
Fwd: Munjoy Hill growth and change feedback

Jeff Levine <jlevine@portlandmaine.gov>
To: Jennifer Munson <jmy@portlandmaine.gov>

Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 8:53 AM

Munjoy Hill file.

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From: JoAnn Dowe <joythroughhealing@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Feb 27, 2018 at 10:45 PM
Subject: Munjoy Hill growth and change feedback
To: jlevine@portlandmaine.gov
Cc: JoAnn Dowe <joythroughhealing@gmail.com>

Hello Jeff,

My name is JoAnn Dowe and I live at [28 Waterville St.](#) I moved to Munjoy Hill in 2009 with my husband, Jim. The move was for both of us, a first experience living in a city neighborhood. When we first moved in, it felt very much like a quaint old time neighborhood with lots of interesting residents covering a wide demographic, interesting old historic homes and funky houses too, lively and vibrant, lots of secret gardens, outbuildings, additions... so many chain link fences too, reminiscent of the past and what it was like on the hill. After four years in this house together, Jim died after a late cancer diagnosis, a very deep and life-changing loss for me. ; (

I have to say that since I have been here, right from our beginning in 2009, I witnessed drastic changes to the landscape, with development speeding along at a crazy clip, propelled by the popularity of the hill as the trendy cool "place to be". In the neighborhood, I have seen many lovely old buildings knocked down, mostly replaced by "box style" condo complexes with first floor garages, 3 floors above, and big price tags. I have also watched a lot of the sweet younger people who were my neighbors move away, as properties change owners, undergo renovations and rents then hike up to unaffordable amounts for young people just starting out.

On my own street, I have lived through (not pleasant) a significant construction of a 4 story condo across the street from me, 29 Waterville. I have witnessed and experienced the impact of: the renovation of a large building at the top of the street into high end apartments, a major renovation of a formerly vacant building, a condo-izing of an apartment building on Monument Street at the top of Waterville, significant renovations of 3 of the 6 single families on Waterville Street, and the sad demolition of a really well kept, attractive, multifamily building at the bottom on Fore street to make a new "box style" condo complex. Another neighbor across from me down the hill a bit just sold his single family, after spending years renovating it top to bottom. I am so worried that the wrecking ball will be showing up soon. 24 St. Lawrence, hoping to demolish, lines up with my house, just one street over, and I would be witness to that sad destruction of another perfectly intact older building to make way for more building units. Some of my other neighborhood friends have made comments about the fact that if and when they sell, their house is going to get knocked down too. Its so sad.

Besides the detriment of constant construction with its noise, dust, blowing litter, and contractor vehicles parked everywhere, many times blocking the road, there is the end result of the building boom, which is more people, more cars, less street parking, and less character in the new buildings, not to mention the demise of some of the oldest most majestic trees in the neighborhood.

I feel that this quaint funky cool neighborhood, with all of its history and ethnic diversity, that we were discovering in 2009

is changing so rapidly. Urban in-fill is filling it to the brim. The line of sight down my neighboring streets is so constricted now with each new box building at four stories high and extending right out to the sidewalk. It is feeling more and more claustrophobic and congested all the time to me. 58 Fore Street project is going to create a tunnel like feeling along Fore street if they build it out as proposed. I know as a planner that it is your job to create and plan development, but I think the growth rate and type of growth is drastically changing Munjoy Hill, and not for the better.

I also agree with comments from last night that many if not most of these new housing units, are extremely pricey, and not at all affordable to the average Maine resident, and are attracting wealthy baby-boomers from out of state that may not even be living here most of the time. I guess that will at least make for less cars on the street at least some of the time.

I would love to see some condo conversions that would work with the existing building footprint and style, and retain their character and history. I would like to see more trees saved, and more affordable units built. I would like to see more affordable rental units for people. I would like to see more greens cape too. It seems so many of these new projects have no garden space, only hardscape and pavement. I think the moratorium was a good move. I just hope that modifications to existing codes can be made that will save some of these lovely old buildings, consider the character of the hill and how to preserve it, and slow the rate of construction down.

Thanks,

JoAnn Dowe