

December 16, 2022

VIA EMAIL

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE
PLANNING & ZONING DIVISION
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CITY OF OAKLAND PARK
5399 N. DIXIE HIGHWAY, SUITE 3
OAKLAND PARK, FL 33334

**Re: Historic Mai Kai Restaurant and Polynesian Show Upgrades
Development Review Committee (“DRC”) Project Narrative**

Our office represents TIKI REAL ESTATE LLC (“Applicant”), owner of the real property located at 3599 and 3635 N. Federal Highway, Oakland Park, Florida 33308, Folio Nos. 494224160010, 494224050260, 494224050270, 494224050230, 494224050220, and 494224050200 (the “Property”). Applicant is submitting this Development Review Committee (“DRC”) Development Permit Application for proposed exterior renovations to the Mai Kai Restaurant (the “Mai Kai” or “Project”).

The 2.7 acres (117,111 square foot) Property has bifurcated zoning as the Federal Highway Mixed-Use Business & Entertainment Overlay Industry North District (“F-1”) and Commercial Parking District (“CP”) with an underlying Commercial (“C”) future land use designation. The Property currently comprises of the Mai Kai establishment and associated surface parking lot with primary vehicular access off N. Federal Highway and secondary access off NE 8th Avenue. The building area totals approximately 23,582 square feet (20% of the Property), the landscaped open space total approximately 19,246 square feet (16% of the Property), the impervious open space totals approximately 74,283 square feet (63% of the Property). The principal building footprint and setbacks shall remain as existing and may be considered existing legal nonconforming, as applicable.

We hereby provide the following project narrative describing the history and scope of the proposed exterior upgrades.

1. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAI KAI

The Mai Kai is one of the most iconic and historically significant developments in Broward County. The Mai Kai was created by Robert Thornton and Jackson Thornton in 1956. In its early years, it generated approximately one million dollars annually, which made it one of the most successful restaurants in the United States. Historically, the Mai Kai included eight dining rooms, a bar, tropical gardens with walking paths, waterfalls, a stage to showcase the Polynesian Islander Revue floor show, and a gift shop. There was a large renovation project conducted during the 1970s. In 2008, the Mai Kai was severely damaged by Hurricane Wilma and underwent additional renovation for restoration purposes. In 2014, the Mai Kai was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places because it was deemed locally significant under Criteria A in the areas of Commerce and Entertainment/Recreation.

Stephanie J. Toothaker, Esq.

land use development political strategy procurement

The Mai Kai continued operating until 2020 when a pipe burst which resulted in substantial flooding and water damage thereby causing the roof to collapse. Due to these severe damages, the Mai Kai closed due to unsafe conditions regarding the structural integrity. The Mai Kai remains closed but has plans for exterior renovations through this Development Permit Application.

2. DESCRIPTION OF IMPROVEMENTS

An overview of the description of work includes demolition of the Bora Bora Room, partial replacement of the exterior flat roof with a new “A Frame” thatched roof structure, construction of a proposed event space, and access and circulation improvements off N. Federal Highway. Prior to the primary phases, the Applicant proposes to conduct emergency repairs that include repairing the interior finishes with significant water damage, repairing the plumbing lines, and replacing deteriorating landscaping and roof thatching. The existing flat roof shall be repaired, and a permit was received to replace the existing flat roof system that was leaking and compromising the historic interiors of the Mai Kai. Existing mansard thatched roof was removed to repair the existing flat roof. The mechanical equipment shall be replaced, and a permit was approved for the replacement of the existing HVAC equipment to maintain the interior’s conditions.

The primary renovations shall be conducted in a series of two phases, as shown on the Proposed Floor Plan (Sheet SP-7). Phase 1 includes interior upgrades and a temporary kitchen. Permit drawings are currently being reviewed for the interior reconfiguration of the back of house area to include the staff restroom, locker rooms, new ADA restroom, and temporary kitchen. Phase 2 includes renovation of the kitchen area, renovation of the dilapidated event space, A-Frame roofing upgrades, replacement of previously removed thatched mansard roof on portion of the east and north elevations, demolition of the Bora Bora Room and mechanical penthouse. All renovations are intended to maintain a similar aesthetic as the original authentic Polynesian design.

2.2. Access and Circulation Improvements

As shown by the Site Plan (Sheets SP-3A-C), improvements to the access off N. Federal Highway is proposed. The existing Bora Bora Room, located to the southeast section of the Property, will be demolished to create a path for the proposed driveway. The proposed driveway will utilize the existing curb cut off N. Federal Highway, but will be angled to the east, continue straight, and then lead vehicles to a roundabout where the valet station is proposed. This new design will drastically improve the flow of traffic during peak showtimes by creating approximately 300 feet of queuing space. The intent of the design is to avoid traffic congestion on N. Federal Highway and allowing for proper queuing internally.

Currently, the valet station is at the main entrance, underneath the original porte cochere. The original existing porte cochere will remain and be converted to an outdoor seating area for the Mai Kai patrons. In summary, these improvements are intended to enhance the flow and efficiency of vehicular circulation, create more activated outdoor space, and create a safer walking environment for pedestrians and Mai Kai patrons.

