
Changes Requested to Planning Dept Proposal for Munjoy Hill Overlay District

Karen Snyder <karsny@yahoo.com>

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Posted in group: **Planning Board**

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Portland Planning Department
Planning Board Chair and Members
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101

Re: Changes Requested for R-6 Munjoy Hill Overlay District

Dear Planning Board Chair Dundon and Planning Board Members:

There is overwhelming amount of support and transparent evidence from the listening sessions, to Planning Board workshop, to the public comments sent to Planning Board, to petitions signed by Munjoy Hill Residents, and finally a **multi-group support** from **MHNO, Greater Portland Landmarks**, and the grassroots group **MHCC** (Munjoy Hill Conservation Collaborative), to ensure that there is balance between development and preservation of Munjoy Hill by the following recommended changes to the Planning Department proposal made at the 4/10 Planning Board workshop.

The proposed recommended changes to the R-6 Munjoy Hill Overlay District are the following:

1) Planning Board Needs To Ensure the Design Standards are Enforced

- The fact is the current design standard are not effectively enforced and certain developers/property owners are outrageously ignoring these design standards. Example: 24 St. Lawrence, 30 Merrill, 5 Cumberland, 25 Monument, etc.
 - The only way to enforce these design standards is to insert them into the R-6 overlay zoning ordinance.
 - Incorporate the language of compatible scale/mass into the zoning ordinance and to require developers to meet BOTH the key design standards and to be less than the dimensional caps.
- This specific language to incorporate into the design standards has been provided to the Planning Dept last week and supported by MHNO board in letter sent this past Monday, 4/30/2018 and MHCC letter sent on 4/27/2018.***

2) Planning Board Should Strengthen the Demolition Standard

- a) Keep the 18 month demolition delay.
- b) Require the owner to post required information if the owner applies for a demolition permit. Other Maine cities are doing this. Why not Portland?
- c) There should be also a public hearing to allow neighbors and other interested parties to be notified if there a disagreement between not meeting the exceptions but yet not considered "preferably preserved".
- d) There should be a deed clause for real "affordable" housing and considerably lower than the AMI level which is currently < 80K/annual income. This current level excludes basically all Portlanders and their families and only rich retirees can "afford" this.
- e) ***This specific language to incorporate into the demolition standards has been provided to the Planning Dept last week and supported by MHNO board in letter sent this past Monday, 4/30/2018 and MHCC letter sent on 4/27/2018.***

3) Planning Board Should Endorse Proceeding in a Timely Manner a Munjoy Hill Historic District

- Unlike what the developers have said with only razing and profiteering in mind and most do not live on the Hill, Munjoy Hill does have much historic fabric and architecture that is needed to urgently be protected.
- Our neighborhood is being razed, TRUE affordable housing for working class/middle class is disappearing and NOT being replaced.
- Greater Portland Landmarks has done significant survey work and have initially proposed Munjoy Hill Historic Districts.

-There is also additional effort being made now to gather petition signatures from property owners in this proposed Munjoy Hill Historic District by Greater Portland Landmarks. Munjoy Hill Property Owners are now understanding that Munjoy Hill is needing additional protections.

-Both MHNO in letter sent this past Monday, 4/30/2018 and also Greater Portland Landmarks letter to Planning Board are advocating initially using Greater Portland Landmarks survey work and initiating Munjoy Hill Historic Districts by Fall 2018. In addition, MHCC letter sent on 4/27/2018 also aligns with MHNO and Greater Portland Landmarks.

4) Planning Board Should Make Additional Modifications to the R-6 Dimensions to the Overlay District

- a) Min Side Yard Setback: No single side yard should be less than 5 feet.
- b) Rear Yard Setback: Change back to 10 feet.
- c) Height Maximum: Exclude the HVAC equipment to be above height maximum.
- d) Height Maximum: Only Allow New Construction on vacant lots greater than 4,500 sq ft.
- e) Structure Setbacks: Put back to pre-2015. Boxes are being built with no structure setbacks.

5) Planning Board Should Postpone the Amendments to 14-436 Building Extension Review

- There has been no study or previous effort to analyze the 14-436 Building Extension change ramifications.
- This would be a city-wide impact and not just Munjoy Hill Overlay.
- There is also no transparency as to who is advocating this amendment change without any due diligence efforts being made.
- As a result of the above concerns, this amendment change needs to be postponed.

In conclusion, the R-6 zoning changes made in 2015 completely goes against the supposed core principles of this City and the Comprehensive Plan which was to maintain affordable housing, vibrant neighborhoods, and environmental sustainable practices. In fact, it accelerated the exact opposite.

If the above proposed changes are not approved by Planning Board in next week's 5/8 Planning Board meeting, then it will be clear that the Planning Board is not serving the overall public good. It would be allowing Munjoy Hill neighborhood, community, and history to continue to be erased for a short term profit gain at the expense of Portland Munjoy Hill residents and future generations.

Regards,

Karen Snyder
72 Waterville St