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From: Marcela Video <marcelavideokw@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 4, 2025 1:34 PM
To: Keri O'Brien; Mayor E-Mail; District I; District II; District III; District IV; District V; District VI; City Clerk External E-Mail; asheckler@aol.com; Hugh J. Morgan; Hughkw123@gmail.com; henry@olyenger.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Southernmost Point Plaza / Agenda Item #27 and #28 / 8.6.25

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Dear Madam Mayor and City Commissioners,

#27 and #28 is in regards to the Southernmost Point "Plaza". It is on the agenda and being described on there as a "Public Facilities" project. The TDC offered \$1M upon completion. The City is asking for an extension to complete this project which is call called: Phase 2 Roadway - (aka - Removing of Sidewalk Curbs and Narrowing the Street Project). The Engineering Report of 6.30.25 states that the design has been finalized which was several days after my parents' neighbor and I met with the Engineer and City Manager and Assistant City Manager about this project, expressing our concerns. **That is when I discovered that an important question needed to be asked: what are other ways to drain the water besides making the street and sidewalk one level? The engineer's answer: we don't know.** We have to ask the outside consultant that question.

I was told to go through the Commissioner for any further questions and a few days ago, Commissioner Castillo has directed the City Manager's office to get that question answered.

I want the TDC to be aware of what this project really is. We are told drainage, but it's clear it is not about drainage.

I can send you photos of South St after a rain, the water collects on the sides of the street. Whitehead St is more of an issue. So there is no justification for the removal of the sidewalk curbs on South St.

And in fact, other sidewalks in town don't get removed because of drainage issues. If that was the case, we'd have virtually no sidewalks in Key West.

Another clue that this is not about drainage is the title of the project "Plaza" - similar to Italy's Piazzas (Italian for public square).

You can change the title, but at this point, the cat is out of the bag. This project is for the tourists, not the residents, but the ironic part is the repeat visitors who love Key West, do not want it to look more like Disney World.

Per the City's Comprehensive Plan: (provisions applicable to preservation of our Historic Areas)

- ***Policy 1A-4.1.2: - Public Improvement Projects Must Address Preservation Issues.***

The City shall ensure that all public improvements projects and other municipal actions address the preservation of historic resources.

The City shall coordinate with HARC, the Historic Preservation Planner, and the Historic Florida Keys Foundation Commission in identifying, documenting, and preserving historical, archaeological, and architectural resources. Reference Policy 5-1.9.1 of the Coastal Management Element.

- **The consequences of this "drainage solution" is a huge congestion problem on South St,** where we need the road the width it is to accommodate the 18 wheelers stop on the road to make deliveries to nearby food trucks/restaurants. The sidewalks are wide enough for the tourists to walk through. It's the street that needs the width. **Why would the City even think about making this congestion worse? The "finalized" design includes Narrowing the street from 25 feet to approx 19 feet (accounting for the yellow center lines) and removing the curbs which keep the tourists off the street.**
- I'm resending my email from June 3, 2025. **TDC: please do not fund this disaster waiting to happen.**
- The tourists LOVE the residential features of this block. **Please preserve the look of Key West when possible and where it makes the most sense and avoid turning it into "Disney World" just for the sake of putting your mark on the City. The biggest mark you can make is no mark at all. Keeping it as is, unless it's shingles on a house in front of the ocean where hurricane winds circulate the house and rip off the shingles - that is a law that makes no sense. Preserve when it makes sense, and amend laws that make no sense. That's the best way to help Key West preserve its look and its historic structures.**
- **Email from June 3, 2025**

Dear Madam Mayor and City Commissioners,

Before you on June 4 at the 9am mtg is Phase 1: the seawall project. Phase 2 will be before you soon and this is the last meeting we have to address the serious concerns we have about Phase 2.

Phase 2 aka "Roadway Project" includes:

1. Narrowing South St by at least 2.5" feet.
2. Taking out the sidewalk curbs and making the street and sidewalk one level.

Narrowing the Street:

We need the street to remain as is in order to deal with the congestion issues on this block.

We have large food delivery trucks that stop in front of the Southernmost House, ubers, FedEx, UPS, and USPS. Many residents avoid this block because of the congestion so you may not be aware what the residents of this block endure trying to get in and out but to make the situation worse is hurting quality of life - which every one of you say is a priority when you run for office. By narrowing the street, it will be less room for bicyclists and cars to get through which will affect the surrounding intersections on South and Duval St and possibly United/Duval & United/Whitehead St.

