

Sharon Wells
Historian and Historic Preservationist
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November 4, 2014

To: Chair and Members of HARC

I am sorry that I will be out of town and unable to attend the special HARC Meeting on November 6th.

At the request of residents of the historic neighborhood adjoining Peary Court, I wish to offer my observations and professional opinion with respect to the latest plans submitted by Peary Court Holdings, dated Sept. 15, 2014, as well as commenting on the staff report submitted for the Nov. 6, 2014 HARC meeting. These observations and opinions are based on personally overseeing the historic district in Key West, including Peary Court, since the 1980's. A copy of my C.V. is attached for the record.

As a preliminary observation, it appears to me that the project architect has effectively revised the original plans (which I was unwilling to endorse because of some features that I found incompatible with the adjacent historic neighborhood fabric), so that the project as now proposed deserves HARC approval. I concur with the opinion expressed in the staff report that "the new site plan proposes a more balanced number of cottage and medium parcels adjacent to the historic streets. The removal of the large parcels along Angela Street, which promoted the larger alternative model, has been a positive change in the plans." However, I do not concur with some of the other opinions expressed in the staff report, as follows:

1. The report states that "16 out of the 19 parcels will have houses with their back facades oriented towards Angela Street, making their back yards facing the street." Although this comment is technically accurate, it is incomplete. These 16 building parcels face **two** streets in the historic district: Angela St. (a narrow lane) and a wider street within Peary Court. One of those two streets must be designated the front, and the other, the rear. The development plan was revised in response to pleas from the adjacent historic neighborhood and a clear direction by the City Commission to keep the Angela St. fence intact. As the staff report acknowledges, the City Commission has stated that "the existing fence along Angela St. shall remain." The logical consequence of this mandate is that residents of these new buildings will be entering their homes from the street and sidewalks that provide access to their homes, namely the Peary Court Street, not Angela St. It would make no sense from an historic or practical perspective to have the front yards of these new homes face a street other than where the front entrance will be. Having rear yards on Angela St. is a necessary consequence of the decision to protect the existing historic neighborhood along Angela St., Florida St., Pearl St., and Newton St. from Peary Court traffic.

Further, it should be noted here that the HARC Guidelines do not contemplate any involvement with an existing fence that is not being modified. And, it is not within the purview of HARC to use its advisory authority to insist on integration of an existing historic neighborhood with a non-historic neighborhood such as Peary Court, particularly given that the proposed plans are not being presented with that option.

2. The report says "The proposed design ethic of developing an isolated community.... is contrary to... the history of Peary Court." This suggestion that the development plan proposes "an isolated community" contrary to Peary Court's history cannot be reconciled with the historical plan for the area now known as Peary Court. Page 3 of the staff report contains a copy of the 1829 Whitehead Map. Whitehead's Map depicts Squares 30 and 43 lying East of White St. as the only platted portion of what is now Peary Court (the other portion being clearly designated as "United

States Government"), accessible only via White, Fleming and Southard Streets. The revised site plan proposes to re-open the historic Fleming Street entrance to Peary Court, so now the property will have the same entrances that were laid out in 1829. Therefore, it is inaccurate to say that having two entrances into Peary Court ---the same entrances that were designated on Whitehead's map of Key West --- is "contrary to the history of Peary Court". It is also inaccurate to say that Peary Court wasn't fenced and gated during most of its history. As evidenced by the attached photos, the current fence and gates have historic antecedents.

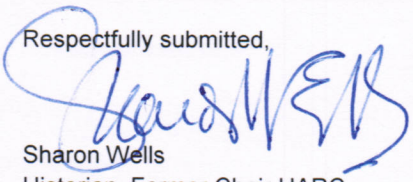
3. The report continues, "[H]aving 16 backyards facing Angela Street raises the question of how the north streetscape will develop in the future; for example, swimming pools that will require solid fences toward Angela Street could very well be the streetscape developed."

It is unclear why swimming pools would "require solid fences"; LDR Sec. 122-1185 (4) requires only "a fence or wall at least four feet high and so constructed as to not be readily climbable by small children." But regardless of what type of fence might be proposed for a back yard swimming pool, the Angela St. view of those back yards can be obscured by requiring landscape screening (which the development plan proposes). Screening is within HARC's purview, and each parcel's layout will be subject to future HARC scrutiny; as staff observes, "this review will be one of many others this Commission will make regarding this project." Those subsequent reviews, which will be required for each phase of construction and for individual houses (each of which will require a Certificate of Appropriateness), will address screening and architectural features in much greater detail than can occur during overall site plan review. A certificate of appropriateness couldn't be granted for the new buildings at this preliminary stage of the review process. No certificate of appropriateness can be issued until HARC is presented with plans and specifications sufficient to determine conformity of a structure or structures with the Design Guidelines (including details such as architectural features, color, materials, screening, etc.).