Additionally, as shown on the data table of the Site Plan (Sheet SP-3A and Sheet SP-3B), revised parking calculations were conducted for the improvements and additions. Currently, 154 parking

spaces exist (148 standard, 6 ADA). The total proposed customer service area shall be 10,083 square feet and at a ratio of 1 space per 50 net square feet of customer service area, a total of 201 parking spaces is required. The improved design proposes 123 spaces (116 standard, 7 ADA) and an additional 78 parking spaces are needed based on the existing parking requirements. Due to the nature of the Mai Kai establishment, a valet service shall be provided which reduces and consolidates the overall parking demand. Refer to Sheet SP-14 for details regarding the proposed valet plan.

The Applicant will be submitting a Parking Waiver which includes a Parking Analysis prepared by a traffic consultant as a part of this DRC Application. It is understood the Applicant will coordinate with the City's Planning Department on parking mitigation efforts, which include the addition of valet parking to control vehicular demand and flow.

2.3. Principal Building Improvements

As shown in the Exterior Elevations (Sheet SP-8 – SP-11), on the south building exterior a portion of the wall finish and materials are to remain. A new synthetic palm leaf thatch textured roof, impact resistant door and sliding doors, and textured stucco wall finish are proposed. The east building elevation proposes a new A-Frame roof with a synthetic palm leaf thatch textured roof, a textured stucco wall finish, and replaced thatched mansard roof to match the existing Mai Kai colors. The west side of the building proposed similar improvements including a new synthetic palm leaf thatch textured roof, textured stucco wall finish, a new exterior door, and new paint to match the original color palette. A majority of the north side of the building is to remain, except for a new thatched tiki mansard roof and new synthetic palm leaf thatch textured roof to extend beyond the existing. In addition to the exterior upgrades, improvements to the kitchen and the back of house are also proposed.

As stated in **Section 1**, the original Mai Kai suffered a pipe burst which caused tremendous water damage leading to a roof collapse. An event space is proposed to replace this dilapidated area. The event space is an integral component to the revitalization of the Mai Kai and will not only be a critical economic driver but create a space communities can come together and celebrate the iconic Mai Kai. All materials proposed are made from the highest quality durable materials that are intended to protect the Mai Kai's historical architecture from natural and man-made disasters. The Project's intention is to preserve a vast majority of the building's framework, architecture. The improved features and architecture are to be replaced with high-quality and durable materials that match the originals to maintain the historical integrity of the Mai Kai.

2.5. Civil and Landscape Improvements

As shown on Sheet DEM-1, a temporary construction staging area will be arranged in the southwest portion of the existing parking lot. A majority of the existing parking and pavement shall remain, except for the entrance off N. Federal Highway leading up to the proposed roundabout and sporadic parking spaces and islands, which shall be repaved. As shown in Sheet PD-1, the existing drainage system shall be cleared and repaired as required. A series of new stormwater grates and drainage systems are proposed throughout the areas to be repaved.

The Mai Kai is known for its lush landscaping and “jungle-like” atmosphere which create a secluded oasis. To ensure the Mai Kai is fully restored to its iconic standards, superior landscaping and water features are proposed in a series of phases. The proposed roundabout will feature a decorative Polynesian centerpiece and will be surrounded by more than 21 species of palms, bamboo, and tropical trees. Similar plant species shall be included throughout the Polynesian gardens with water features that will be cleaned, resealed, and upgraded. All landscape areas shall be provided with an underground irrigation system. the system must be designed to have a minimum of 100% coverage with a 50% overlap. all proposed trees will be fed off the new irrigation system.

2.6. Safety and Security Improvements

The proposed renovation of the Mai Kai includes enhanced safety and security improvements. The improvements include incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (“CPTED”) Principles such as natural access control and territorial reinforcement, natural surveillance, and site maintenance. The site’s property limits are heavily landscaped and act as a barrier between the residence and the parking area to natural prevent and discourage public access. The parking lot will meet the code lighting requirements and a local towing company shall be engaged in the event of unauthorized vehicles during off hours or suspicious activity. A CCTV camera system will be added throughout the property especially at main entry, main offices where money is kept, employee and self-parking area and all footage shall be backed up to cloud-based storage. The dumpster enclosure and bike rack area to have adequate lighting, visibility under the double gate and security mirror(s) to see around the enclosure. Lastly, camera locations will be coordinated with low voltage vendor and locations shall include all exterior corners of the building, main entrances, all exit locations, main office where money is kept, and employee and customer parking areas. Additionally, the exterior doorways shall have CCTV monitoring and a glass pane or peep hole so employees may see persons on the other side and all utility features will be secured to prevent use by unauthorized personnel. Refer to Sheet SP-3C for safety and security details.

2.7. FEMA Requirements

The existing Finished Floor Elevation (“FFE”) is at 6.78’ NAVD. If the existing FFE of the Mai Kai were to be raised due to substantial improvement, it would significantly damage the historic interior which would preclude the building’s continued designation as a historic structure which is what allows the Mai Kai to be exempt from the FEMA requirements for substantial improvement.

3. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

As stated in **Section 1**, the Mai Kai was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places. Thus, any proposed architectural improvements or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the City of Oakland Park’s Historic Preservation Board. Additionally, the Project requires a Certificate of Appropriateness because exterior improvements are proposed to the principal building. It is the Applicant’s intent to preserve as much of the original architecture as possible and only restore the features that are severely damaged or pose a safety hazard to the public.

The Applicant is eager to restore the Mai Kai to its former glory and continue its legacy with proposed improvements that enhance and compliment the historical architecture while creating a more resilient structure.

If you require any additional information, or have comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

/s/ Stephanie J. Toothaker

Stephanie J. Toothaker, Esq.