

638 UNITED STREET

November 27, 2018

HARC Commission Meeting

I am a full-time, resident homeowner who loves the Key West lifestyle and takes pride in my home, my neighborhood, and my community. In an effort to preserve my privacy, my long-distance views, and my quality of life, I would like to express some concerns regarding the United Street development project, and share some possible solutions. Although this major development plan was approved by the Planning Board, the overall scale, proportion and density are incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood. I am not opposed to development, but feel this project is not in harmony with our neighborhood and would disrupt the existing historic context.

I understand this project is a profitable investment for a wealthy, off-island company and feel it will not contribute to the real housing needs of Key West. **The keys infrastructure can hardly maintain what is already here, and we don't** need more homes that stand empty most of the year; we have seen a dramatic increase in second home ownership, a significant increase in vacation rentals, and a decrease in full time population. These five, densely packed, three-story residences are out of context with our neighborhood and will only serve to promote the growing "old town/**ghost town**" problem. Unfortunately, the affordable housing units required to accompany market-rate structures are being held hostage to these incongruous homes. I realize this issue is not within the purview of the HARC but do want to express these concerns. I fear the perceived need for more affordable housing will override the unacceptable United Street project plan.

On a personal note, the height of these proposed homes will completely obliterate my privacy and long-distance views to the north, where I can see cars and pedestrians on United and Louisa Streets, as well as the spires of the Basilica and beyond. My bedroom, kitchen, and outdoor living space face north where, if approved, there will be a 29-foot wall of windows just over 50 feet away!



View to the north

I have outlined the proposed design inconsistencies and incompatibilities which **will compromise our historic neighborhood's desirability and integrity** below.

Guideline 1: Acceptable proposals will be compatible with the size, scale, color, texture, material and character of the district, sub-area or block and designed so that when completed the urban context in which it stands will not be jarred by the look of the new building. New buildings shall not overshadow the historic properties around it.

- The size and scale of the proposed project are clearly incompatible. The only homes that come close to these in size and scale are hidden on large lots on Villa Mil. There are no 3-story structures in the surrounding neighborhood.



Elizabeth Alley



United Street

Guideline 2: Acceptable development may be designed in a variety of architectural styles, so long as the design preserves or enhances and reflects the sense of place and creates a continuity of character of the area.

- The architectural style works but the density is out of proportion.

Guideline 4: Many recent modular homes brought to the historic districts lack a level of detailing (e.g. lack of window reveals) and do not have the proportions of the vernacular style they seek to mimic. Proposals that do not have appropriate proportions or architectural detailing of that style of property are not allowed.

- This plan does not conform in terms of proportion, scale, height nor mass, and is not harmonious with adjacent homes.
- The scale of this project completely overwhelms the surrounding homes, obstructs long-range views, and eliminates privacy.

Guideline 10: Proposals that include garages or carports visible from the public realm can only be located on a site where carports and garages exist on adjacent properties. In any other location, any garage or carport must not be visible from the public realm.

- Only homes on Villa Mil have garages. No other adjacent homes on United have garages or off-street parking.

Guideline 11: New buildings must be of a similar scale, form and massing to buildings on adjacent sites of the same land use.

- It is obvious the bulk of these new buildings is out of scale with the adjacent neighborhood homes.

Guideline 12: Roof forms, bays and other projecting elements shall be similar to those of same land use found on the block of the proposed building.

- These new buildings are over-scaled relative to the surrounding neighborhood and would tower over the adjacent, existing homes.

Guideline 13: New buildings should generally be consistent with the existing height of buildings of same land use in the district, sub-area and/or immediate block. Buildings at the corners of major named and numbered streets, may exceed the height of adjacent buildings, particularly if there is a prevailing pattern of such height differentiation in the immediate area and adjacent corners.

- Again, these buildings are not consistent with the height of the homes in the surrounding area.

