

Letter in support of Munjoy Hill Rezoning

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Posted in group: **Planning Board**

Dear Chair Dundon and members of the planning board:

Like many of my Munjoy Hill neighbors, I have been grateful for the city's responsiveness to dramatic changes in the fabric of my neighborhood. The unanticipated side effects of the 2015 rezoning in R6 have included demolishing of antique houses, loss of affordable housing, and dramatic increases in property values which may cause spikes in property taxes when revaluation is complete.

The city's planning staff have done an outstanding job engaging residents, with very large turnouts at several meetings held at East End School. Among the excellent research done by planning staff is a survey of building types on the Hill. We learned we are mostly single family homes, and that the average building height on the north side of the Hill is less than two and a half stories. Many, if not most, of the two- and three-unit buildings on the Hill are also owner-occupied. We are more like Deering Center in home ownership and building size than we are like Parkside, and this social fabric is what makes Munjoy Hill a great place to live-not its proximity to downtown restaurants.

The proposed zoning changes presented in the neighborhood on March 24 are a good start, but more needs to be done. Specifically:

1. Mass and height: Newer bulky condominium buildings in most cases do not shelter the kind of family life typical of the Hill and take light and space from our yards. What yard space they have is usually paved over, and social activity occurs on private decks and balconies. This is done to maximize building mass and profits. **I respectfully request that you consider enforceable restrictions on building height and mass that reflect adjacent buildings, staying within the average existing building height and mass for a street or block. In addition, I request that you restore the previous lot coverage maximum of 40-50% with an exception for the "small lots". Finally, I request you restore the previous requirements for landscaping and greenspace.**

2. Historic Districts: to the two districts under consideration, I urge you to add two more. Too often we think of a Historic District as an opportunity to preserve the architect-designed homes of the wealthy. But Munjoy Hill has always been distinguished by its rich social fabric. **I urge you to add consideration of the black neighborhood centered on Lafayette St., which has been documented by Greater Portland Landmarks. Also, Montreal St, which housed the famed murder victim known as the Black Dahlia and a neighborhood speakeasy, but most importantly contains houses built in the 1800s which survived the Great Reservoir Flood of 1893.**

Thank you.

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