



THE CITY OF KEY WEST
PLANNING BOARD
Staff Report

To: Chair and Planning Board Members

Through: Taylor Brown, Planning Director

From: Sheetal Almas, Planner I

Meeting Date: May 21, 2026

Agenda Item: **Conditional Use – 604 Whitehead Street (RE# 00012950-000000) – A request for a Conditional Use to allow the operation of a museum (cultural and civic activity) at a property located in the Historic Residential Office (HRO) zoning district, pursuant to Sections 122-926 and 122-62 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Key West, Florida.**

Request: The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of a museum within an existing structure located at 604 Whitehead Street. The request represents a change of use from a law office to a museum within the Historic Residential/Office zoning district, with no expansion of floor area. The proposal includes accessory retail in the form of a small gift shop and event programming associated with museum use.

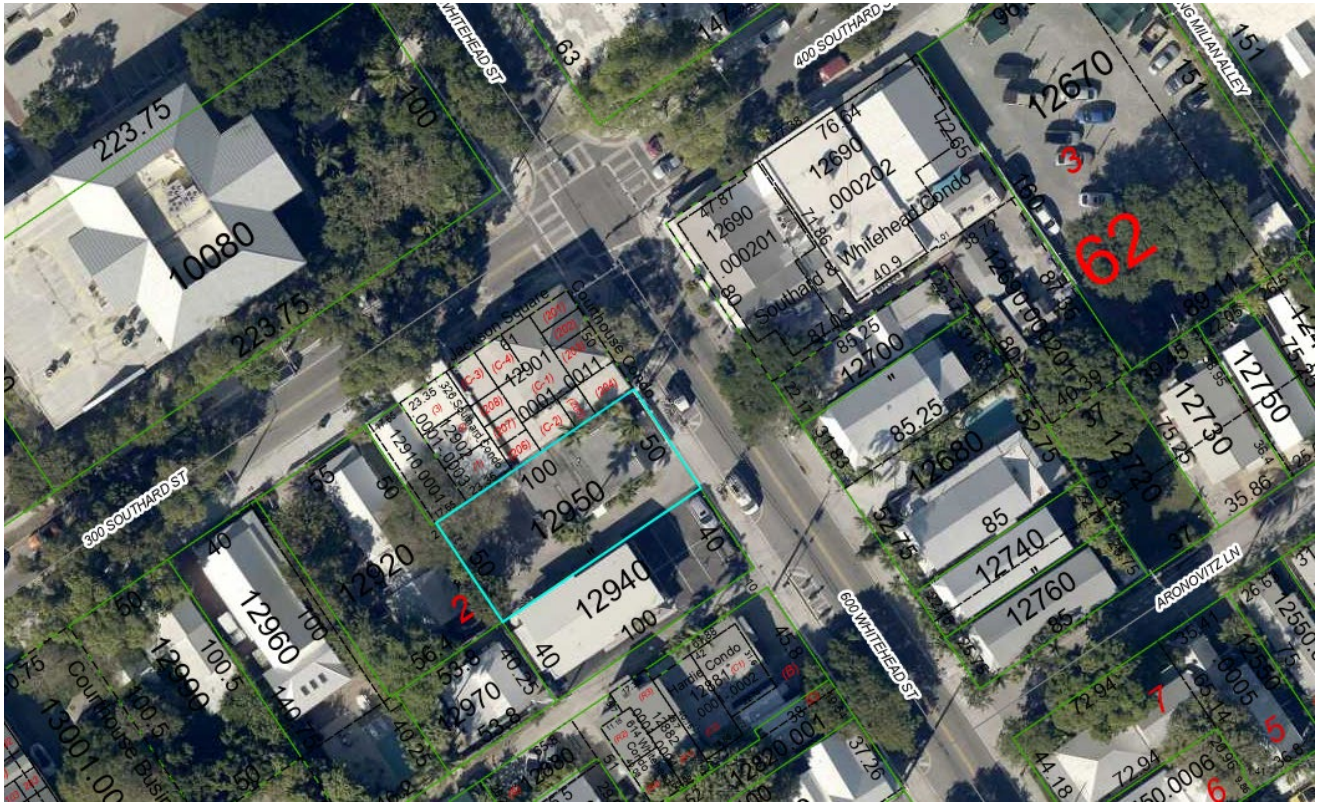
Owner: Cara Higgins PA

Applicant: Richard McChesney/ Spottswood Law Firm

Location: 604 Whitehead Street (RE# 00012950-000000)

