

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



To: Chairman, and Planning Board Members

Through: Katie Halloran, Planning Director

From: Nicholas Perez-Alvarez, Stantec

Meeting Date: July 17, 2025

Agenda Items: **Conditional Use – 1023-1025 White Street (RE# 00033820-000100)** – A request for conditional use approval to allow a change in use from commercial retail to educational institution, located in the Historic Neighborhood Commercial – 1 Truman/Simonton (HNC-1) zoning district, pursuant to Chapter 122, Article III and Section 122-808 of the Land Development Regulations of the City of Key West, Florida.

Request: This application was submitted in order to convert the existing commercial floor area from retail to educational institution as an annex to the Montessori Children’s School of Key West.

Applicant: The Montessori Children’s School of Key West, Inc.; Evan Haskell, Board President; Richard Klitenick, P.A.; Trepanier & Associates, Inc.

Property Owner: Lee H. Dunn, Inc.

Location: 1023 White St, Key West, Florida
(RE # 00033820-000100)

Background:



This application was on the agenda for the June 18, 2025 Planning Board meeting, which was cancelled due to lack of quorum. The subject property, with a total lot size of 4,775 sq. ft., is situated in the Historic Neighborhood Commercial-1 Zoning District. The unit is located in a larger historic multitenant retail building originally built in 1947. According to the property card, this property last transferred ownership in August of 2000.

The Montessori Children’s School of Key West, which has its campus 2-blocks south of the subject site at 1221 Varela Street, is requesting to allow a conversion of the use of the existing commercial structure at 1023-1025 White Street from retail to educational institution and serve as an annex to the Montessori School’s main campus for 66 additional students. The maximum number of students the subject site can accommodate while not exceeding the parking requirements of the existing retail space is 66 students. As indicated in the table below, the parking requirement per Section 108-572 of the LDRs based on the existing 3,991 sf of commercial retail space is 13.3 spaces. The proposed change in use to accommodate a 66-seat educational facility, based on 1 space required per 5 seats, is 13.2 spaces. A parking variance will be required if this site is to serve more than 66 students.

	Code	Required
Existing Commercial (3,991 sf)	1 space/300sf	13.3 spaces
Proposed Educational (66 seats)	1 space/ 5 seats	13.2 spaces
Change in Parking Requirement		-0.1

The applicant proposes completion of the project in 2 phases, listed in further detail and illustrated below:

- Phase 1: commence immediately upon approval with anticipated completion approximately 1.5 years after commencement
- Phase 2: commence immediately upon vacation of current tenant ca. August 2026 with anticipated completion approximately 1.5 years after commencement

According to the applicant's Solutions Statement, drop-off and pick-up for students that attend the new proposed annex would remain at the main Montessori campus at 1221 Varela Street and the students would walk, attended by school staff, the approximately ¼-mile distance (generally a 5-minute walk) between the two sites. The proposed new 66 students at the annex location is estimated to generate up to 41 additional vehicles during drop-off and pick-up periods at 1221 Varela Street, based on the below drop-off/pick-up modal split of existing students provided by the applicant:

- 83% by vehicle, with 50% of vehicles containing 2 or more students
- 13% by bike or scooter
- 4% walk

Proposed Floorplan / Phasing Plan



The application went before the Development Review Committee (DRC) on April 24, 2025, where the following comments were shared with the applicant:

Planning

1. Maximum 66-students permitted without requiring a parking variance
2. Please provide more detail on how the school will discourage drop-off and pick-up at 1023 White St.
3. Suggest coordinating with City on designation of new school zone for speed limit restrictions

Fire

1. Happy to see building will be fully sprinklered and fully alarmed, some questions on accessibility, request a site visit soon

Engineering

1. Will the school request a change in designation of the existing on-street loading space?
2. Need to coordinate striping and pedestrian safety improvements

