THE CITY OF KEY WEST
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Peary Court Housing Complex

Floodplain Management

Site Visit Observations

October 3, 2011

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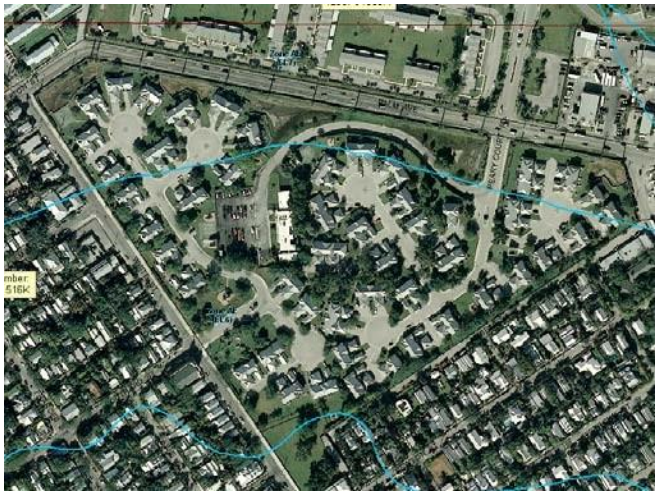
Purpose:

The U.S. Navy is preparing to sell its Peary Court housing complex located between White Street and Palm Avenue in Key West (triangular blank on graphic to right) occupying slightly less than 23 acres. The complex includes approximately 157 dwelling units, in roughly 52 buildings of various sizes containing two to four units each. In addition to the dwelling units, the site includes a large commercial building with an accessory building (currently being utilized as a bank), two guard shacks, cemetery, outdoor recreational facilities and utilities designed to support a neighborhood sized subdivision.



Located on a military reservation, the original development of, and any subsequent renovations to, this property was not subject to city permitting nor land use regulations.

City staff were instructed to perform a preliminary site visit to identify any development compliance issues that may arise when the property transitions from military use to private ownership.

All structures within this complex rest either in an "AE-6" or "AE-7" flood zone. The dividing between these two zone meanders through the complex. As a result, approximately one-fourth of the structures are located in an "AE-7" flood zone, with the remaining three-fourths in an "AE-6" zone.

The dwelling units are all of slab-on-grade construction, as is the main commercial building. The smaller secondary bank building is elevated on posts.

Staff had received an Ariel photograph with unofficial preliminary first floor elevation figures for approximately three-fourths of the dwelling units, and one of the two commercial buildings.

On Monday, October 3, 2011, city staff were escorted about the complex by representatives from the Navy's property management agency. A general tour of the area occurred, including visiting the inside of an unoccupied dwelling unit. Not all streets within this complex were visited.

Floodplain Observations:

Dwelling Unit Flood Elevation - There appears to have been adherence to ensuring the first floors of the habitable dwellings were constructed at or above Base Flood Elevation (BFE).

Enclosed Accessory Structures Below BFE - Every dwelling unit observed includes a freestanding unattached enclosed storage area and carport.

Preliminary elevation readings tend to indicate most, if not all of these enclosed areas are below BFE. As such, these enclosed areas are required to have at least two flood vents, but none were observed on any of these structures.

Exterior Air-conditioning Compressors Below BFE – Each dwelling unit has at least one air-conditioning compressor mounted on a concrete pad a few inches lower than the dwelling's first floor.

Judging from preliminary elevation readings for the first floors, it would appear most, if not all, these air compressors may be below BFE.

City code [Sec. 34-91(2)], requires air conditioning equipment to be located so as to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during conditions of flooding.

Guard Shacks Below BFE – The two entrances to the complex have an enclosed guard shack positioned at the gates. These guard shacks appear to be below BFE. Neither have flood vents.

Commercial Buildings (2) [Credit Union] – The credit union occupies the two commercial structures within this complex. The larger - main bank building - is a two-story concrete structure said to have been originally constructed as military barracks during the 1940s. The smaller free-standing building is a more recent improvement, given that it's considerably more elevated than the main bank building, with particular attention given to ADA compliance.

- Main Bank Building: Clearly, original construction occurred pre-FIRM. However, the building has been Substantially Improved, supposedly during the 1990s. If accurate, the renovations would make the structure Post-FIRM and require compliance with floodplain regulations. However, whereas the renovations

- Secondary Bank Building: A casual observation of this structure didn't disclose any floodplain compliance issues. Its first floor elevation is about two feet higher than that of the main bank building.

- Preliminary elevation figures were provided, but these two structures were identified by only one height reading. There's no indication to which of these two structures this height reading applies. If this reading is for the older main bank building, then this structure is above BFE. However, if this reading is for the new secondary bank building, then the main building is considerably below BFE.

    - A subsequent conversation with the surveyor, indicates the preliminary elevation provided (+6.24-feet msl), was for the old main building. If so, then this building would be above BFE (AE-6 zone), eliminating flood compliance concerns. An official Elevation Certificate is needed for confirmation.

Recommendations:

1. Determine if the numerous air-conditioning compressors are in fact below BFE, and should be elevated.

2. Installation of at least two appropriately sized flood vents in each of the accessory storage enclosures attached to the carports. If engineered flood vents are used, they must be certified by a Florida licensed engineer.

3. Installation of flood vents in the two guard shacks or removal of these structures.

4. Ascertain, specifically, the elevation of the large commercial building currently occupied by a credit union, to determine compliance status.

5. Elevation Certificates from a Florida licensed land surveyor are required for every dwelling building (slabs, not individual units/addresses) and commercial structure, including guard shacks.

    a. On the Elevation Certificates, the addresses should be ranged to include all street addresses shared by the single building (e.g. 323-327 Fraser Blvd.). Thereby making a single certificate applicable to every dwelling unit sharing the same slab.

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ADDENDUM

January 29, 2016

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Synopsis:

A question arose as to whether the exterior air-conditioning condenser units installed a few inches below Base Flood Elevation (BFE) had been elevated since first reported during 2011. A spot check of a number of units indicates these condensers have been adequately elevated.

The original 2011 visual site observations were that these residences were of apparent slab-on-grade construction. Subsequently, the original construction documents were discovered, showing much greater construction detail of the foundations. According to the original construction plans, these foundations are actually re-enforced concrete slabs supported by 10"x20" tie-beams atop 16" concrete pilings, bored 3' into the cap rock.

Originally, it was also reported the small carport storage enclosures below flood lacked proper flood ventilation openings. A spot check of several such enclosures disclosed these have since been properly ventilated.

Air-Conditioner Units:

During 2011, Elevation Certificates showed the first finished floor of these residential structures were at BFE or slightly higher. Since the external air-conditioning compressors were observed to be lower than the first finished floors, it was readily apparently many were below BFE.

While not all the exterior compressors were found to have been elevated, it was apparent those with the greatest flood vulnerability had been elevated. In particular, more of the compressor units for buildings in the higher AE-7 flood zone area were observed to have been elevated. Fewer units in the lower AE-6 flood zone had been elevated, but those may not have required elevation.

Elevation of these compressor units was achieved with the insertion of pre-treated blocks of lumber under the compressor mounting brackets. The compressors were then mounted to these wooden blocks, and galvanized screw-anchors were utilized to secure the wooden block to the concrete equipment slabs below.

At one location, where the compressor was elevated by two wooden blocks between the compressor and concrete, a firm grasp and shaking of the compressor demonstrated the unit was securely mounted.

A more comprehensive examination of each air-conditioning compressor unit and related Elevation Certificates would result in a more definitive report, if deemed necessary. Such is not deemed necessary at this time.