Zoning: Historic Residential/ Office (HRO)

SITE MAP



BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located at 604 Whitehead Street within the Historic Residential/Office zoning district. The principal use of the site is an existing law office within a structure totaling approximately 1,484 square feet. The property is located within the historic commercial pedestrian-oriented area.

The property fronts Whitehead Street at the intersection of Whitehead Street and Southard Street and is surrounded by a mix of offices, restaurants, lodging, and personal service uses along the Whitehead Street corridor. Restaurants and bar uses are located to the northeast, office uses are located to the south, a bed and breakfast/inn, is located to the east, a deli and personal service uses are located to the northwest and a residential property on the west.

Planning records do not indicate any prior Conditional Use approvals associated with the subject property. Cultural and civic activities are classified as conditional use within the HRO zoning district pursuant to Section 122-926 of the Land Development Regulations. The proposed request is subject to review under these provisions, as well as the Conditional Use criteria set forth in Section 122-62.



REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of a museum within an existing structure located at 604 Whitehead Street. The request represents a change of use from an existing law office to a museum within the Historic Residential/Office zoning district, with no expansion of floor area. The proposed museum will focus on the life and work of Tennessee Williams.

The museum will operate daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with last admission at 4:30 p.m. The use is anticipated to be staffed by 1 employee, with up to 2 employees on tour days. Guided tours are proposed to take place twice per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Visitor volume is anticipated to be approximately 10 to 15 people per day, with increased attendance of approximately 25 to 30 people on tour days.

The proposal includes accessory retail in the form of a small gift shop located within the entrance lobby of the building, offering items related to Tennessee Williams, including books, t-shirts, hats, calendars, and similar materials associated with the museum exhibits. The space is also proposed to be available for event rentals, including literary speaking events, seminars, and programming



associated with the Tennessee Williams theme and local arts and cultural organizations. Events are proposed to occur outside of regular business hours, typically between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

