit material of the Contributing Resource but is not permitted by UDO Section 5.15.6.P. of the UDO.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Location and Zoning Map
2. Application
3. Site Plan & Elevations
4. HPRC Report
5. Supplemental Pictures