
Dr. & Mrs. Grant Shumaker

**1306 Villa Mill Aly.
Key West, Florida 33041**

City of Key West Planning Board

PO Box 1409

Key West, Florida 33041

RE: Major Development Plan – 638 United Street (RE# 00036600-000000)

Dear Planning Board Members:

Our primary residence is at 1306 Villa Mills Aly. Our property is adjacent to the proposed development, on the south side. We do not support the the conversion of the property at 638 United St. that has been proposed. As an immediate neighbour to the site of the proposed development, we are of the view that the proposed development will have a serious impact on our standard of living. Our specific objections are as follows:

Detrimental impact on neighboring communities.

The proposed project does not respect local context and street pattern or, in particular, the scale and proportions of surrounding buildings, and would be entirely out of the character of the area, The properties along Villa Mill Aly and United are characterised by quaint Key West homes with small yards and surrounding vegetation. The proposed dwelling is considerably larger than the neighbouring property and a great deal taller. The proposal would demonstrably harm the amenities enjoyed by local residents, in particular safe and available on-road parking , valuable green space , privacy, and the right to enjoy a quiet and safe residential environment.

Need to Avoid Town Cramming

.The proposed dwelling would significantly alter the fabric of the area and allow ‘cramming’ in what is a currently a low density region. The applicant states that the proposed dwelling would allow abundant vegetation, however the nature and orientation of the plot appears that the vegetation would be suboptimal for the actual size of the dwellings. Given a majority of the property will be utilized for actual buildings , they have little space for landscaping. As noted per

Key West Old Town ordinances, new structures must conform to city easement, setback, and building requirements. Specifically, noting no new structure should be placed closer to sidewalk, street or visible alley, than the distance of previous pre-existing historic structures. Areas for open space must be retained. Written in ordinance 3.4, it is noted massing scale and proportion shall be that of existing similar historical homes in the historical neighborhood. The neighboring residential homes directly adjacent to this property are 1- 1.5 stories, including us.

Protection of valuable open space under protected order

We have grave concerns about the adverse effect the proposed development would have on the vegetation on our property and other adjacent properties. The potential damage that heavy equipment can cause leaves us wondering how many neighbors will suffer damage to their driveways, landscaping, and homes.

One of the council's broad aims set out in the District Wide Local Plan is to protect or enhance the local environment including wildlife habitats, trees and vegetation. We have abundant reptiles and birds that currently live on our property, adjacent to the proposed. Green open space is in scarce supply in our area and destroying the current ecological system would create harm to our plants & wildlife.

Ground Stability & Drainage

A very serious concern exists over the toxic nature of the previous buried fuel tanks on the property and if an environmental impact study has been performed to mitigate spreading contaminated soil.

Construction will result in change of natural drainage patterns and impact adjacent properties. Given that the property has had all natural vegetation removed in violation of existing desired land use policy, we request that 25% of the existing parcel be replanted with natural vegetation to restore the habitat consistent with adjacent properties.

We have concerns about the impact the proposed works could potentially have on the stability of our property. Cinder blocks act as our foundation, excavation work could have a seriously impact the stability of our existing structures. The work will require the demolition of a large concrete support structure within inches of our front door.

Loss of privacy and overlooking

The proposed site of development is at such an angle that the primary amenity area of our garden,

terrace, cabana, and pool area would be severely overlooked from the top rooms of two of taller homes which will directly be facing our property. We feel this in itself, creates a serious invasion of our privacy. We believe that the proposed development is a direct contravention of the District Wide Local Plan. The design of the proposed development does not afford adequate privacy for the occupants of the building or of adjacent residential properties, particularly with regard to their right to the quiet enjoyment of garden amenities. We would urge you to consider the responsibilities of the council under the Human Rights Act in particular Protocol 1, Article 1 which states that a person has the right to peaceful enjoyment of all their possessions which includes the home and other land. We believe that the proposed development would have a dominating impact on us and our right to the quiet enjoyment of our property. Key West Old town ordinances also state that there must be a sympathetic relationship of height between new buildings and existing adjacent structures in the neighborhood. They proposed construct certainly does not display any sympathy to our home, which will be directly adjacent to two, 2 ½ story homes inches from our front entryway.

Inadequate parking and access

According to the parking guidelines set out in this document, they have requested six city parking spaces off United Ave. The proposed development which has a total of 23 bedrooms does not allow sufficient parking spaces on premise, they have requested six city parking spaces. The parking spaces on United are already occupied by residents who live nearby.

We also have serious concerns that the plot size and the suspension it will not easily accommodate cars in the layout proposed. The area concerned are the dwellings with attached garages. The vehicles combined with the fencing situated between the two properties would make access to the proposed spaces very limited. Again these vehicles will be entering their driveways inches from our front door.

Economic effects

The proposed plan would have a disastrous impact on property values in the area, specifically ours due to the proximity. Preserving the historical area of Key West, such as you do, maintains and increases property values. Historical homes are unique and typically have a higher market value than the rest of the city. By allowing this proposal to go forward, it would be very unlikely that we could sell our home for the current value, particularly with (two) 2 1/2 story homes peering into our property and private area.

Public interests

Allowing this massive project to move forward will set precedent for other developers to mimic their intentions, which in turn would harm Old Towne's unique character . We, along with our neighbors on Villa Mill Aly are against this proposal. Hopefully, you have received letters from them opposing the plans. Unfortunately, and much to our disadvantage, many of us are away this week, therefore unable to speak personally with the planning commission. We are relying on the planning board to set precedence, follow ordinances previously in place,, identify with our concerns, and protect the historical district from infrastructures that do not conform to Old Town standards.

We agree that the current building lacks curb appeal and we would love to see the property revitalized on a smaller scale than has been proposed.

In conclusion we would also like to request that, should the application be approved, the council consider using its powers to enforce controlled hours of operation and other restrictions that might make the duration of the works more bearable. The proposed site of development is very small and contained, so we would ask that consideration be made about how and where construction vehicles and staff would gain access to the site for unloading and parking without causing a road hazard or inconveniencing neighbours.

However, we would be grateful if the council would take our objections into consideration when deciding this application. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with a representative of the planning board at our home to illustrate our objections at first hand. The plans may appear acceptable on a paper draft, however , in actuality it will change the area dramatically making living in that area unbearable during construction and thereafter.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dr. & Mrs. Grant Shumaker