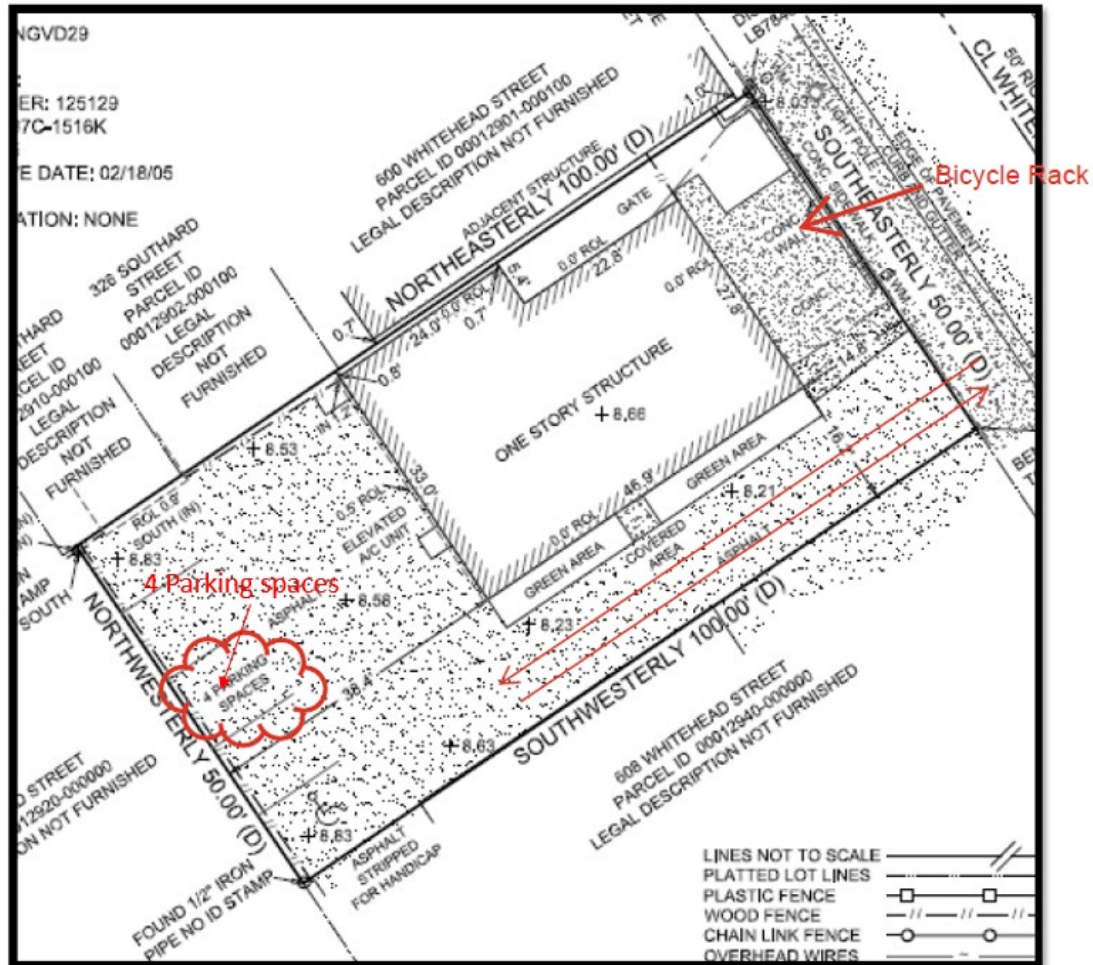
The proposed use would typically require approximately 10 off-street parking spaces based on the gross-floor area of the structure. The site currently contains 4 existing parking spaces, consisting of 1 accessible space and 3 standard spaces. 1 bicycle rack is proposed on site. Pursuant to Section 108-573(c), a parking variance is not applicable for the proposed change of use, provided that no additional floor area is created, and all lawful existing parking spaces are maintained.

Bicycle parking required for proposed use pursuant to Sec. 108-572	1 (10 % of the motor vehicle parking)
Bicycle parking proposed	1 bicycle rack
Total parking required for proposed use pursuant to Sec. 108-572	10
Total parking proposed	4 (3 standard + 1 accessible parking space)
Parking variance	Not applicable pursuant to section sec 108-573(c) provided that no additional floor area is created.

SITE PLAN



Proposed Site Plan – 604 Whitehead Street



SURROUNDING ZONING AND USES:

North: Historic Residential/Office (HRO), Restaurant and Bar

South: Historic Residential/Office (HRO), Office Building

East: Historic Residential/Office (HRO), Lodging

West: Historic Residential/Office (HRO), Residential

PROCESS:

Development Review Committee: April 23rd, 2026

Planning Board: May 21st, 2026

Local Appeal Period: 10 days



DEO Review:

Up to 45 days

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE:

This application was reviewed by the Development Review Committee (DRC) on April 23, 2026. Committee members' comments, questions, and applicant responses are summarized below.

Building Department

- Chief Building Official noted that an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible bathroom is required.

STAFF ANALYSIS- CONDITIONAL USE CRITERIA

Pursuant to Sections 122-61 and 122-62 of the Land Development Regulations, conditional uses shall only be permitted on specific sites where the proposed use may be adequately accommodated without generating adverse impacts on surrounding properties and land uses. Section 122-62(a) requires that the Planning Board make a finding that the proposed use complies with the applicable criteria. Section 122-62(b) outlines the required characteristics of the proposed use to be described in the application, and Section 122-62(c) establishes the specific criteria for conditional use review and approval.