Multi-modal

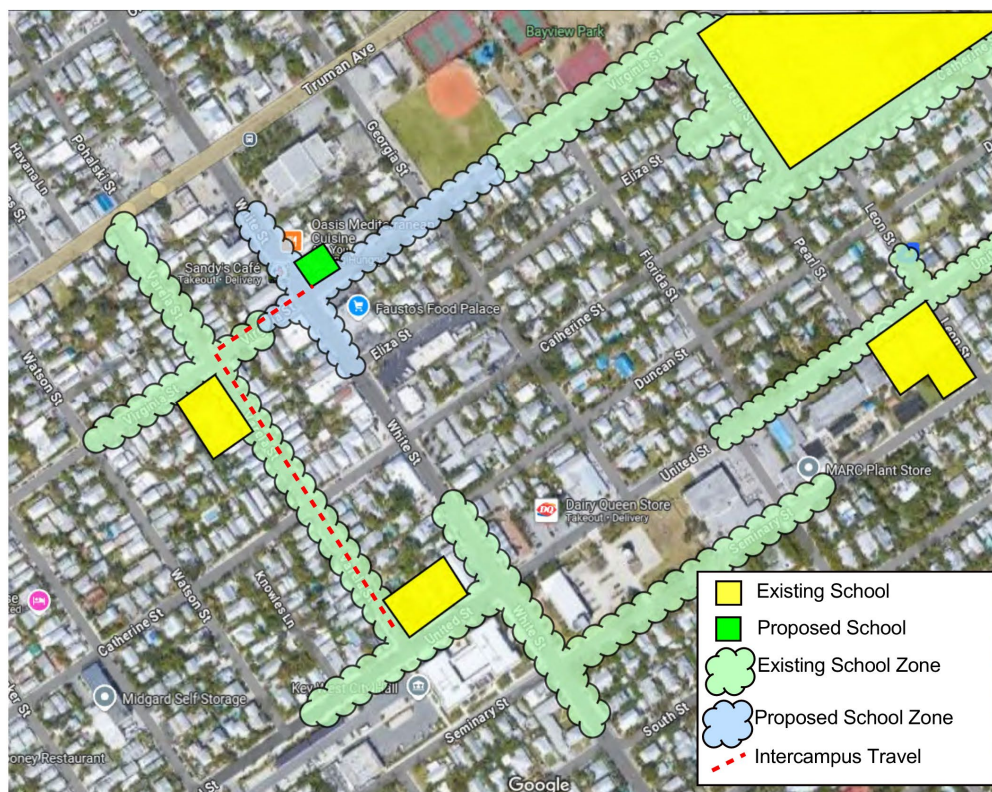
1. Reiterated need for pedestrian safety improvements, given proximity to grocery loading zone
2. City has a pedestrian signalization master plan, will follow-up with what is appropriate at this intersection

HARC

1. Any changes to exterior or signage will require HARC review

A follow-up meeting between the applicant, City Engineering / Multi-Modal staff, Planning staff, and Police was held on April 29, 2025 to further discuss inter-campus travel operations and the need for pedestrian safety improvements and expansion of the school speed limit zone. The applicant provided the below proposed travel route and new school zone map for the City's consideration.

Proposed Travel Route and School Zones



Staff Analysis -Conditional Use Criteria Evaluation:

Conditional uses are regulated pursuant to Chapter 122 (Zoning), Article III (Conditional Uses). Section 122-61 of the Code states:

The purpose of this article 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. This article 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.

