

# **Public Comments**

December 14, 2015

Enid Torregrosa , Historic Preservation Planner  
3140 Flagler Avenue  
Key West, FL 33040

Via Email: [etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov](mailto:etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov)

Re: 822 Sawyers Lane demolition/development and 818 Sawyers Lane structure movement/development

Dear Ms. Torregrosa:

My wife and I are the owners and residents of #4 Gecko Lane (formerly 0 Gecko Lane). We bought our home at 4 Gecko in 2002 and subsequently acquired the lot immediately to the west in 2012 (that lot is where Roberts Lane terminates, and it is used by us for gardens and as our only off-street parking). As a result, we own all of the property located immediately adjacent, to the south, of the subject 822 and 818 Sawyers Lane properties).

We oppose the proposed plans for 818/822 Sawyers Lane for two primary reasons: first, such an expansion would destroy the historical, architectural and aesthetic integrity of two historic lanes, Sawyers and Roberts; and, second, the proposed plans call for an increase in the elevation of the ground level which will exacerbate an already significant flooding problem that we, and our neighbors at the ends of Gecko and Carabello lanes, experience.

The 818/822 section of Sawyers Lane with its Eyebrow house and former ship building cottage form a uniform and historic whole that typifies old Key West, the way it was back when the area was largely residences for commercial fishermen. HARC Guidelines were designed specifically to prevent alterations and additions which would damage the design of the historic properties and streetscapes caused by out-of-scale changes – thus, fundamentally altering the symmetry and beauty of the historic district. (*See, e.g.*, HARC Guidelines, at page 36). To accomplish this goal, the Guidelines set forth certain rules, among them:

- i) A structure *shall not be altered* and/or expanded in such a manner that its essential character-defining features are disguised or concealed;
- (iii) Addition designs should be *compatible with the characteristics* of the original structure, neighboring buildings and streetscapes;
- (iv) Additions should not *alter the balance and symmetry of an historic structure*;
- (vi) Additions should be constructed with a scale, height and mass that is appropriate to the original building and its neighbors;
- (vii) No existing structure shall be enlarged so that its proportions are out of scale with its surroundings. [All emphases as in HARC Guidelines, p.37].

We firmly believe that the proposed demolition and additions to 822 AND, most especially, the turning and subsequent additions to the Eyebrow house at 818 fail each of the above criteria. To (1) demolish, and then replace the 822 cottage with a large non-historical structure approximately four times its size; and (2) then pivot 818, the Eyebrow, to the west and roughly double its size, fundamentally changes the balance and symmetry of the historic lanes. While we recognize that the properties are in need of major rehabilitation, the proposed changes are just not consistent with the character of Sawyers Lane and are clearly inconsistent with the above cited Guidelines. Most


significant is the proposed rotation/move of the historic 818 Eyebrow house. We walk up and down Sawyers and Roberts lanes multiple times each day, coming and going from the Historic Seaport. Turning that structure 90° will remove a historic façade seen from not only Roberts Lane and Sawyers Lane, but also from Caroline St. The proposed plans call for the Eyebrow view from the north/west to be replaced with a side view of a new modern structure, with the front of the Eyebrow home now facing west directly at the rear wall of 814 Sawyers Lane and the rear fence of 313 William. This will FUNDAMENTALLY change the character and visual integrity of the lanes.

Turning to our second concern: the proposed plans show that the ground elevation for all structures would be raised to the level of the fill around the 818 Eyebrow house. Major flooding issues already affect the entire center of the Eaton/Caroline-William/Margaret block. Without exaggeration, whenever there is any significant rain, water flows north from Eaton (down Gecko and Carabello lanes) and south from Caroline (down Roberts and Sawyer lanes, as well as across the Key West Marine Hardware parking lot), and fills the center of the block, including our back lot, even flooding under our main structure – the historic conch cottage located at the western end of our original Gecko lane property.

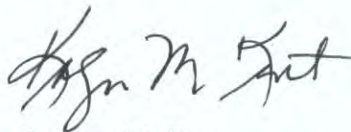
The root cause of the flooding is likely the result of a series of alterations to the ground elevations of (1) 313 William (raising the elevation and then installing a large impermeable Belgian block patio and walkways), (2) of 818 and 822 Sawyer (depositing fill dirt, especially around 818, in order to install a hot tub/dip pool, and (3) of raising the ground elevation of 814 Sawyer (at an elevation higher than both Sawyer and Roberts Lane) when that property was constructed. If the current proposed plans, which call for raising the grade under ALL proposed structures (see side and front proposed elevations of plans), were to be permitted, this will further impede the runoff flow (especially during major rains and hurricanes).