Guideline 14: There must be a consistency of scale and proportion. The width and height of new construction shall be similar to those buildings of the same land use immediately adjacent to it

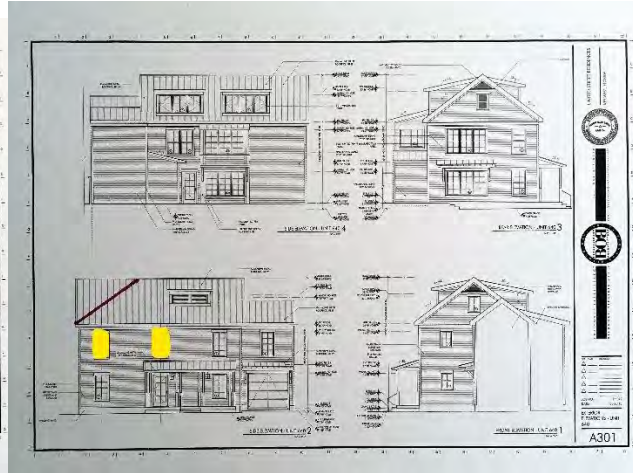
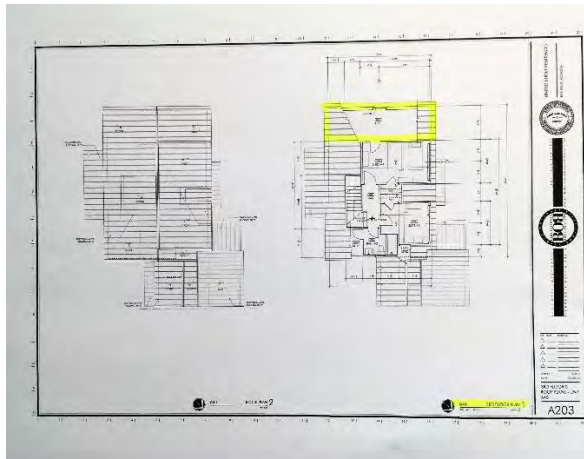
- Similarly, the density and mass of this project is not consistent with the height of the homes in the surrounding area.

HARC Questions:

1. *Does the new building or structure have a similar height to the immediately adjacent buildings?* NO
2. *Is the new building or structure sensitive and harmonious to the immediate urban context in which it will be located?* NO
3. *The new building or structure does not parody any existing building within the urban block.* NO
4. *The new building or structure does not overpower adjacent buildings or structures.* NO
5. *Does the new building or structure maintain the required setbacks and relationship to the street and or site?* YES
6. *For new buildings or structures facing a street, does any façade facing a street maintain similar rhythm, and composition found in adjacent buildings and or same typology?* NO
7. *The new design does not propose a carport or garage that is visible from any street. (Unless the immediately adjacent properties have historic garages or carports)* NO
8. *Does the new building or structure have a similar scale, mass, and form to the buildings immediately adjacent to where it will be built?* NO
9. *Are the exterior materials for the new building or structure similar to those used on the immediate adjacent properties or same typology?* YES
10. *The new building or structure does not include elements such as roof decks, balconies, dormers, roof forms, openings, doors, and windows, among others, that are incompatible or would unnecessarily intrude on the privacy of the immediate adjacent buildings or structures.* NO

Suggestions to make this project more compatible might include the following:

1. Reduce the overall number and size of the homes.
2. Rearrange the plan locating the tallest structures to the Villa Mil (East) side of the lot. This would be more consistent with the height and scale of the neighborhood and would preserve views while minimizing the privacy concerns of the closest neighbors.
3. Reduce the scale of the homes, particularly the height (eliminate the third floors). One and two-story homes are more compatible with the existing neighborhood homes.
4. Eliminate unused attic space on the third floors and taper the rooflines accordingly.



Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my concerns and suggestions. I know it's time for the old Dion's office to go, but hope that with the expertise and guidance of the HARC we can achieve a plan that conforms to the neighborhood, is inobtrusive, and serves the community.

Respectfully,

Mary Ann Matter

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