

29January, 2019

Key West City Commission

REF: Mall on Duval Pilot Program.

As I will not be able to attend the city commission meeting on 5Feb, I am submitting this letter.

I opened Tucker's Provisions located at 611 Duval St. in 2013. Previously I owned and operated the Life is good store at 532 Duval St for 10 years. And before that I founded Cole's Peace Artisan Breads. In total I have 20+ years of retail experience in Key West. During this time I have watched small towns all across the US of A rethink and explore ways to redevelop historical shopping districts. A couple of great examples are Greenville, SC and Chattanooga, TN. One of the common threads of this trend is to create reasons for local families to rediscover and visit these districts that have lost their authentic draw.

I believe Duval St in spite of the volume of tourism has lost its once authentic draw. Without authenticity (a place were local families regularly visit) the quality of the experience eventually diminishes and becomes stagnant. I believe Duval St has reached this stagnant state and has begun to lose its once unique draw to quality tourism.

The Mall on Duval Pilot Program is one very small but essential first step in the city committing itself to the significant redevelopment and rebranding of Duval St. A healthy Duval St. creates better tourism which creates better businesses which supports better jobs which helps bridge the affordable housing gap which in turn further supports the economy of the island. I believe many of Key West's local issues are directly related the deterioration of Duval St a potentially huge asset that needs to be more fully realized.

I fully support the Mall on Duval Pilot Program.

Kurt Matarazzo