We fully recognize that the 818/822 Sawyer lane properties need to be rehabilitated/improved. And, we welcome improvements to the properties. However, as residents, for over a decade, and property owners of one of the original conch cottages (we believe, based on historic records at the Library, the house was constructed around 1865-1870) we also respect the unique character of the Historic District and the efforts of HARC to protect that character. Therefore, we ask that HARC recognize that the current proposed plans fail to meet HARC Guidelines, especially those noted above, and have the potential to negatively impact our historic neighborhood. It would be shortsighted, given HARC's mission to protect the integrity of the historic buildings and streetscapes of Key West, as well as help assure that the historic character of the area is preserved, to grant this application.

Thank you for your consideration.



Christopher D. Kent



Kathryn M. Kent

4 Gecko Lane

December 13, 2015

Enid Torregrosa  
Historic Preservation Planner  
3140 Flagler Avenue  
Key West, FL 33040

**Via Email to [etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov](mailto:etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov)**

Re: 822 Sawyers Lane demolition/development and 818 Sawyers Lane structure movement/development

Dear Ms. Torregrosa:

My wife and I are the owners and residents of 308 Margaret Street, unit number 2. We oppose the proposed plans for 818/822 Sawyers Lane because we feel such an expansion would destroy the historical, architectural and aesthetic integrity of a beautiful and historic lane. The 818/822 section of Sawyers Lane with its eyebrow house and former ship building cottage form a uniform and historic whole that typifies old Key West, the way it was back when the area was largely used by fisherman.

The HARC Guidelines were drawn to prevent alterations and additions which can permanently damage the design of historic buildings and streetscapes by introducing out of scale changes -- altering the symmetry and beauty of historic districts. HARC Guidelines, page 36. To accomplish this goal, HARC sets forth certain rules, among them:

i) A structure *shall not be altered* and/or expanded in such a manner that its essential character-defining features are disguised or concealed;

(iii) Addition designs should be *compatible with the characteristics* of the original structure, neighboring buildings and streetscapes;

(iv) Additions should not *alter the balance and symmetry of an historic structure*;

(vi) Additions should be constructed with a scale, height and mass that is appropriate to the original building and its neighbors;

(vii) No existing structure shall be enlarged so that its proportions are out of scale with its surroundings. [All emphases as in HARC Guidelines, p.37].

We believe that the proposed demolition and additions to 822 and especially the turning and subsequent additions to the eyebrow house at 818 fail all of the above criteria. To demolish, then replace the 822 cottage with a large non-historical structure four times its size; and then pivot 818, the eyebrow; and then make additions to double its size; would totally change the balance and symmetry of the historic lane.

However, most concerning with the owner's plans, is the rotation/move of the historic 818 eyebrow house. Turning this structure 90° will remove a historic façade seen from not only Roberts and Sawyers Lane, but also from Caroline St. This eyebrow elevation will then be replaced with a side view of a new modern structure and the front of the eyebrow home would now face directly in to the rear wall of 814 Sawyers Lane).

Furthermore, the owner's plans show that the ground elevation for all structures would be raised to the level of the fill around the 818 eyebrow house; especially the east side of 818 (of which the fill may have been illegally dumped by a previous owner when an in-ground hot tub was installed without a permit or approval).

If the current owners are allowed to raise the grade under ALL proposed structures as indicated in their plans (see side and front proposed elevations); this will significantly impede the runoff flow during flooding especially during hurricanes. This, coupled the increased footprint of all structures, including two large pools and a hot tub will surely affect the drainage and flooding capacity of the entire block. Note: the land around the current 822 house (targeted for demolition) does not have additional fill, but the proposed replacement structure would).

Like many people who've purchased homes here, we came (in 2002) because Key West had so uniquely kept its heritage, largely through the efforts of HARC. When our home was redeveloped in 2001, HARC even required that the developer keep the original roof joists -- hence our roof is supported by new joists placed right next to the "old" ones, which are still in place. Therefore, we ask that HARC apply same level of "heritage" protection when evaluating these plans especially since these current plans have the potential to impact our historical neighborhood in such a negative way.

