

**THE CITY OF KEY WEST  
PLANNING BOARD  
Staff Report**



To: Chairman and Planning Board Members

Through: Katie P. Halloran, Planning Director

From: Daniel Sobczak, Planner I

Meeting Date: May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Application: Conditional Use- 624 White Street (RE# 00010130-000000) – A request for conditional approval to convert a single-family residence into a cultural and civic activities space without associated/accessory commercial sales on a parcel located within the Historic Medium Density Residential (HMDR) zoning district pursuant to Sections 122-62 and 122-598 of the Land Development Regulations of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Key West, Florida.

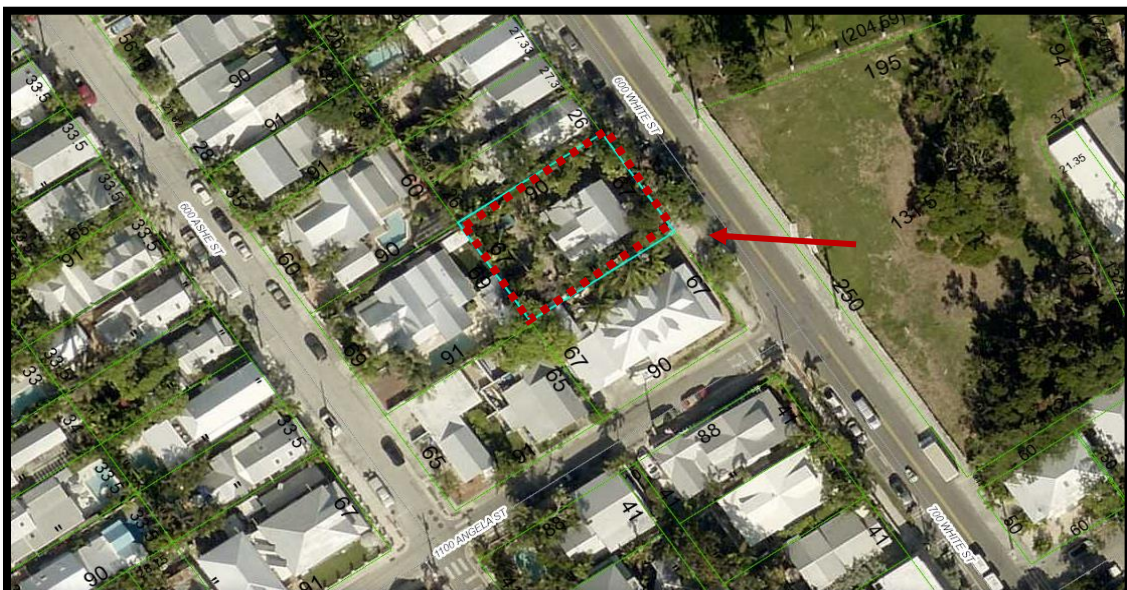
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Request: To allow a conditional use in the HMDR zoning district to convert a single-family residence to cultural and civic activities space to become the administrative headquarters of the Key West Literary Seminar and be used primarily as an administrative office.

Applicant: Owen Trepanier & Associates, Inc.

Property Owner: Key West Literary Seminar, Inc.

Location: 624 White Street (RE# 00010130-000000)



**Background:**

The Elizabeth Bishop house is located at 624 White Street. The single-family structure on the property dates to the late nineteenth century and the exterior is mostly architecturally true and intact. The interior of the structure has been updated with modern utilities but remains preserved except for an added bathroom on the first floor. The structure was acquired by the poet Elizabeth Bishop in 1938 and she lived there on and off for eight years until eventually selling the house in 1946. The single-family structure is architecturally known as an *eyebrow house*, which is a classical revival style that features side-oriented gable-roofed buildings. These gable roof extensions in the front creates a large awning over the top floor windows, which is how the style received the *eyebrow* moniker.

The structure at 624 White Street is a historically significant house and contributes to the Key West Historic District. The home has been used as a single-family structure for most of its existence until it was bought by the current owner in 2019. The house is a two-story frame structure with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. The rear addition of a screen porch is also historic and was built above the historic cistern for the house. The parcel is located in the Historic Medium Density Residential (HMDR) zoning district and is bordered by property in the Historic Special Medium Density Residential (HSMDR) zoning district to the north, HMDR to the east and west, and Historic Neighborhood Commercial (HNC-2) zoning to the south.

