Todd Humes / Alan Naragon
715 Fleming Street
Key West, FL 33040
toddhumes@hotmail.com
(917) 602-7428

August 10, 2025

Historic Architectural Review Commission
City of Key West
1300 White Street
Key West, FL 33040

Re: Opposition to Proposed New Construction at 704 Russell Lane

Dear Members of the Historic Architectural Review Commission,

As the homeowners of 715 Fleming Street, we are writing to respectfully oppose the current proposed structure for the new construction at 704 Russell Lane. We are deeply concerned about the project's lack of compatibility with the historic context of our neighborhood as well as the surrounding homes and make the following observations:

(1) The proposed structure's footprint, mass and height are not consistent with the surrounding homes – The proposed building appears to be a 2 ½ story 5 bedroom home with nearly 2000 square feet standing 29 feet tall. This is significantly larger than the relevant comparable homes bordering the proposed structure. We disagree with the applicant and his architect's asserted comparable homes as those structures do not primarily sit adjacent to or share a

border with the proposed structure. Please see the attached map and profiles of the most relevant comparable houses, all of which sit directly adjacent to the proposed structure. In each instance, the current residences are single story, or in one single case, a one and a half story home and all are of modest massing and footprint. The houses directly bordering the proposed structure range from 1,200 square feet to approximately 1,500 square feet and are 2 or 3 bedrooms in size (one appears to have 4). All sit significantly shorter in height than the proposed 2 ½ story structure. In fact most are a single story. Please refer to the attached comparables with metrics and visuals for comparison.

(2) **Given the size, mass and height of the proposed structure it will certainly be visible from mutiple angles from historic Fleming street, including from the public library which generate significant traffic –** The proposed structure's size and height will certainly make it visible from multiple angles of historic Fleming street. The included pictures show the two homes which are on Fleming Street (709, 711 and 715 Fleming), border the proposed structure, and are significantly shorter then the proposed structure. The structure will certainly be visible over the shorter houses on Fleming. In addition, the proposed structure will sit 5'6" off the back property line of those houses making it close to Fleming street given the modest depths of the properties of 709, 711 and 715 Fleming and making its visibility heightened and obvious. The structure as proposed will no doubt significantly alter the street façade of historic Fleming Street.