Furthermore, we appreciate that the owner of 818 and 822 Sawyer Lanes wants a Key West home to retire to and have more space for his family. However, when they sell their property (as everyone eventually does), the historic vista will have been irrevocably changed forever to accommodate a relatively temporary need for space. It would be shortsighted, given HARC's mission to protect the historic buildings and streetscapes of Key West, to grant this application.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

/S/ John F. Alden III

John F. Alden, III

cc: Paulette Alden

## Jo Bennett

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**From:** Kelly Perkins  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2015 3:01 PM  
**To:** Jo Bennett  
**Subject:** FW: 2nd copy of Corrected letter regarding 818 & 822 Sawyer's Lane

Hi Jo,

Can you also upload this letter to the public comments section?

Thank you,  
Kelly

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**From:** Zan Mixer [mailto:zanmix@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 12, 2015 11:58 AM  
**To:** Enid Torregrosa <etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>  
**Subject:** 2nd copy of Corrected letter regarding 818 & 822 Sawyer's Lane

**From:** Zan Mixer <[zanmix@gmail.com](mailto:zanmix@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Corrected letter regarding 818 & 822 Sawyer's Lane  
**Date:** November 12, 2015 10:46:56 AM CST  
**To:** Enid Torregrosa <[etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov](mailto:etorregrosa@cityofkeywest-fl.gov)>

Dear Ms. Torregrosa and the HARC Committee,

I regret I cannot attend the October 27 HARC meeting. I feel strongly about participating in the conversation, however, because all the houses around me have absentee owners or are vacation rentals and I have had little result in rallying opinions, whatever they may be.

You may remember my notes presented to the Development Review Committee. I outlined some of the ongoing problems of this tiny lane in the hopes of solving some of them now that development process has begun. I believe several conversations have taken place but I only have first hand knowledge of information from Patrick Wright. I did meet Rick Milelli of Meridian Engineering and we had a lengthy conversation but I have no knowledge of development decision that have been made. I tried to contact Mr. Milelli with some updated neighborhood information but my calls have not been returned.

My telephone conversation with you regarding this matter was brief and you were unwilling to discuss the case at the time I called. Please be clear, my goal is to support the total renovation of the historic house at 818 Sawyer's Lane and I trust you will be in agreement that it is an opportunity to restore one of the few eyebrow houses we have. The recent owners made considerable structural

improvements but were unable to completely refurbish the property.

The questions I have remaining are:

1. Why must the house, historic and unique to Key West, be uprooted and turned? Is that historic preservation?
2. How can this tiny dirt lane support the additional traffic and parking problems that will come with squeezing two houses together?
3. How can I protect my fence and property from damage when cars, trucks, vans etc. will be backing into it, turning into it and scraping along side of it when even more vehicles will be coming in and backing out of this constricted area?

Just a few weeks ago while I was speaking with Officer Janeth Del Cid (KWPD) about a vandalism problem that has come up, a painter's van nearly struck us as he veered into my fence and hit it while trying to miss the utility pole that was close to taking out his door's rear view mirror on the other side of Robert's Lane. The construction traffic here is going to be heavy for quite some time. Trucks will be parking in the lanes from all sides. How do you tear down one house, rotate the other and remove tons of concrete that was poured under the historic house when the entry to the lane is less than ten feet wide? And then there is the reconstruction and new build.

4. Has the City Fire Department had the chance to look at this proposal?

With all of the unknowns that we are dealing with leading up to the start of this project I have one sweet story to share with you. A tiny, grey haired lady was standing in the lane at the corner in mid July pointing around the neighborhood and talking to her daughter about her childhood years on Sawyer's Lane. Her name is Rose Marie Bradley Brandon. She introduced her daughter, Linda, and proudly explained that her own mother was a Sawyer. She lives in Santa Fe, Texas, now and happily told me all about the eyebrow house number 818. The house was built with wooden pegs in the shipwright's manner when there was a lot of boat building all around the neighborhood. It was the time when all the small paths wound wind through old town and she remembered so fondly running out the door to dash over to her grandparent's house that faced William Street. She and her siblings never had to worry about the cars because the paths were too small for traffic. I asked her how she would feel about the house being turned; she said she would be very sad to think it would change that way. The history to her was so much more valuable than the thought of changing things for the sake of "development". I must say, I agree with her.

The 818 Sawyer's Lane house could be so beautiful all renovated, quietly sitting with some bit of space around it, cars parked off the lane around back and proudly standing under the two huge mahogany trees that have been there, too, for a very long time.

Thank you for reading my letter. I wish I could be at the meeting to hear what you and the board have to say.

Sincerely,

Zan Mixer  
810 & 814 Sawyer's Lane