Section 122-62(b) *Characteristics of use described*

CHARACTERISTICS	COMMENTS
Scale & intensity	
Floor area ratio	The proposed use will not add any additional floor area
Traffic generation	Based on the applicant's plan to maintain pick-up and drop-off at the main campus, no additional vehicular traffic is anticipated. Pedestrian activity will increase in the area with the students and staff walking to the site before and after class. It is recommended as a condition of approval that vehicular pick-up and drop-off remain at the main campus as indicated in the applicant's Solutions Statement. The proposed new 66 students at the annex location is estimated to generate up to 41 additional vehicles during drop-off and pick-up periods at 1221 Varela Street, based on the modal split of existing students provided by the applicant and indicated above.
Square feet of enclosed building for each specific use	3,991 sq. ft. proposed to be converted from retail to education
Proposed employment	N/A
Proposed number and type of service vehicles	None proposed
Off-street parking needs	The applicant proposes up to 66 students at this site, which represents no change in the required parking for the 3,991 sq. ft. of retail space. It is a recommended condition of approval that maximum 66 students are permitted at this site unless a parking variance is obtained. There is no off-street parking existing or proposed.
On- or off-site improvement needs generated by the proposed conditional use	
Utilities	The property has adequate facilities to support the proposed use.
Public facilities, especially any improvements required to ensure compliance with concurrency management as provided in chapter 94	None expected. Compliance with building codes and life safety codes would be required prior to building permit issuance.
Roadway or signalization improvements, or other similar improvements	The applicant has initiated conversations with the City Engineering and Police Departments to discuss the installation of improved pedestrian signalization and the designation of a school zone.
Accessory structures or facilities	None.
Other unique facilities/structures proposed as part of site improvements	None.

On-site amenities proposed to enhance site and planned improvements	
Open Space	No proposed change in open space.
Setbacks from adjacent properties	N/A. The exterior of the building is to remain unaltered
Screening and buffers	The applicant provides that solid waste will be handled in the rear of the structure
Landscaped berms proposed to mitigate against adverse impacts to adjacent sites	N/A. The exterior of the building is to remain unaltered
Mitigative techniques for abating smoke, odor, noise, and other noxious impacts	There is no expected excessive smoke, odor, noise, or other noxious impacts from the proposed educational use.

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

CRITERIA	COMMENTS
Land use compatibility	The conditional use as an educational facility is compatible with the surrounding area in that the neighborhood contains a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses not anticipated to be negatively impacted by the proposed use.
Sufficient site size, adequate site specifications, and infrastructure to accommodate the proposed use generation	The size of the existing building is adequate to accommodate the proposed scale and intensity of the conditional use requested.
Proper use of mitigative techniques	The applicant has initiated conversations with the City Engineering and Police Departments to discuss the installation of improved pedestrian signalization and the designation of a school zone.
Hazardous waste	None anticipated.
Compliance with applicable laws and ordinances	The conditional use will comply with all applicable laws and ordinances, including compliance with building codes and life safety codes.
Additional criteria applicable to specific land uses	
Land uses within a conservation area	The site is not located in a conservation area.
Residential development.	No residential development is proposed.
Commercial or mixed use development	No commercial or mixed use development is proposed. The proposed educational use would replace an existing commercial retail space.
Development within or adjacent to historic district	The conditional use application is within the historic district.
Public facilities or institutional development	The proposed use is compatible with other uses within this zoning district as well as the district regulations.
Commercial structures, uses and related activities within tidal waters	The site is not located within tidal waters.
Adult entertainment establishments	No adult entertainment is being proposed.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Department recommends that the request for the conditional use be **Approved**. If the Planning Board elects to approve the conditional use, staff recommends the following conditions:

General conditions:

1. The school will adhere to the drop-off and pick-up operations indicated in the applicant's Solutions Statement dated May 16, 2025.

Conditions prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy and/or Business Tax Receipt:

2. The owner shall obtain and maintain a Conditional Approval Permit, pursuant to City Code Chapter 18, Article XII, Division 1. The City Code Compliance shall inspect the property on an annual basis upon reasonable notice to determine compliance with the above general conditions.

Conditions subject to a Conditional Approval Permit, and subject to an associated annual inspection:

3. Maximum 66 seats at 1023-1025 White Street unless a parking variance is obtained.
4. If unanticipated traffic impacts are observed at the 1221 Varela Street location through a significant increase in parking or moving violations during drop-off and pick-up periods, the applicant shall prepare a new traffic management plan subject to the review and approval of the City Manager.
5. **The** Conditional Use shall be phased - Phase 1 shall commence immediately following the effective date of this resolution and Phase 2 shall commence within 1 year of the effective date and be completed within 2 years of the effective date.