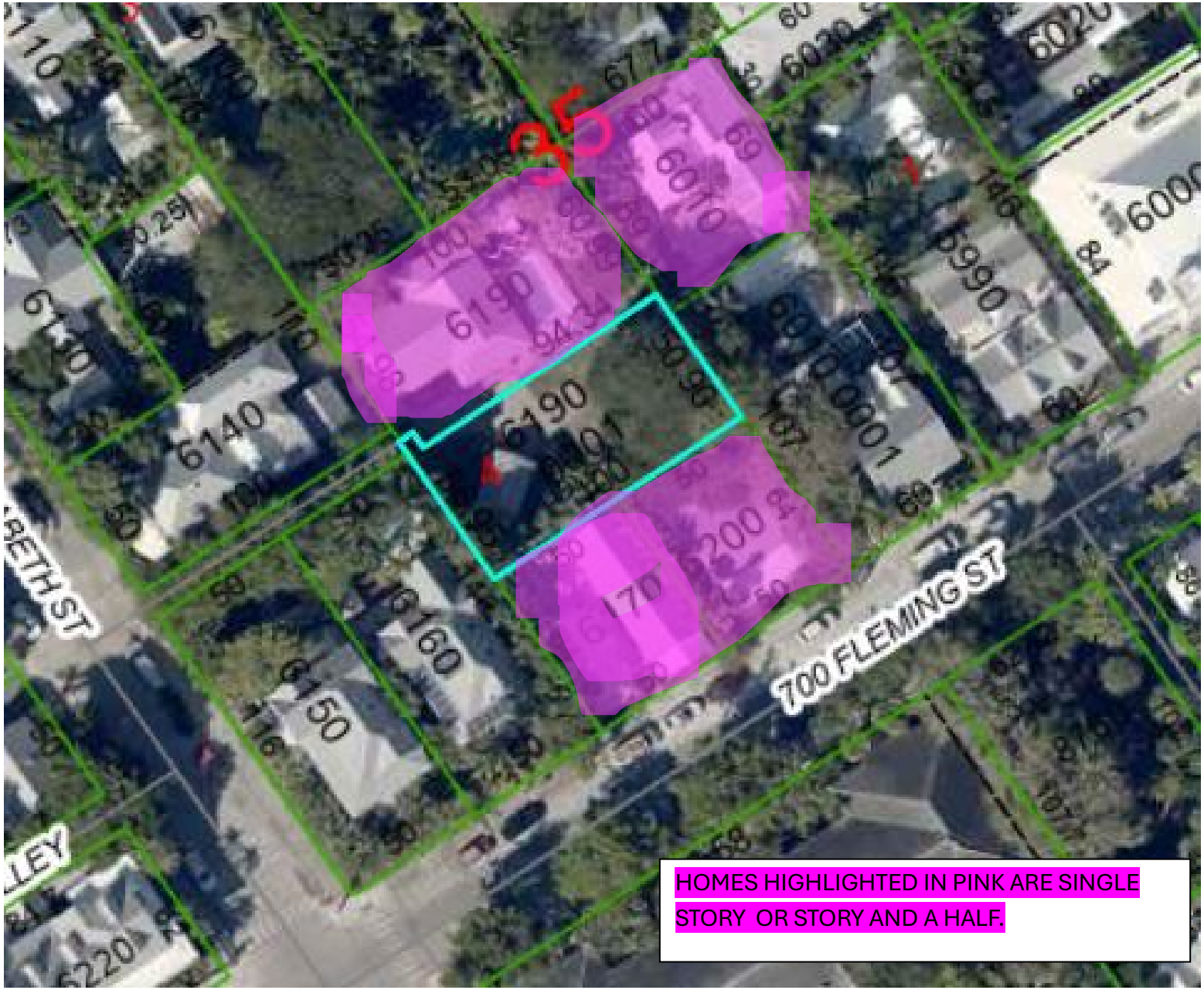
(3) **Living in Old Town Key West is a privilege that requires compromise to protect and maintain the visual and aesthetic appeal –** As homeowners in historic KW we are all required to compromise our perceived needs and higher wants in order to benefit the common good of the community. We do this to ensure that individual selfish needs do not infringe on the aesthetic appeal we have worked so hard to preserve as a community. It is the purpose of this Commission. Our home on 715 Fleming is modest in size and does not fully suit our needs. Adding a second story to our home would be hugely appealing. If applicant is allowed to build a structure significantly larger in mass, footprint and height by simply pointing to less relevant comparable homes outside the directly adjacent homes to his property, what is stopping us from using our directly adjacent neighbor's (719 Fleming) traditional 2 ½ story balcony home to justify adding a second story to our home? We could easily do so and keep with the historic aesthetics of the homes applicant purports to use as comparables. We hope that the commission and applicant will graciously compromise with a proposal in keeping with the generalized size, mass, height and aesthetics of that of his neighbors.

We invite all commission members to visit our homes to inspect the impact the proposed structure would have on the directly adjacent neighborhood. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to host you to help you make a more informed decision.

FOR THE FOREGOING REASONS WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT THE COMMISSION REJECT THE CURRENT PROPOSED STRUCTURE IN FAVOR OF A DESIGN THAT IS CONSISTENT IN SIZE, MASS, HEIGHT AND ASTHETICS TO HIS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Humes & Alan Naragon
715 Fleming Street


6190
6140
6150
6160
6010
6000
5990
700 FLEMING ST
HOMES HIGHLIGHTED IN PINK ARE SINGLE STORY OR STORY AND A HALF.

#4
#3
#2
#1
717
704
715
DRIVEWAY
LIBRARY
Fleming St
Fleming St
Russell Ln
Elizabeth St
Elizabeth St
Lovett Ln
William St
708
704
726
418
801
723
719
417
417
730
726
724
703
701
711
712
426
716
Map

COMPARABLE #1 – 715 FLEMING STREET. SINGLE STORY, 2 BED RESIDENCE, 1209 SQUARE FEET.

