



Jennifer Munson &lt;jmy@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**Re: Public Comment for 255 Diamond Avenue**

1 message

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**Laura Balladur** <lauraballadur@gmail.com>  
To: Jennifer Munson <jmy@portlandmaine.gov>

Tue, Feb 27, 2018 at 10:42 AM

Would it be ok to resend that? I made a couple of edits. Nothing substantively different, but it just reads better. If ok, here it is:

February 26, 2018

I'm writing to voice my concern about recent developments seen on Munjoy Hill. There has been an enormous amount of development on the Hill relative to the rest of the city. Such development drives up property prices at the cost of affordable housing. I urge the city to support demolition guidelines, dimension changes addressing change of scale and mass, and design standards. Furthermore, I strongly encourage the city to be proactive and create a Historic Preservation District for Munjoy Hill in order to preserve and protect its architecture and its history. Moreover, I see this Historic Preservation District designation as an important step in reducing the rampant speculation that is driving up property prices and creating a lack of affordable housing.

I have been a resident at 89 Walnut Street since 2004, bought my house in 2006. At the time, my house looked run-down and some of its architectural elements were hidden behind aluminum siding. But I saw in the house a piece of valuable history. Indeed, I found out that at one time the house was home to a cobbler and later a sailor, common working class folk who lived on the hill.

I have been concerned with the recent developments that have been occurring on the hill. The first one is of course right around the corner from my house, Munjoy Heights. When I went to the neighborhood meeting where Jonathan Culley and his team described the project, it was clear from one of the slides in the presentation (an artist rendering of the view from Walnut Street, with a New Englander adjacent to the project) that part of what they were selling was the idea of living in a quaint New Englander style neighborhood, admittedly without the issues that come when you live in 100+ year old homes with creaky floors and drafty windows. What was not clear from the presentation was an idea of the scope of the project. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that Munjoy Heights can be seen from Alpha Centauri, no? At least from any point across the cove in Portland, look up to the hill and you can see this project that has forever marred and altered the topography of the hill. It is definitely way out of scope and dimension with its surrounding neighborhood. It has completely obliterated the scenic views of residents behind on North Street including the residents at the retirement community, and replaced their sweeping sunset vistas with views of industrial air conditioning units. Has anyone compensated those property owners for their homes' loss of value? Not to mention the fact that the luxury condos have gone up at the expense of the last forested batch of elm trees that lined the old Jack Path. I realize that elm trees don't pay taxes, but that is a shortsighted view; their value is worth so much more. As far as I know, there is one elm left in the neighborhood. One.

I am also concerned with the proposed development on Washington Avenue, at the old Casale's lot. While I commend the general idea for the project, I am again concerned that it is following a newer pattern on Washington Avenue that tries to maximize profits and building height at the expense of older homes on the

slopes of the hill that form the basis of its architectural history. Several years ago, a neighbor of mine spoke up at a city meeting about a previous project at that same location. His view – an important part of his home's value - was going to be completely obliterated by that previous project. At the meeting, his remarks were rebuked as being "romantic." Are they romantic? Fast forward to an exchange a few months ago about this newer project on that same lot. The project developer wants to go up to 4 stories high, while most older buildings on Washington Avenue are 3 floor New Englanders. When someone suggested that the developers consider building one of those floors underground, their response was, well... "romantic": they wanted to maximize the view. Aha! Clearly the view has an economic impact, but for whom? This part I find particularly troubling. The developers had considered the impact of their 4 story building on the neighbors, and they put up the slide demonstrating this. The slide showed a cross-cut of the slope from Washington Ave to North Street. The **only** buildings shown were their project and... Munjoy Heights. They had, in effect, re-written the history of that slope and disregarded any other building. Their baseline to consider their building's impact was a project that is way out of scope and dimension with the whole neighborhood and was built four years ago. The adjacent houses on the slope built over 100 years no longer mattered; in fact, they no longer existed. When does this end?

I urge the city to move quickly and protect valuable architectural history that forms the basis of this beautiful town.

Sincerely,

Laura Balladur  
89 Walnut Street

On Tue, Feb 27, 2018 at 8:35 AM, Jennifer Munson <[jmy@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jmy@portlandmaine.gov)> wrote:

Good Morning,

Thank you for your e-mail. Your public comment will be included in the review and will become part of the public record.

If you have any further questions, please contact me.

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