It's narrowing an important artery. I suggest to narrow the street with cones and test it out before you make an irreversible decision. No one I have talked to thinks that is a good idea, and for what? The sidewalk in front of my parents' and the Southernmost House is plenty wide enough, so it doesn't need to be any wider. And how does a more narrow street help with the drainage?

Also, I asked the Engineer about these traffic consequences and the Engineer says the computer they rely on to create these designs doesn't take into account the traffic issues - it can't.

So that's why these designs need to be scrutinized and no one knows the area more than the residents.

Here's a short video to show there is just enough room to get around the stopped vehicle and this is not even a large delivery truck, as well as other concerns.

VIDEO

<https://vimeo.com/1068958718>

2. One Level/ Sidewalk & Street - Worse Idea Ever.

We are being told by Engineering that the reason for making the sidewalk and the street one level is to help with the drainage. The residents of Key West avoid driving in this area because it's crowded, so it's not being done for them.

And the residents of the block don't want the sidewalk curb removed - so why is money being spent on something that doesn't benefit the residents of Key West at all?

I believe this is being done **for the tourists only**, just like the plaza in front of the Customs House, **except this area has homes on it** - so it's not the right location for this pedestrian-friendly change to Key West.

I asked the City Engineer David Allen, what other street in Key West is raised to the sidewalk level? **He said there is no street in Key West that is raised to the sidewalk level.**

So this will also be an irreversible experiment in a congested area.

Furthermore, the adverse impact to the residents is not worth the benefit that will occur on a handful of days of the year for maybe 30 min or 1 hour less of flooding there.

If you remove the sidewalks, it will give the wrong message to the tourists every day of the year, that they own the street. We already have that issue somewhat there, why make it worse for us?

The City is giving our street to the tourists and not alerting the public or really informing the residents.

We asked to remove the one-way, but not to give us a more narrow two-way to make it just as difficult to get into our homes as a one-way would

By making it look more like Disney World, you're actually removing the charm of this block - completely and forever. In exchange for how much of a reduction of flooding time exactly? No one knows. So we don't even know the actual benefit to justify doing this.

--Right now, it takes maybe a couple hours on a bad day for the water to drain.

--The last flood we had in Key West on 2.24.25, I drove down to South St, and there was no flood after a few hours.

-- Even if the flooding issue is made better by X amount of time, it's still not a good idea to drive around Key West on those flood days for a couple of hours because other streets are flooded and can ruin your car.

-- Why not see how the new drainage and seawall affects the flooding of this area first before making irreversible, drastic, costly changes?

-- Who is paying for this and why if the residents don't want it? The seawall alone is almost \$1M. And that doesn't include the Pump we were told may go there, which is incredibly costly too. So how can the City afford this additional, unwanted roadway project? TDC money can be better used for so many other projects.

Flooding promises by the Engineering Department have failed in the past and pocket park is an example - also the high school field is another example. In 2018, the City Engineers swore that this pocket park design would get rid of the flooding on that block - and it didn't. That's why the tables and chairs couldn't be at the pocket park - correct?

"But the park seating never came to fruition due to persistent flooding at the edge of the park, as water seeps over an old boat ramp there, especially during high tide and south winds." (by: Mandy Miles)

<https://keysweekly.com/42/key-west-city-commission-meeting-gets-cranky/>

The Engineer couldn't predict this issue which removed our 100K/year parking spots and forever changed the look of the end of Duval St? (You can't even see the ocean anymore when driving past it; it's covered by a tree & illegally parked maintenance vehicles for a hotel.)

And now it's not implausible to think that the pocket park flooding has infiltrated South St, as I don't remember a flooding issue like this prior to 2018 and my parents have lived there since the 1970s.

What goes up, must come down. How did the engineer not predict this would be a problem for South St? That the water at the pocket park (the area was raised like what they are proposing to do here) would then come down to South St? (I show this in the video above).

I asked David Allen will the raised street cause issues down Whitehead St passed United St? He said no. However, we've been told that before and look what happened.

Raising a street is not a guarantee of removing flooding issues in the immediate area, especially in front of the ocean, and it does not guarantee that the surrounding areas won't be impacted.

The question remains: why do it if raising this street will impact the quality of life of the residents - when the visitors who love Key West want Key West to remain looking like Key West and not changed into Disney World? What is the real purpose of this roadway project?

Please don't make it worse to live and run a business on this block, preserve the look of Key West as much as possible for all those who truly love Key West, and please instruct the Engineering Department to remove these two changes from the design immediately.

Thank you.

Best,
Marcela Morgan Gregory