

Citizens of Key West:

***Why Is It Important to
Preserve the
Key West
Historic District?***



A message from your HARC Members

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PRESERVATION of the character and appearance of the Historic District of Key West benefits the educational, cultural and economic welfare of its citizens.

EACH YEAR, 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE VISIT the island, it is said for three reasons: the beaches, the bars, and the quaint Historic District. As we well know, many other places have better beaches and virtually every other place has bars. So the unique aspect of Key West is its quaint Historic District. If we lose it, then we lose the force that drives a major element of the present Key West economy.

FURTHERMORE, by preserving the Historic District we preserve the stability of its architectural environment and the property values of the residents of Key West. Citizens can be assured, if they live in the Historic District, that any new construction and any modifications to existing buildings will be compatible with their own property.

A RECOUNTING of the rich history of Key West goes far beyond the scope of these few pages. That history is reflected in the neighborhoods which have a unique character and architectural environment. Both help tell important events in history and thus add to our cultural and educational background.

OK, let us agree that preservation of Key West's Historic District is important. How do we do it?

IN THE MID-1900's, there was a general feeling that preservation of the buildings in Key West was important, but community leaders needed an impetus; a significant event, to jar the "system" into action. That impetus was created by the destruction of the Caroline Lowe House in 1959, and the decay of the Geiger House, now restored as the Audubon House. Stimulated by these and other events, in 1963 the Florida Legislature granted Key West the authority to create an "architectural review board. That "architectural review board" authorization evolved through the years to become, in 1986, what is now called the Historic Architectural Review Commission, or "HARC".

HARC CONSISTS OF VOLUNTEERS: five members and two alternates nominated by the Mayor of Key West and appointed by the City Commission. A preservation planner and coordinator aid these members. All changes to all buildings in the Historic District are submitted to HARC for approval. The majority of these requests is of a routine nature and is quickly approved by the preservation planner. Those of a non-routine nature are presented to HARC at its bi-weekly public meetings. Property owners may attend or may be represented by someone such as an architect or builder. The public is invited to attend, and all comments are welcomed.

HARC FOLLOWS the "Historic Architectural Guidelines of Key West," which are available to property owners and contractors upon request at HARC's offices on Simonton Street. These Key West guidelines are based on the "U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation" and comply with state and national preservation criteria. The guidelines cover in detail such subjects as building

exteriors, roofs, windows, shutters, awnings, entrances, porches, doors, paint, demolitions, relocations, site excavations, decks, patios, hot tubs, pools, outbuildings, fences, walls, air-conditioning, parking areas, and landscaping, including recommended plants. The guidelines also cover commercial buildings, flags, signage, and lighting.

SOME ARCHITECTURAL and land use principles are also addressed: siting and massing (the design of a structure should be appropriate for its location, and compatible with existing massing patterns of neighboring buildings); scale and proportions (project should not exceed the established size and scale of the buildings in the vicinity); as well as types of materials and roof forms, rhythm and texture, detailing and color.

ANY APPLICANT may appeal a HARC decision by filing a written request, after which, a date will be set for an appeal hearing before a special magistrate.

BECAUSE THE CITIZENS of Key West are legally bound to comply with the Historic Architectural Guidelines of Key West, the cultural charm of our City and its Historic District will endure for future generations. Please join your friends and neighbors in working with HARC to make this happen.

Thanks for your interest and help!

Your HARC Members

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