

CORI CONVERTITO, PhD
281 FRONT STREET
KEY WEST, FLORIDA 33040

October 7, 2025

Honorable Danise Henriquez, Mayor
Honorable Monica Haskell, City Commissioner, District I
Honorable Samuel Kaufman, City Commissioner, District II
Honorable Donald Lee, City Commissioner, District III
Honorable Lissette Carey, City Commissioner, District IV
Honorable Mary Lou Hoover, City Commissioner, District V
Honorable Aaron Castillo, City Commissioner, District VI
City of Key West
1300 White Street
Key West, Florida 33040

Honorable Mayor Henriquez and Esteemed City Commissioners,

As both the Curator and Historian for the Key West Art & Historical Society and a long-time resident of this island, I write to you not only in a professional capacity, but also as a deeply concerned member of the community. The proposed demolition of the historic Diesel Plant complex is troubling, not just because of what we stand to **lose**, but because of what we could **gain** if we choose a different path.

The historical significance of the Diesel Plant cannot be overstated. It represents a pivotal chapter in Key West's industrial and technological development, one of the earliest sites of commercial electrical power in the country. Yet its potential as a site for community use is equally compelling. In its current state, the complex reflects neglect, not its rightful place in our city's narrative. But with vision and collaboration, these buildings could once again become assets that serve and inspire the community.

I believe the Diesel Plant presents an ideal opportunity to create a multi-use cultural facility, one that could serve as a family-centric museum, community gathering space, and educational center focused on Key West as a working island. Rather than offering a general overview of local history, this museum could specifically honor the industries that have shaped the island's identity, including maritime trades, cigarmaking, naval

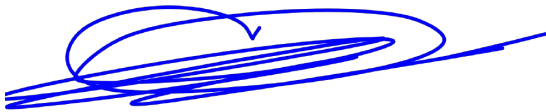
operations, and others. By thoughtfully preserving and interpreting the industrial equipment already housed within the buildings, the space could provide an immersive, hands-on experience that connects families, students, and visitors with Key West's labor heritage and culture of ingenuity. Located near Truman Waterfront Park, the Eco Discovery Center, Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, and the USCGC *Ingham*, this reimagined site would be a natural and powerful addition. Together, these destinations could form a cohesive and vibrant cultural corridor that enriches the experience of both residents and visitors.

Throughout Key West and in historic cities around the world, the adaptive reuse of historic structures has proven to be both achievable and impactful. Local examples such as the Custom House, the Gato Cigar Factory, and The Armory show that preservation can go hand in hand with meaningful public use. These restored sites have created spaces that foster civic pride, support cultural understanding, and reinforce a strong sense of place. At the Society, we have already begun to explore how the history of the Diesel Plant buildings, along with the industrial equipment they contain, can be preserved and interpreted to continue this tradition while serving the evolving needs of our community.

I urge you to see the Diesel Plant not as a liability, but as an opportunity to preserve a significant piece of our past while investing in our collective future. This project has the potential to unify our community around something positive, lasting, and uniquely Key West.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by several horizontal strokes.

Cori Convertito, PhD