COMPARABLE #2 – 709/711 FLEMING STREET. SINGLE STORY, 3 BED RESIDENCE, 1468 SQUARE FEET.

COMPARABLE #3 – 714 ELIZABETH STREET. SINGLE STORY 3 BED RESIDENCE, 1464 SQUARE FEET

COMPARABLE #4 – 717 FLEMING STREET. SINGLE AND A HALF STORY 4 BED RESIDENCE, 1567 SQUARE FEET.

Letter of Opposition to Proposed New Construction at 704 Russell Lane

Dear Members of the Historical Architectural Review Commission,

As the homeowner of 709 and 711 Fleming Street, I am opposed to the proposed structure at 704 Russell Lane. The design is not consistent with the adjacent single- and one-and-a-half-story homes and is incompatible with the historic character of the neighborhood.

At the June 24th HARC Public Hearing, Commissioner Osborn emphasized the importance of considering the surrounding context:

"We have consistently said - you have to look at the area, you can't kind of cherry pick the properties you want to refer it to. So the design, my interpretation of the guidelines, is we need to also somehow face and deal with the story and half and the prominent visual exposure to Fleming. " (3:22:54)

My concern is that the proposed structure disregards the size, mass, height, and aesthetics of neighboring properties—especially significant given its location directly across from a historic landmark, our library. The decision here sets precedent not only for this block, but for future builds in Old Town.

I first visited Key West in 2001, eventually renting these homes for 12 years before purchasing them in 2022. I see ownership of Dos Casas as a responsibility to uphold the stewardship of Old Town. Living here is a privilege, and preserving its character is our shared duty.

I entrust the Historical Architectural Review Commission to protect Fleming Street by ensuring new development respects the historic scale and integrity of its surroundings. The 700 block of Fleming is more than just our family's home—it is part of what makes Old Town so special. We look forward to welcoming new neighbors whose homes also reflect that legacy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher Bonaminio

709 & 711 Fleming Street

FROM THE DESK OF

Arlene Brush

August 26, 2025

Historic Architectural Review Commission

Dear HARC Members:

Having carefully reviewed the material on the proposed house at 704 Russell Lane, I am very concerned about the impact such a large structure would have on both the quiet lane which runs past my apartment and on the neighborhood around it.

All the dormers and gables in the world do not change the fact that this a 5 bedroom, 2 story building (or is it really 2.5?) looming over 1 story cottages and snuggling right up to the property lines.

The way such a large structure would look bearing down on the cottages that front on Fleming Street is particularly alarming. The mass, height and scale of this structure is not in keeping with the surrounding buildings.

This is a lovely, esthetically harmonious neighborhood. I fear putting such a large structure here would strike a very sour note.

Please, Commissioners, REJECT this proposal .

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Arlene Brush
417 Elizabeth Street, Apt 1
Key West

Outlook

[EXTERNAL] Opposition to 704 Russell Lane proposal

From Laurie Wilson <laurie.s.wilson@gmail.com>
Date Mon 9/22/2025 12:32 PM
To Daniela Salume <daniela.salume@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>; Matthew Crawford <matthew.crawford@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Members of the Historical Architectural Review Commission,

As the homeowner of 703 Fleming, I consider myself a steward charged with the care of my house and the historical neighborhood in which it was built. 703 Fleming has been in my family for 20 years, and in that time, we have overseen various improvements, always respecting our neighbors and the historical nature of the property.

After carefully reviewing the material regarding the proposed structure at 704 Russell Lane, I must respectfully voice my opposition. The design of the structure is incongruous with the adjacent properties. Additionally, the roofline (depicted in their elevations as shorter than 701 & 703 Fleming, but mentioned elsewhere as intended to be taller), would be visible from Fleming Street. At any height over 1 story, it would tower over the homes directly in front of it on Fleming, dramatically changing the streetscape and nature of the neighborhood.

In the application, 701 and 703 Fleming are referenced as standard heights on the block which is inaccurate. The properties are not standard to the block but rather only to each other which leads back to the properties' charming origin lore: a ship builder was constructing the houses for his two daughters and he didn't want them to fight so he made the houses exactly the same.