4. The staff report expresses the concern that, because some building prototypes are being presented to assist HARC in evaluating impacts on the adjacent historic district, "There could be repetition of the same model many times." This concern must be addressed because it would be undesirable for the project to be built using multiple repetitions of the same basic design; however, that scenario can be easily prevented. I suggest that approval of the prototypes be granted with the caveats that such approval is granted only for mass, scale and proportion, and that individualized design is encouraged in order to assure diversity of housing style. Additionally, HARC could approve the site plan subject to the requirement that no model be repeated on adjacent single-family parcels. And, as noted above, this initial review does not grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to any of the models depicted in the application; rather, such review will occur during later stages of the project.

Finally, Staff should be commended for including in the staff report photographs depicting the appearance of Peary Court during its long history as a military base. The mass and scale of the former barracks and other military structures contributed to the historic character of this site. It is instructive to see how the adjacent neighborhood developed in such close proximity to an active military base. Although applicable Historic Guidelines would not support creating modern copies of the massive buildings that dominated the site during its historic period, it would also be a mis-application of the Guidelines to require that new structures built on Peary Court mirror the existing homes in the adjacent neighborhood. In my opinion, the mass, scale, and proportion of the housing types proposed in the revised site plan is compatible with the existing community fabric.

Respectfully submitted,



Sharon Wells
Historian, Former Chair HARC

SHARON WELLS

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VITAE

Summary of Qualifications:

Sharon Wells has worked professionally as an historian and historic preservationist in Key West since 1976. Artistic pursuits, including photography, painting, and publications under the State of Florida or Island City Heritage Press have continued from 1978 to the present day.

Professional Experience:

1995 – Present

Historic Preservation Consulting Services
Key West Light Gallery, Owner
Co-Founder and Author, Key West Walking Guide APP
Photographer/Painter
Customized ART MONTAGES: Historic House Histories

S and W Arts, Inc., President

Historic preservation consulting firm and publishing company, offering architectural photography, art montages of house histories, historic preservation consulting, investment tax credit services, historical and legal research, and architectural walking tours.

d/b/a This Island City Heritage Press (founded 1996) - published and distributed 100,000 annual editions of Sharon Wells' Walking and Biking Guide to Historic Key West, which was founded, authored, and published in 1994.

d/b/a Key West Light Gallery (founded 2002) - an art gallery exhibiting primarily photographs and paintings by Sharon Wells. Historic photographs from Key West

historic photos are displayed at the gallery and available through keywesthistoricphotos.com.

1982 - present:

Historic Preservation Consultant

- Successful completion of 35 Investment Tax Credit applications to the National Park Service.

1982 – 1992:

Co-Owner of Historic Preservation Tax Credit Planners

1978 - 1995

Historic Preservationist, Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board, Florida Department of State, a Florida state agency.

Responsibilities:

- Provide professional services as historian and historic preservationist on a county-wide basis for state agency since 1978.
- Seek and administer grant funds from state and federal agencies.
- Design and implement projects, including public presentations, public relations and community coordination.
- Author design review guidelines and provide expert witness testimony in legal matters related to historic preservation.
- Provide historic preservation liaison efforts to municipal architectural review commission (HARC) as appointed commissioner to City of Key West for 8 years within the span of 1983-2003.
- Municipal government's preservation issues and efforts to local, county and state groups from 1983-1990.
- Supervise volunteers for historic cemetery survey project.
- Administer special grant projects, including preparation of project budgets and publications.
- Preparation of National Register nominations and oversight of two National Register Historic Districts in Key West.
- Implement historic survey of 1847 cemetery in Key West.
- Supervise volunteers for historic cemetery survey project.
- Inaugurate and coordinate local historic preservation awards program.
- Organize annual fundraiser at Truman Little White House for Historic Florida Keys Foundation.

1978—1995

Grant Writer

- GRANT, State of Florida. Cemetery Self-Guided Tour. Brochure for HFKE. 1994. Still in circulation.

