City of Key West
Planning Board
Re: 624 United Street

August 16, 2026

Dear Planning Board Chairman and Members,

I am writing in opposition to the 624 United Street variance request. This structure contributes to the historic and architectural character of the neighborhood and as such, the established Land Development Regulations for altering or making additions should be enforced.

624 United Street was built in 1889, most likely by Key West Judge Jeptha Vining Harris, who lived in the Southernmost House. In 1886, Harris purchased six acres near United and Santiago Alley, now Elizabeth Street, where he built frame homes to house cigar makers, spongers, and seamen. As a nineteenth-century vernacular residence that has stood for more than 130 years, 624 United Street reflects Key West's Old Town architecture and neighborhood character.

While the existing footprint allows the nonconforming side setbacks to remain, relocating the structure to an entirely new footprint requires compliance with current minimum setback requirements, not a reconfiguration of the nonconformity. As stated by Planning Staff:

The proposal also includes the relocation of the structure from its existing footprint. While Section 122-32 permits modifications that lessen the degree of nonconformity, it does not authorize the relocation of a nonconforming structure in a manner that establishes a new building footprint. Relocating the structure effectively results in the reestablishment of the nonconforming condition at a different location on the lot, which constitutes a reconfiguration of the nonconformity rather than a simple reduction.

In reviewing the variance approval criteria listed in Section 90-395 of the City Code, the application fails to satisfy the following required conditions.

- *Existence of special conditions or circumstances. That special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure, or building involved and which are not applicable to other land, structures, or buildings in the same zoning district.* **NOT IN COMPLIANCE**

- *Special privileges not conferred. That granting the variance requested will not confer upon the applicant any special privileges denied by the land development regulations to other lands, buildings, or structures in the same zoning district.* **NOT IN COMPLIANCE**

Both recent and potential developments in this same zoning district have been held to the current LDR's. Granting this variance would set precedent for all future nonconforming applications.

- *Hardship conditions exist. That literal interpretation of the provisions of the land development regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in this same zoning district under the terms of this ordinance and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant.* **NOT IN COMPLIANCE**

The minimum variance for side setbacks is five feet. The proposed setbacks after relocating the property 23' 8" forward to a new footprint are only *marginally* improved by a mere ¼" on the Elizabeth Street side, and 3" on the West side.

Application Site Data Table:

FRONT & SIDE SETBACKS			
	Existing	Proposed	Variance Requested
Front Setback	33' 4 1/2"	5' 11"	N
Elizabeth Street Side Setback	3' 2"	3' 2 1/4"	Y
West Side Setback	2' 10 1/2"	3' 1 1/2"	Y

Additional questions remain regarding changes to green space coverage.

The standards established by Section 90-395 of the City Code have not been met by the applicant, nor has the applicant demonstrated a good-neighbor approach by reaching out to noticed property owners to discuss the proposed development.

Please follow the recommendations of the Planning Department and deny this request for variance.

Respectfully,

Mary Ann Matter
1309 Elizabeth St