The "sister house" story, together with the historic library and the visual scope of the block, is a staple of the many architectural tours that come by daily. This historic streetscape means so much to so many people. The proposed structure would have a significantly negative impact on what everyone here has worked so hard to protect.

I respectfully call upon the Commission to reject the proposed structure.

Sincerely,

Laurie Wilson

Daniela Salume

From: Tony Elitcher <aelitcher@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 4, 2025 11:32 AM
To: HARC EXT EMAIL
Cc: Andie
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Upcoming Review of 704 Russell Lane Application

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Because we will not be in the country and thus unable to attend the September 23rd meeting, and because the agenda for that meeting is not yet available, we ask that you accept the comments below:

My name is Tony Elitcher, who along with my wife Andie Taras reside full time at 420 Elizabeth Street, directly opposite the entrance to Russell Lane. The proposal for the construction of a house and guest house at 704 Russell Lane is inappropriate for this location within the area of Key West that is the purview of HARC. The outsize nature of the proposed construction, especially its southern elevation, would be visible from Fleming Street, towering over two small cottages that front on Fleming, akin to the surreal effect of the giant cruise ships that loom over the Customs House, Mallory Square, and the Historic Seaport area when docked at Pier B. The proposed second story with five dormers can not be said to conform to the style of the neighborhood. Whatever is ultimately approved for this project should be designed so as to not be visible from Fleming Street, and should be limited to a conforming style.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tony Elitcher and Andie Taras

Outlook

[EXTERNAL] 704 Russell La.

From CALLEN LOCASCIO <callencalli@aol.com>
Date Mon 9/22/2025 1:48 PM
To Matthew Crawford <matthew.crawford@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Crawford,

I am writing this email to you in opposition of the proposed building project at 704 Russell Lane.
It seems that Key West is changing so rapidly.
Instead of being a homey, friendly island filled with beautiful old architecture, it is becoming generic, with an eye on maximizing profitability rather than preserving history.
It is a sad state of affairs. Between the gigantic cruise ships and old homes being turned into corporate hotels, the flavor of the island has certainly changed.
It is my fervent hope that you will listen to the citizens concerns who are opposed to the size and scope of this project. I also hope you and your constituents will give some serious thought to preserving what little we have left that makes Key West a unique and beautiful place to live, rather than letting it become “Anywhere, U.S.A.”
Our motto here is “One Human Family” NOT “One Corporate Island.”
Thank you for your time and attention.
Respectfully,
Callen Locascio
800 Fleming St.

Daniela Salume

From: Michael M <michaelscottmueller@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 3:57 AM
To: Daniela Salume
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 704 Russell Lane

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Hi Daniela

I have concerns about the size of this structure and its impact on the neighboring properties.

The scale is too large for Old Town

Thank you

Michael Mueller
818 Carsten Lane
Sent from my iPhone

Daniela Salume

From: Rob Slifer <robslifer@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 6:25 PM
To: Daniela Salume
Cc: Matthew Crawford
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 704 Russell Lane

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Evening.

I have previewed the proposed plans for this property and I am concerned about the scale of the proposed property, especially for a quaint lane. The scale of this seems like it will be looming over the adjacent properties and adversely impact the surrounding street scape.

Sent from my iPhone
Rob Slifer
917-626-1964.

Outlook

[EXTERNAL] 704 Russell Lane

From Julie Goodridge <julieinthepool@gmail.com>
Date Tue 9/23/2025 9:31 AM
To Matthew Crawford <matthew.crawford@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>

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Mr. Crawford,
I am a neighbor of the proposed development at 704 Russell Lane. My address is 612 Elizabeth Street. I believe that the plans and the height of the proposed structure do NOT reflect the HARC protocol and feel that it is vital that HARC require compliance and reject a variance.

