

Objection to Planning Application for Variances

Property Location: 309 William Street

Applicant's Request: Variances to increase maximum building coverage from 40% to 52%, reduce front yard setback from 10 feet to 8 feet, reduce rear yard setback from 15 feet to 5 feet, and reduce street side setback from 7 feet 6 inches to 5 feet, in order to demolish and reconstruct an existing residential property in the Historic Medium Density Residential Zoning District (HMDR).

Grounds for Objection

1. Excessive Increase in Building Coverage

- The proposed 52% lot coverage represents a 30% increase above the allowable maximum and is inconsistent with the intent of the HMDR district to preserve open space, maintain appropriate density, and ensure compatibility with surrounding historic properties.
- Allowing this variance sets a precedent for overbuilding, which undermines the City's zoning regulations and long-term planning goals.

2. Negative Impact on Neighborhood Character and Historic Integrity

- The HMDR district was specifically established to protect the historic scale and fabric of Key West's neighborhoods. Increasing lot coverage and reducing setbacks erodes the distinctive spatial relationships between homes, yards, and streetscapes.
- The cumulative effect of reduced yards and increased massing will alter sight-lines, diminish the sense of openness, and compromise the historic streetscape.

3. Adverse Impacts on Neighbors

- Reducing the rear yard setback from 15 feet to just 5 feet will significantly impact privacy, natural light, and ventilation for adjacent properties.
- Reduced side and front setbacks will increase visual bulk, encroach on neighboring properties, obstruct breezes that are vital to residential comfort in this climate and obstruct light to neighboring properties.

4. Failure to Demonstrate Hardship

- Variances under Sections 90-395 and 122-600 of the Code of Ordinances require a showing that literal interpretation of the provisions of the land development regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in this same zoning district under the terms of this ordinance and would work unnecessary and undue

hardship on the applicant.

- The applicant has not demonstrated that strict application of zoning standards would deprive them of reasonable use of the property. A desire to maximize square footage or construct a larger dwelling does not meet the legal threshold for hardship.

5. Inconsistency with Public Interest

- Granting these variances would not serve the public interest but rather provide a private benefit at the expense of neighborhood scale, character, and livability.
- Approval would weaken the enforceability of zoning standards across the Historic District, leading to incremental erosion of Key West's historic identity and the demolition of a 'contributing' structure for this type of scheme is an additional concern.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, I respectfully request that the Planning Board deny the application for variances. The proposed increases in lot coverage and reductions in setbacks are excessive, incompatible with the character of the Historic Medium Density Residential Zoning District, harmful to neighboring properties, and unsupported by the required showing of hardship.

Respectfully submitted,

George Eric Rowe
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