Section 122-62(b): Characteristics of Use Described:

The following characteristics of proposed conditional use shall be clearly described as part of the conditional use application:

Scale and Intensity of the proposed conditional use as measured by the following:

- a) **Floor area ratio:** N/A - No change.
- b) **Traffic Generation:** A traffic trip generation estimate based on the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual was submitted with the application. The analysis indicates that, for approximately 1,400 square feet of use, the proposed use is expected to generate approximately 15 to 16 daily trips, with an estimated 2.13 trips during the AM peak hour and 2.02 trips during the PM peak hour. Based on the submitted traffic generation information, staff finds that the proposed Conditional Use meets the review considerations of Sections 122-62 with respect to traffic impacts.
- c) **Square feet of enclosed building for each specific use:** No additional enclosed building area is proposed.



- d) **Proposed employment:** 1 full-time and 2 employees on four days.
- e) **Proposed number and type of service vehicles:** Not applicable.
- f) **Off-street parking needs:** Pursuant to Section 108-572, the proposed use would typically require approximately 10 off-street parking spaces based on the gross floor area. The site currently contains 4 existing parking spaces. Pursuant to Section 108-573(c), a parking variance is not applicable for the proposed change of use, provided that no additional floor area is created, and all lawful existing parking spaces are maintained.

On- or off-site improvement needs generated by the proposed conditional use:

- a) **Utilities:** No needs are identified by the application.
- b) **Public facilities:** No needs are identified by the application.
- c) **Roadway or signalization improvements:** No roadway or signalization improvements are proposed. The submitted traffic statement indicates no adverse impact to surrounding roadways.
- d) **Accessory structures or facilities:** No needs are identified by the applicant and no new accessory structures are proposed.
- e) **Other unique structures or facilities:** No needs are identified by the applicant.

Section 122-62(c): Criteria for conditional use review and approval.

Land Use Compatibility: The applicant shall demonstrate that the conditional use, including its proposed scale and intensity, traffic-generating characteristics, and off-site impacts are compatible and harmonious with adjacent land use and will not adversely impact land use activities in the immediate vicinity.

The proposed museum, a cultural and civic use permitted within the Historic Residential/Office zoning district, constitutes a change of use within an existing structure with no expansion of floor area. Based on its limited scale of operations, low traffic generation (15–16 daily trips), and parking conditions permitted pursuant to Sections 108-572 and 108-573(c), the use is consistent with the surrounding mixed-use corridor.

Accessory components, including a small gift shop and limited evening events, are subordinate to the principal use. Pursuant to Section 122-926, development intensity within the HRO district is limited to activities generating no more than 50 trips per 1,000 square feet of gross leasable floor area per day. The proposed use generates fewer than 50 trips and therefore complies with this standard.

Based on the information provided, staff finds that the proposed Conditional Use is compatible with adjacent land uses and will not adversely impact the immediate vicinity.



Sufficient site size, adequate site specifications, and infrastructure to accommodate the proposed use: The site shall be of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed scale and intensity of the use, including urban design amenities such as screening, buffers, landscaping, open space, off-street parking, efficient internal traffic circulation, infrastructure

The proposed use will be accommodated within an existing 1,484 square-foot structure on a developed site with access from Whitehead Street. No expansion of floor area or changes to the site layout are proposed. Existing parking (4 spaces) will be maintained, including 1 proposed bicycle rack, in accordance with Sections 108-572 and 108-573(c).

Based on the existing site configuration and the absence of additional development, Staff finds that the property is adequate to support the Conditional Use without the need for additional infrastructure or site improvements.