Julie N. W. Goodridge, CEO
https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.northstarasset.com&c=E,1,XHK4EztLfcEC8rVxFtLlBjUmcsu5zOCQsXj6vTIGHIpdgD0oXDfC3WY8jBeggOtx_Aa4XxQVwiqr9iTUP9aX4OZ72lL-NUn5v8wJTkmP_y5-PhLC5uHmpC3PxN8,&typo=1

"Where creative shareholder engagement is a positive force for change." TM

From: Carol Mansur <cmansurart@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 11:09 AM
To: Daniela Salume <daniela.salume@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 704 Russell lane

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September 23, 2025

Dear HARC Members:

My name is Carol C. Benesh. One of the three owners of 417 Elizabeth st. My house borders Russell lane. After looking at the planned structure proposed for 704 Russelllane, I realized what a negative impact the size (height) would have on the community. Quite frankly it's too tall/ big....
My family has owned our house for 50 years and we have seen many changes to the neighborhood! Specifically the 400 block of Elizabeth st. All of which have been tastefully done and have stayed within the boundaries of what was originally there or complimenting the surrounding homes. The proposed house will not do this. The property is too small to support such a structure and keep the integrity of our neighborhood community. All the surrounding homes ,on Fleming st. are small cottages. This home will loom over the surrounding cottages in a most threatening and despicable way. Russell lane also, cannot withstand more traffic.
We all know change is inevitable. And a home there is as well. This proposed home is too big. I am asking you to please reject this proposed structure.

Thank you for your time,

Carol Benesh.
On behalf of, Carol Ann McKay
and Holly Herring.
Owners at 417 Elizabeth st.

Second Letter of Opposition to Proposed New Construction at 704 Russell Lane

Dear Members of the Historical Architectural Review Commission,
This is my second letter of opposition for the proposed project at 704 Russell Lane. As the homeowner of 709 and 711 Fleming Street I was curious to understand the visible impacts of the proposed new construction.

This slideshow illustrates the incompatibility of the proposed new build regarding size, mass, height and aesthetics of the adjoining existing 1.5 and one story historic properties.

The slideshow also directly supports the concerns of HARC staff *"....contributing structures that define the rhythm and scale of the streetscape, the added height may disrupt the established hierarchy..."* Furthermore it clarifies the assumption that the proposed structure "may be visible", "is partially visible" or "is only slightly visible" from Fleming, as suggested by the architect in the three previous proposals.

Please take this into consideration for today's meeting to help protect historic Fleming Street & Key West.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bonaminio
709 & 711 Fleming Street

Slideshow of Opposition for Proposed new Construction at 704 Russell Lane:

The accompanying photorealistic images were developed based on the architectural drawings submitted to the HARC Commission by architect Brent Bender on Aug 26th, 2025.

To ensure dimensional accuracy, the proposed project and its surrounding structures were meticulously modeled in 3D using AutoCAD, adhering strictly to the submitted plans. From these models, initial renderings were generated and then enhanced with Gemini AI to achieve a photorealistic quality.

These renderings intentionally depict the scene with minimal low-level vegetation. This approach was chosen to provide a more accurate long-term perspective, as such plantings are often susceptible to blight, disease, and other environmental factors that can compromise their permanence. While the architect's plans utilize existing vegetation, we believe it is important to evaluate the structure's visual impact without relying on landscaping that may not endure.