**624 White Street, 1938**

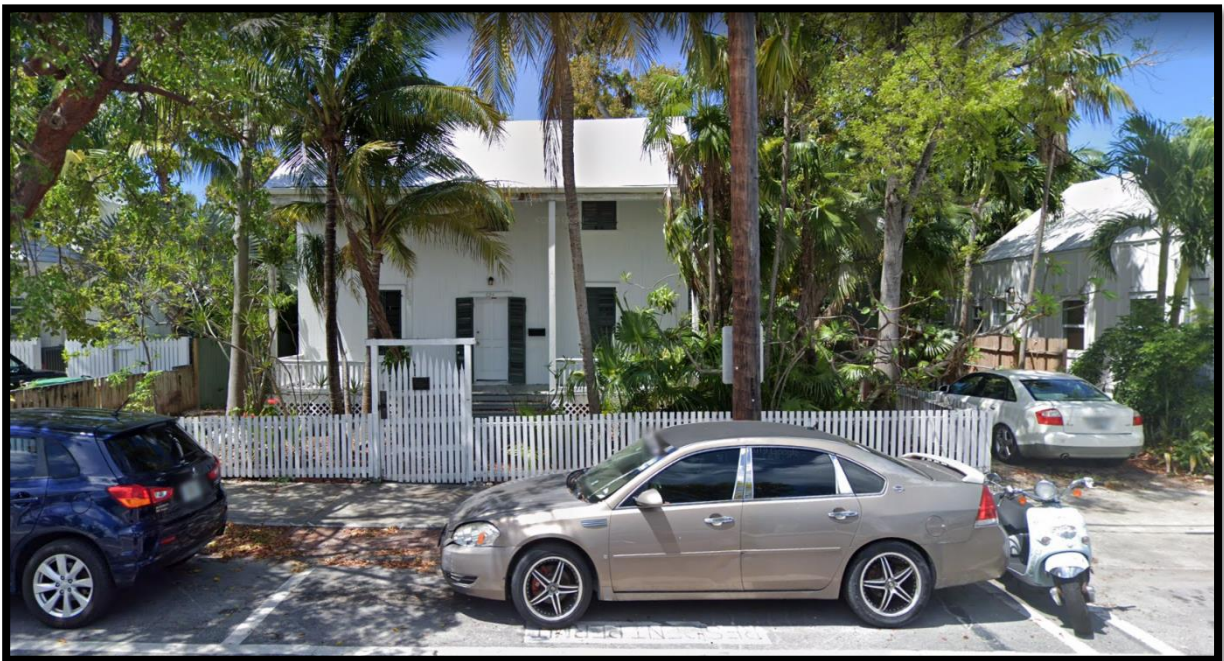




624 White Street, 2019



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**Staff Analysis - Evaluation:**

The subject parcel is located in the Historic Medium Density Residential District (HMDR), which allows for cultural and civic activities as a conditional use. Section 86-9 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Key West defines land use classifications and specifically, subsection d. states, "Cultural and civic activities means activities typically performed by public or private not-for-profit private entities for the promotion of a common cultural or civic objective such as historical, literary, scientific, musical, dramatic, artistic or similar objectives,". The intent of HMDR zoning district is to preserve the residential character and historic quality of the area. This district does not allow commercial offices or other commercial uses unless they are lawfully existing (lawful nonconforming uses). This Cultural and Civic activity space would not be able to be used as a commercial retail or commercial office space.

The purpose of conditional use review, pursuant to City Code Section 122-61, is to, ". . . ensure that a conditional use shall only be permitted on specific sites where the proposed use may be adequately accommodated without generating adverse impacts on properties and land uses within the immediate vicinity". City Code Chapter 122, Article III sets forth provisions and criteria for consideration of conditional uses on specific sites. Conditional uses shall be permitted only upon a finding that the proposed use satisfies this article. Granting or denying a proposed Conditional Use on a case-by-case basis gives the Planning Board the discretion to review the proposed conditional use based on the following criteria:

**Characteristics of use described:**

**(1) Scale and intensity**

- a. Floor Area Ratio:
  - i. Permitted: 1.0 (6,030 sqft)
  - ii. Proposed: 0.3 (1,832 sqft)
- b. Traffic Generation:
  - i. Applicant submitted that day-to-day trips of office staff consist of one pedestrian, one scooter, and one bicycle. The International Transportation Engineer (ITE) Manual, Tenth edition, provides detailed analysis of trip generation per land use type. The ITE defines a *small office* as a building that houses a single tenant, is less than 5,000 sqft in size, and where affairs of a business, commercial or industrial organization, or a professional person or firm are conducted. The average number of employees in the *small office* studies provided by the ITE are four. The average trip generated per employee is 7.98 trips per day, with a range of 2.00-16.00 trips generated per weekday. The total average trips generated per day for three employees at a small office is 24 trips. This total range of trips generated per day for three employees at a small office is at least 6 trips and at most 48 trips. The total number of trips would increase when volunteers are needed or when there are public events at the site. Day to day public visitor trips should also be considered. It is unclear which mode of transportation day to day public visitors would use.
- c. Square feet of enclosed building for each specific use:
  - i. Cultural and Civic Activities use – 1,558 sqft
- d. Proposed Employment:
  - i. One full time employee and two part time employees.
- e. Proposed number and type of service vehicles:
  - i. No service vehicles proposed
- f. Off-street parking needs:

- i. Minimum parking requirement – Three (3) parking spaces required
- ii. Parking variance requested to substitute 12 bicycle parking spaces for three (3) off-street parking spaces.

