

---

## Fwd: Munjoy Hill concerns about proposed changes

---

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

Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 9:25 AM

Munjoy Hill file.

Jeff Levine, AICP  
Director  
Planning & Urban Development Department  
389 Congress Street 4th Floor  
Portland, Maine 04101  
Phone (207)874-8720  
Fax (207)756-8258  
<http://www.portlandmaine.gov/planning>  
@portlandplan

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **elizabeth** <[elizabethmiller1953@hotmail.com](mailto:elizabethmiller1953@hotmail.com)>  
Date: Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 9:24 AM  
Subject: Munjoy Hill concerns about proposed changes  
To: "[bsr@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bsr@portlandmaine.gov)" <[bsr@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bsr@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[estrimling@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:estrimling@portlandmaine.gov)" <[estrimling@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:estrimling@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov)" <[sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[bbatson@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bbatson@portlandmaine.gov)" <[bbatson@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bbatson@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[jcosta@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jcosta@portlandmaine.gov)" <[jcosta@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jcosta@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[pali@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:pali@portlandmaine.gov)" <[pali@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:pali@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[nmm@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:nmm@portlandmaine.gov)" <[nmm@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:nmm@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[jduson@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jduson@portlandmaine.gov)" <[jduson@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jduson@portlandmaine.gov)>, Jeff Levine <[jlevine@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:jlevine@portlandmaine.gov)>, "[Jay.Norris@MunjoyHill.org](mailto:Jay.Norris@MunjoyHill.org)" <[Jay.Norris@munjoyhill.org](mailto:Jay.Norris@munjoyhill.org)>, "[munjoyhillconsvcoll@gmail.com](mailto:munjoyhillconsvcoll@gmail.com)" <[munjoyhillconsvcoll@gmail.com](mailto:munjoyhillconsvcoll@gmail.com)>, "[kcook@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:kcook@portlandmaine.gov)" <[kcook@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:kcook@portlandmaine.gov)>

We attended the February 26 "listening session." We very much appreciated the City's efforts to gather ideas about the Hill's future and how the City could/should guide this future. After much consideration, we offer the following advice:

Why we support a design review ordinance but not the creation of a historic district?

In addition to its proximity to the water, its breadth of architecture - pre-Civil War to 21st century - makes it a great place to live. The blossoming of contemporary architecture in the last ten years is a positive sign of the neighborhood's vibrancy and creativity. Given the decades of neglect, however, many structures have exceeded their useful life. We think it is unrealistic - and undesirable - to save everything. Not all old buildings should be considered sacrosanct. Just as there are mediocre examples of contemporary architecture popping up on the Hill, there are mediocre examples of earlier periods. We believe it is important that the City support residential growth for all income levels. Encouraging contemporary design, whether in rehab or new construction, is essential. We hope that the Planning Department develops an approach that acknowledges that Munjoy Hill is a dynamic environment.

Perhaps this includes developing design requirements that ensure compatibility with its overall historic fabric. If so, these requirements should focus on mass and materials. Encourage creativity and innovation, but don't micromanage. We believe a zoning policy should encourage greater density, especially along the Congress Street spine and Washington Avenue. For example, height limits should be increased to at least five stories. With increased population, an added benefit could be (we hope) increased patronage of public transportation as well as attracting other essential services, such as a grocery store or bank branches.

We endorse the suggestion made at the February 26 "listening session" of lowering threshold for number of units at which developer must set aside for "affordable" or contribute to the City's affordable housing fund. We also support requiring all new development or substantial renovations (such as condo conversion) to provide one off-street parking space for each residential

unit. While it's desirable to have a garage entrance to the side, it should not be essential in light of many lots' narrowness. We recommend that the set back between buildings be a minimum of ten feet, but not necessarily in the front.

Historic district status requires that substantial repairs or alterations to the exterior must first receive the approval the City Preservation Board or staff. We believe this impinges on our property rights. We are apprehensive that historic district status would increase ongoing maintenance and renovation costs even as many owners of multi-family rentals struggle to keep rents affordable. Finally we see constrictions on future demolition as impinging on property owner's rights to maximize profit. For many people, property ownership is their single largest asset and an essential piece for long-term care planning.

The maxim, "first, do no harm" applies to the situation facing the City vis-a-vis Munjoy Hill. We hope that the City proceeds conservatively and cautiously in restricting new residential development on Munjoy Hill. There's another maxim: be careful what you wish for.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Miller and David Body

[46 Waterville Street #3](#)

[Portland, ME 04101](#)

878-8604