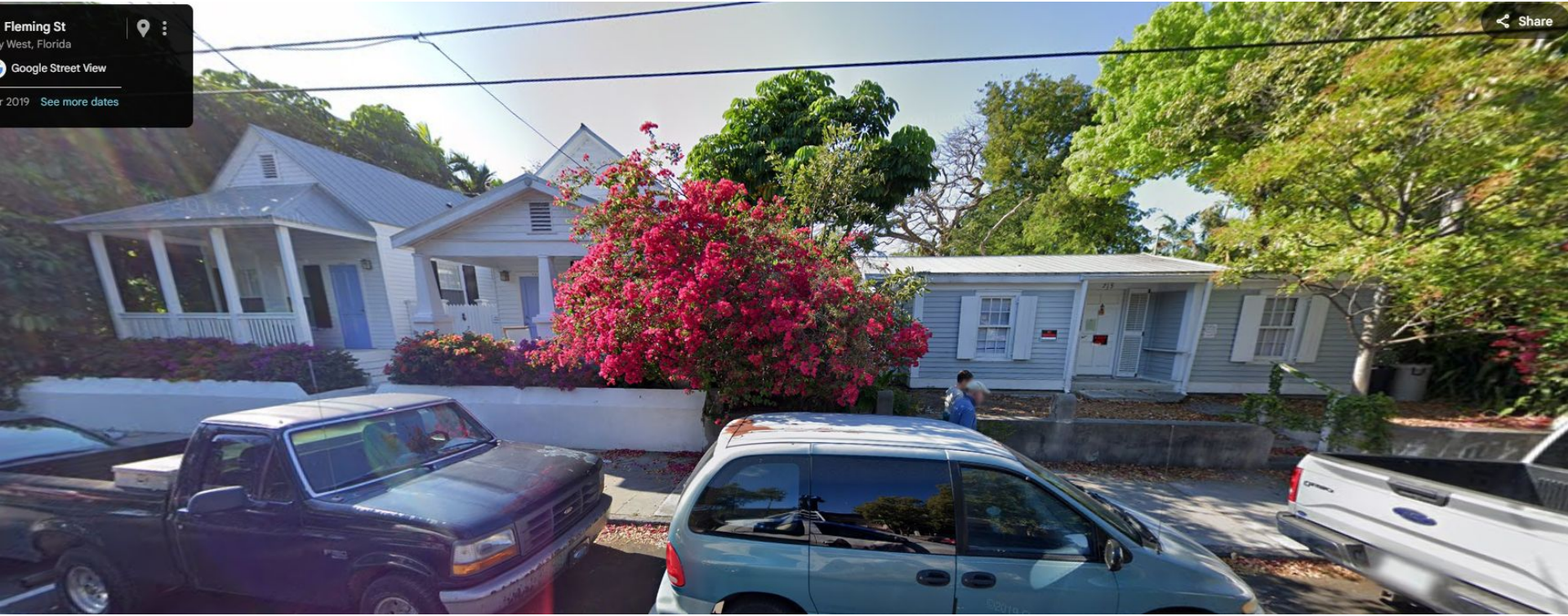
The purpose of these images is to illustrate the scale of the proposed structure and its incompatible relationship with the existing adjacent historic homes. The perspectives were chosen from various key public vantage points, including the street level on fleming and the top step of the historic library. The goal is to provide the Commission with a comprehensive understanding of the proposed project's presence within the existing historic neighborhood and the potential impacts on the contributing structures that currently define the rhythm and scale of the streetscape.

Notes	
Presentation Note: For optimal viewing, it is assumed that all slides will be presented in "Slideshow" mode. This view provides a cleaner interface and displays all content as intended.	
Slide 4	Google Street View images providing orientation of the site and its surroundings.
Slide 5	
Slide 6	image from Monroe County Florida GIS. Aerial Photo was taken earlier in 2025. ● Property lines are outlined in yellow. ● The proposed structure and pool are highlighted in green ● The "Protected Tree," as noted by the architect, is located in the corner of the property. The plan presumes construction will proceed without impacting this tree
Slide 7	image from Architect Brent Bender was overlaid onto Monroe County, Florida G.I.S. ● This plan mirrors the GIS data, with property lines in yellow and the proposed structure and pool in green. ● The plan similarly notes the "Protected Tree" and assumes no negative impact from the construction.
Slide 8	An AutoCAD rendering from the perspective of the Library steps, illustrating the mass and scale of the proposed structure.
Slide 9	A photorealistic, AI-enhanced version of the rendering from Slide 7 with adjusted view from middle of fleming street. **Note:** This rendering intentionally depicts the scene with minimal low-level vegetation. This approach provides a clearer long-term perspective on the structure's visual impact, as landscaping is often susceptible to blight, disease, or other environmental factors that can affect its permanence.
Slide 10	An AI-enhanced rendering of the proposed building, this image was created from the perspective of a 5'7" person standing on the sidewalk across from the library's rear back corner along fleming street.