**(2) On- or off-site improvement needs generated by the proposed conditional use**

- a. Utilities
  - i. If the kitchen will be used in any commercial way or if the kitchen will produce any grease vapors, steam, fumes, etc., the property owner shall be required to install a commercial grade local exhaust ventilation system as defined in the Florida Building Code.
  - ii. Utility accounts to change from residential to commercial.
  - iii. The installation of emergency exit signs
- b. Public facilities:
  - i. No improvements specified.
- c. Roadway or signalization improvements:
  - i. No improvements specified.
- d. Accessory structures or facilities
  - i. No improvements or structures proposed
- e. Other unique facilities/structures proposed as part of site improvements
  - i. ADA access from front of property to rear with ADA elevator

**(3) On-site amenities proposed to enhance site and planned improvements, including mitigative techniques such as:**

- a. Open Space
  - i. None proposed.
- b. Setbacks from adjacent properties
  - i. None proposed.
- c. Screens and buffers
  - i. None proposed.
- d. Landscaped berms
  - i. None proposed.
- e. Mitigative techniques for abating smoke, odor, noise, and other noxious impacts
  - i. None proposed.

**Criteria for conditional use review and approval**

**(1) Land Use Compatibility:**

- a. The Key West Literary Seminar will preserve the historic structure as it is, leaving the 1890s house in its current state. The applicant states that the house will be used primarily for administrative purposes, for the planning and organization of its programs which will continue to be held at venues around the city. Occasionally, some events will be held in the 14-person main assembly hall in the historic home. The headquarters will be staffed by one (1) full-time employee and two (2) part-time employees, in addition to occasional volunteers. The Elizabeth Bishop house and garden will be open to the public during all normal business hours.

**(2) Sufficient site size, adequate site specifications, and infrastructures to accommodate the proposed use**

- a. The size and shape of the site will remain the same as it is in its current state. The applicant shall install a new ADA accessible walkway to wrap around the house in order to

access an ADA lift in the rear of the building. There will be no accessible parking or loading area available on the property for persons with disabilities. The applicant has applied for a variance to substitute the three (3) parking spaces required with twelve (12) bicycle parking spots. White Street is a busy street with a limited number of parking spaces that are for both residents and nonresidents, however, the applicant suggests that most visitors will travel to the site by bicycle and utilize the proposed on-site bicycle parking.

**(3) Proper use of mitigative techniques**

- a. No mitigative techniques have been proposed by the applicant.

**(4) Hazardous waste**

- a. The applicant has stated that no hazardous waste will be produced on the property.

**(5) Compliance with applicable laws and ordinances**

- a. The applicant has not complied with minimum parking standards but has applied for a variance from these standards.

**(6) Additional criteria applicable to specific land uses**

- a. Applicant has stated that the main use of the property will be an administrative office and the headquarters of the Key West Literary Seminar. The applicant has mentioned the possibility of holding some events at the house as well as restoring the garden as it was when Ms. Bishop lived there. Civic and cultural activities must be the primary use of the property as office uses are prohibited in the HMDR zoning district.

**Recommendation:**

A property used for civic and cultural activities shall perform activities that promote a common cultural or civic objective. In the case of 624 White Street, this objective is both literary and historic. The applicant has stated that some events will be held at the structure as well as the front lawn and garden area being open to the public for lounging and reading. It is anticipated that additional public events will be held at the property to promote cultural objectives associated with literacy and Ms. Bishop. Additionally, the historic home and garden will be open to the public during all normal business hours.

Based on a review of the application according to the stringent evaluation criteria established by the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Regulations, the Planning Department recommends the request for a conditional use be **APPROVED** with the following conditions:

1. A parking variance is approved for the property at 624 White Street before a conditional use be approved.
2. The Elizabeth Bishop house shall remain open to the public for cultural and civic educational purposes during all normal business hours
3. The garden shall remain open to the public during all normal business hours
4. If amplified noise is desired for a special event, the applicant must obtain a Special Event Permit from the City of Key West.