Proper Use of Mitigative Techniques: The applicant shall demonstrate that the conditional use and site plan have been designed to incorporate mitigative techniques needed to prevent adverse impacts to adjacent land uses, and to ensure that land use activities in the immediate vicinity, including community infrastructure, are not burdened with adverse impacts detrimental to the general public health, safety and welfare.

The proposed use will operate entirely within an existing structure and does not include any site modifications. Hours of operation are limited to 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with occasional event activities between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM. The use does not involve equipment or materials that would generate excessive noise, odors, or hazardous conditions affecting public health, safety, or welfare.

Based on these operational characteristics, and the information provided, the proposed Conditional Use is not anticipated to create adverse impacts on adjacent land uses or the surrounding area.

Public Comment

Staff has received no public comments as of May 6th, 2026.

Planning Analysis

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow a museum (cultural and civic activity) within the Historic Residential/Office zoning district. The request represents a change of use within an existing 1,484 square-foot structure, with no expansion of floor area.

Pursuant to Section 122-926, the Historic Residential/Office zoning district accommodates cultural and civic activities while limiting overall intensity. The proposed use includes daily operations from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with limited staffing and anticipated visitor volumes of approximately 10 to 15 individuals per day, increasing to approximately 20 to 25 individuals on designated tour days. Visitor activity may increase during periods of higher tourist presence, including days when cruise ships are in port.



Traffic generation associated with the use is estimated at approximately 15 to 16 daily trips, with low peak-hour volumes. Pursuant to Section 108-572, the use would typically require 10 off-street parking spaces; however, the site currently provides 4 existing spaces, including one accessible space. In accordance with Section 108-573(c), additional parking is not required for a change of use where no additional floor area is proposed and existing parking is maintained. 1 bicycle rack is also provided on site. The allowance under Sec. 108-573(c) applies provided there is no increase in floor area or intensity beyond what is described in the application.

The proposal includes accessory retail and event programming. Based on the information provided, these components are intended to function in conjunction with the primary museum use. However, Section 86-9 of the Land Development Regulations defines accessory uses to remain subordinate to the principal use and not operate as independent commercial activities. Conditions are necessary to ensure that the scope of the gift shop and event activities remain consistent with this definition.

Based on the submitted materials and review of the Conditional Use criteria set forth in Sections 122-61 and 122-62, the proposed use appears capable of being accommodated on the subject property. The Planning Board must determine whether the application, including any conditions of approval, satisfies the required criteria and ensures that the proposed use will not result in adverse impacts on surrounding properties or public interest.

Based on the foregoing, staff finds that the proposed Conditional Use meets the applicable criteria of Section 122-62 of the Land Development Regulations.

Conditional Use Recommendation:

Section 122-62 requires that a conditional use approval shall be based on a finding that the use complies with the criteria specified in Section 122-62 and in referenced sections of the Land Development Regulations in order to ensure compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations.

If the Planning Board, based on the criteria of Section 122-62, recommends **APPROVAL** of the conditional use for 604 Whitehead Street, staff recommends the following conditions below.

1. Conditional Use approval is limited to a museum (cultural and civic activity) within the existing structure. Any expansion or change in use shall require further review and approval.
2. Event activities shall remain consistent with the operational characteristics described in the application and approved by the Planning Board.
3. The gift shop shall remain an accessory use to museum and shall be limited to the sale of items directly related to the museum and the life and work of Tennessee Williams. The gift shop shall not operate as a standalone retail establishment.
4. The gift shop shall be located within the building and shall not have a separate entrance or operate independently from the museum use.



5. Event space rental shall remain incidental to the primary museum use and shall not function as an independent venue or commercial event space.
6. Existing off-street parking spaces shall be maintained, including 3 standard and 1 accessible parking space. No reduction on the existing parking spaces is permitted.
7. 1 bicycle rack shall be provided and maintained on site.
8. This approval is based on the existing 1,484 square-foot structure. Any increase in floor area shall require additional review and may result in additional parking requirements pursuant to Section 108-572.
9. The use shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations, including but not limited to building, fire, and life safety codes.