Street View

709 Fleming St
709 Fleming St
Key West, Florida
Google Street View
Mar 2019 See more dates
Share
709
Key West Cemetery
Google

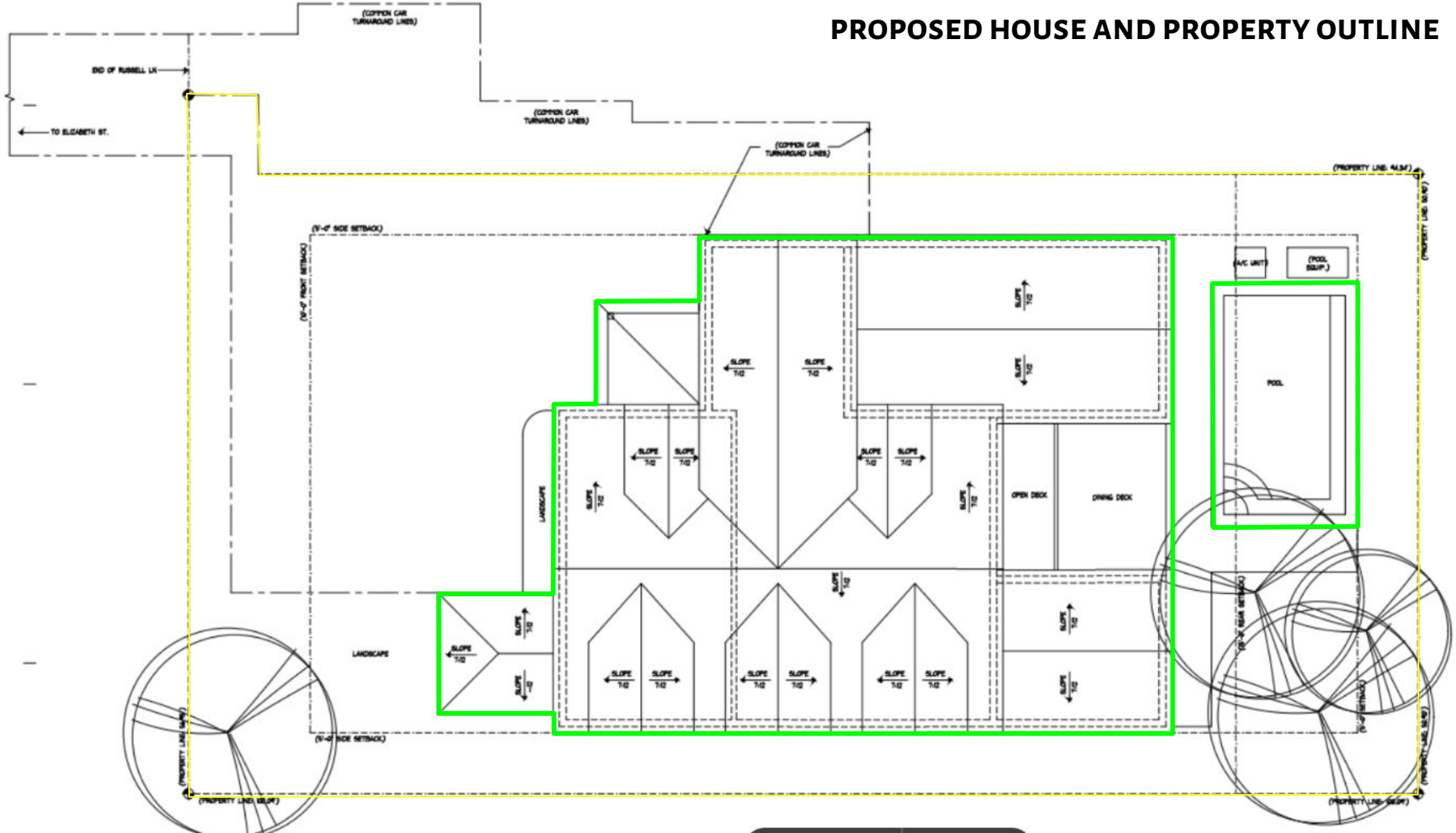
Street View


Fleming St
y West, Florida
Google Street View
r 2019
See more dates
Share

Satellite view detailing proposed house in relation to existing structures.

- Proposed Structure
- Proposed Pool
- Protected Tree
- Image from the County GIS with architectural image overlaid

PROPOSED HOUSE AND PROPERTY OUTLINE



View from the Top step of the Library looking across the street at 709 thru 715 houses

View from Fleming Street looking across the street at 709 thru 715 houses