
Fwd: Questions for the city regarding Munjoy Hill/R-6 densification

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

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For the Munjoy Hill file.

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From: **Maggy W** <mawnola@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Apr 17, 2018 at 1:02 PM
Subject: Questions for the city regarding Munjoy Hill/R-6 densification
To: Jeff Levine <jlevine@portlandmaine.gov>, Jon Jennings <jpj@portlandmaine.gov>
Cc: Belinda Ray <bsr@portlandmaine.gov>, jduson <jduson@portlandmaine.gov>, bbatson@portlandmaine.gov, Spencer Thibodeau <sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov>, Ethan Strimling <estrimling@portlandmaine.gov>, Pious Ali <pali@portlandmaine.gov>, nmm@portlandmaine.gov, jcosta@portlandmaine.gov, kcook@portlandmaine.gov

Hi Jeff and Jon,

I am a resident of Munjoy Hill and have been actively engaged in the ongoing efforts to protect this neighborhood from what many of us perceive as the rapid pace of development which is threatening its fabric, character and livability. In various meetings, we keep hearing the term "Densification" and that term is used to justify building heights and dimensions which seem to most residents as out of scale with the existing fabric. (for example, allowing building heights of 45' when currently only 17 out of over 700 buildings are currently that high and the few that are that high, other than recent structures, mostly have much larger setbacks than those allowed in the zoning language)

Although I have the utmost respect for, and gratitude to, the Planning Department which has been working incredibly hard on defining better zoning rules going forward, it seems we do keep running into this word "densification", which seems to be part of a city policy and also seems to present a recurring conflict with the residents; some of us may just be missing an important piece of the puzzle. I am sure that my questions will seem naive, but I think they are probably shared by a large proportion of the population.

So my primary question is, what are the city's specific goals for densification, especially on the peninsula? We all understand there is a critical need of workforce housing. But most of the building going on, especially on the peninsula, does nothing to provide housing for the working population. We seem to be getting thousands of hotel rooms and hundreds of luxury condos, which are largely being purchased by retirees, and frequently as second homes. Any time existing housing is torn down, we are losing the most affordable housing that can exist, given the prohibitive cost of building. Workforce housing cannot be the justification for these new buildings. Therefore am I correct in thinking the densification policy must be a strategy to help boost property tax base for the city budget? Does the city plan have numbers in mind for this? Since many residents are feeling that densification is a threat to the fabric and character of our neighborhoods, how much is needed? What kind of new revenues are projected from future development on the Hill?

We have heard it said that "Portland needs to grow". I actually have never heard any specific coherent explanation why this is inherently a good thing. How much will it cost to provide the new infrastructure required to support this growth? What kind of growth would be good for the city? I doubt that "more hotels" and "more luxury condos" make a viable growth strategy for the long term. These building do nothing to provide quality long-term jobs; rather they exacerbate the difference between the summer and year-round population, logistics which make it difficult to support the infrastructure and small businesses year round. So what kind of growth are we looking for and how do luxury condos and hotel rooms

support that growth?

These are not at all meant to be contentious questions, nor are they rhetorical! I am sincerely trying to educate myself on the strategy behind allowing the kind of development that seems to be threatening us on Munjoy Hill, on India Street, on the waterfront and in many other areas that make Portland the special place it is. Last year, the Planning department put an incredible amount of work into the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, but I honestly do not see that the type of development we are experiencing is consistent with most of the stated goals in this plan. So I am really in search of answers to my questions. How do these projects translate to fulfilling the Comprehensive Plan. I am not looking for platitudes like "Growth is good" or "change is difficult". I am seeking detailed answers on why and much these projects benefit the greater good. For example, I am also an active member of the Portland Climate Action Team, and if this development moved us any closer to the city's stated Clean Energy goal, I can certainly accept the greater common good. But the buildings that are being constructed currently are not generally incorporating state of the art "green" building technologies, especially when the Comp Plan cites research on p.34 that re-using existing buildings is far more energy efficient than tearing down and rebuilding even to much higher green standards than are currently being used in Portland. If the answers to my questions are already available in the Comp Plan or other documents on the City's website, please help me find them; after 2 eye surgeries in the past year, my vision is still failing and I have a hard time reading huge amounts of fine print to find the relevant sections.

Thanks in advance for reading this email and for any answers to my questions, as well as for all of the incredible work the Planning Department has been doing to sort out the future direction of our great city.

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