- GRANT, State of Florida. Architectural Design Guidelines publication, for City of Key West. 1989.
- GRANT, State of Florida. Preservation Survey for Key West Historic 1847 Cemetery, 1988. For City of Key West. Project Director.
- GRANT, State of Florida. Publication of "Portraits: Wooden Houses of Key West". For Historic Key West Preservation Board. Project Director.
- GRANT, State of Florida. Preservation Planning Grant for Key West Womens' Club Project. 1987. Project Director.
- GRANT, National Endowment for the Arts. Stanley Papio: Folk Sculptor. A Documentation. For Key West Art and Historical Society. 1983-84. Project Director.
- GRANT, State of Florida. Conservation Analysis of Papio Collection at East Martello. For Key West Art and Historical Society. 1985. Project Director.

All successful grants written as employee of Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board.

1974 – 1977

Historian, Florida Department of State, Bureau of Historic Preservation.

Photographer and Historian for Historic Surveys of Orlando, Sarasota, Sanford and Key West, Florida.

Responsibilities:

- Survey and research historically and architecturally significant structures according to National Register criteria, photograph buildings for historic inventories.
- Assessment of historic sites, properties and materials in conjunction with archeological surveys along north Florida highways.
- Compile histories of local communities, and preparation of historical documentation for the Division of Archives, History and Records Management.

Publications & Portraits

- Authored numerous reports, National Register nominations, and 2 books, Portraits: Wooden Houses of Key West (1979) and Forgotten Legacy: Blacks in 19th Century Key West, (1982).
- Sharon Wells' Walking & Biking Guide to Historic Key West. Island City Heritage Press, Publisher. (Since 1984, over 1,800,000 copies of this free publication have been distributed, providing historical documentation and photographs for over 350 historic sites in Key West.)
- Wooden Houses of Key West. Key West: Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board, 1979, reprinted 1982 and 1991. Project Director. (This book is recognized nationally as the first authoritative source on Key West architecture since its

publication in 1979, and contains large format black/white images. Author and co-designer.)

- Forgotten Legacy: Blacks in Nineteenth Century Key West. Key West: Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board, 1982 and 1991. (This work is the sole in-depth study of Key West's black population. It traces the roots, emigration patterns, and social and cultural patterns of this distinctive group of people during the nineteenth century through primary source research. Author and co-designer.)
- Author, Sloppy Joe's The First Fifty Years. Key West Saloon: 1983.
- Author of numerous articles on architecture and historic preservation in Florida Keys.
- An Analysis of the Folk Culture of Pearl City, Florida. 1987. Publication in Spanish River Papers, Feb., 1988. (This paper was the culmination of a study of oral histories of early black residents in Pearl City, Florida, a historic area of Delray Beach.)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

2011- present

S and W Arts, Inc. Art and historic consulting services

2007 – 1995

Sharon Wells Enterprises, Inc; an historic preservation consulting firm, and publisher of SHARON WELLS' *Walking and Biking Guide to Historic Key West*.

2000 - present:

Owner and operator, KW Light Gallery in Key West.

1998 – 2001

and 1984 – 1988

Acting Chairman, Vice-Chairman. Historic Architectural Review Commission, (HARC), City of Key West.

1986 - 1988

Principal author of revised Design Guidelines for City of Key West's Historic District. The Guidelines were enacted in 1985 and are in place.

Monroe County Tourist Development Council, appointed by City of Key West. Board member, 2000.

1991-1992

Author, "Historic Overview of Key West," "History of Design Review in Key West," in Design Guidelines publication, City of Key West.

1992

Juror, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Student Architectural Design Competition, Washington, D.C.

1992

Speaker, Key West Preservation Conference, Key West, Florida.

1980-1993

Project initiator and coordinator, Annual Preservation Awards Program, Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board. This program continues under the Historic Florida Keys Foundation.

1988

Juror, Florida Historic Trust for Historic Preservation, Awards Program.

1988

Speaker, Florida Cemetery Conference, Tallahassee, Florida.

1983 - 1986

Board of Directors. Key West Art and Historical Society. First Vice-President; Second Vice-President. Chair, Pappas Folk Sculpture Committee; Member, Search Committee for Director.

EDUCATION

Graduate Studies. College of Arts and Sciences, University of Florida. 1972-74.
Afro-American Studies, American History, Urban Planning.

Bachelor of Arts, 1970. Magna Cum Laude, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Florida. Double Major: History and Political Science; Minors: Art History, Russian Studies.

Personal

College:

University of Florida, B.A. with High Honors, History and Political Science, 1970.
Graduate Studies, 1972-74

Residency: Resident, Professional Historian/Photographer, in Key West since 1976.
Ongoing artistic endeavors and art gallery owner since 2000.

Parade Ground, U. S. Reservation, Key West, Fla.



