

Keri O'Brien

From: Henry Olynger <henry@olynger.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 4, 2025 8:27 AM
To: Keri O'Brien; Mayor E-Mail; District I; District II; District III; District IV; District V; District VI; City Clerk External E-Mail
Cc: 'Hugh Morgan'; 'Patricia J. Edwards'; asheckler@aol.com; 'Hugh J. Morgan'; 'Marcela M. Gregory'
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Seawall Project / Southernmost Point / Agenda Item #23
Attachments: rendering south st.pdf

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Dear Madam Mayor and City Commissioners,

We recently purchased the Johnson House at 402 South Street in Key West and are also concerned about many of the same things that Marcela Morgan Gregory has listed in her email (following). We are great fans of the Keys and have acquired 16 various properties in Key West and the Lower Keys over the past 40 years.

In particular we have a great deal of difficulty getting in and out of our 402 South St. driveway with the crowd lined up to take pictures in front of the buoy. Enhancing the buoy's status as a tourist destination at this location will surely increase the crowd size, adding to the problem. Additionally, improving the road while eliminating curbs will create more of an overall sense of ownership by tourists, crowding into the curb-less streets and creating further traffic issues. Marcela is correct that many large delivery vehicles both unload in the area, then continue west to turn the "buoy" corner onto Whitehead. In fact, in a very short amount of time two friends' vehicles have been damaged by other vehicles moving through while parked along South Street near this location.

Perhaps the funding could be better utilized by moving the buoy to a more tourist and resident friendly location that provides more space for its tourist attraction benefits.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Olynger, Jr.

Marcel Morgan Gregory email below:

Dear Madam Mayor and City Commissioners,

Before you on June 4 at the 9am mtg is Phase 1: the seawall project. Phase 2 will be before you soon and this is the last meeting we have to address the serious concerns we have about Phase 2.

Phase 2 aka "Roadway Project" includes:

1. Narrowing South St by at least 2.5" feet.
2. Taking out the sidewalk curbs and making the street and sidewalk one level.

Narrowing the Street:

We need the street to remain as is in order to deal with the congestion issues on this block.

We have large food delivery trucks that stop in front of the Southernmost House, ubers, FedEx, UPS, and USPS. Many residents avoid this block because of the congestion so you may not be aware what the residents of this block endure trying to get in and out but to make the situation worse is hurting quality of life - which every one of you say is a priority when you run for office. By narrowing the street, it will be less room for bicyclists and cars to get through which will affect the surrounding intersections on South and Duval St and possibly United/Duval & United/Whitehead St.

It's narrowing an important artery. I suggest to narrow the street with cones and test it out before you make an irreversible decision. No one I have talked to thinks that is a good idea, and for what? The sidewalk in front of my parents' and the Southernmost House is plenty wide enough, so it doesn't need to be any wider. And how does a more narrow street help with the drainage?

Also, I asked the Engineer about these traffic consequences and the Engineer says the computer they rely on to create these designs doesn't take into account the traffic issues - it can't.

So that's why these designs need to be scrutinized and no one knows the area more than the residents.

Here's a short video to show there is just enough room to get around the stopped vehicle and this is not even a large delivery truck, as well as other concerns.

VIDEO

<https://vimeo.com/1068958718>

2. One Level/ Sidewalk & Street - Worse Idea Ever.

We are being told by Engineering that the reason for making the sidewalk and the street one level is to help with the drainage. The residents of Key West avoid driving in this area because it's crowded, so it's not being done for them.

And the residents of the block don't want the sidewalk curb removed - so why is money being spent on something that doesn't benefit the residents of Key West at all?

I believe this is being done **for the tourists only**, just like the plaza in front of the Customs House, **except this area has homes on it** - so it's not the right location for this pedestrian-friendly change to Key West.

I asked the City Engineer David Allen, what other street in Key West is raised to the sidewalk level? **He said there is no street in Key West that is raised to the sidewalk level.**

So this will also be an irreversible experiment in a congested area.

Furthermore, the adverse impact to the residents is not worth the benefit that will occur on a handful of days of the year for maybe 30 min or 1 hour less of flooding there.

If you remove the sidewalks, it will give the wrong message to the tourists every day of the year, that they own the street. We already have that issue somewhat there, why make it worse for us?

The City is giving our street to the tourists and not alerting the public or really informing the residents.

We asked to remove the one-way, but not to give us a more narrow two-way to make it just as difficult to get into our homes as a one-way would

By making it look more like Disney World, you're actually removing the charm of this block - completely and forever. In exchange for how much of a reduction of flooding time exactly? No one knows. So we don't even know the actual benefit to justify doing this.

--Right now, it takes maybe a couple hours on a bad day for the water to drain.

--The last flood we had in Key West on 2.24.25, I drove down to South St, and there was no flood after a few hours.

-- Even if the flooding issue is made better by X amount of time, it's still not a good idea to drive around Key West on those flood days for a couple of hours because other streets are flooded and can ruin your car.

-- Why not see how the new drainage and seawall affects the flooding of this area first before making irreversible, drastic, costly changes?

-- Who is paying for this and why if the residents don't want it? The seawall alone is almost \$1M. And that doesn't include the Pump we were told may go there, which is incredibly costly too. So how can the City afford this additional, unwanted roadway project? TDC money can be better used for so many other projects.

Flooding promises by the Engineering Department have failed in the past and pocket park is an example - also the high school field is another example. In 2018, the City Engineers swore that this pocket park design would get rid of the flooding on that block - and it didn't. That's why the tables and chairs couldn't be at the pocket park - correct?

"But the park seating never came to fruition due to persistent flooding at the edge of the park, as water seeps over an old boat ramp there, especially during high tide and south winds." (by: Mandy Miles)

<https://keysweekly.com/42/key-west-city-commission-meeting-gets-cranky/>

The Engineer couldn't predict this issue which removed our 100K/year parking spots and forever changed the look of the end of Duval St? (You can't even

see the ocean anymore when driving past it; it's covered by a tree & illegally parked maintenance vehicles for a hotel.)

And now it's not implausible to think that the pocket park flooding has infiltrated South St, as I don't remember a flooding issue like this prior to 2018 and my parents have lived there since the 1970s.

What goes up, must come down. How did the engineer not predict this would be a problem for South St? That the water at the pocket park (the area was raised like what they are proposing to do here) would then come down to South St? (I show this in the video above).

I asked David Allen will the raised street cause issues down Whitehead St passed United St? He said no. However, we've been told that before and look what happened.

Raising a street is not a guarantee of removing flooding issues in the immediate area, especially in front of the ocean, and it does not guarantee that the surrounding areas won't be impacted.

The question remains: why do it if raising this street will impact the quality of life of the residents - when the visitors who love Key West want Key West to remain looking like Key West and not changed into Disney World? What is the real purpose of this roadway project?

Please don't make it worse to live and run a business on this block, preserve the look of Key West as much as possible for all those who truly love Key West, and please instruct the Engineering Department to remove these two changes from the design immediately.

Thank you.

Best,
Marcela Morgan Gregory