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Date: Wed, May 2, 2018 at 8:45 AM  
Subject: Munjoy Hill Conservation Overlay District - why?  
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Thank you for considering all viewpoints on this issue. Elizabeth Miller and David Body, [46 Waterville Street, #3](#)

If it ain't broke, why fix it? My concerns about the proposed Munjoy Hill conservation district and related design restrictions are not about the specifics of these proposals but about the assumption that there is a problem. The solutions proposed by Planning Staff are in search of a non-existent problem.

Is the problem loss of affordable housing? This proposal doesn't address that.

Is the problem skyrocketing real estate prices? That's a function of the market place. Rising interest rates should cool things off.

Is the problem gentrification? Again, that's a function of the market place.

Is the problem "too many" tear downs? Statistics don't bear this out.

I've attended meetings sponsored by Munjoy Hill neighborhood groups and the City of Portland Planning Department. I've chatted with neighbors and friends. There is hardly unanimity on the what the supposed problem is. I've heard concerns about affordable housing, about ugly design ("beauty is in the eye of the beholder"), gentrification and "those people."

Imagine if current efforts to stifle development had been in place a century ago. Munjoy Hill would be an underdeveloped tract of small wooden houses. No grandiose Victorians, no three-flats, none of the variety that people now claim is somehow sacrosanct. A glass bell jar is poised to descend on what has morphed from a place to move from to Portland's most desirable neighborhood. I urge you to stop, pause, reassess and do no harm.

When I moved to Portland in 1985, the joke then was "last one over, pull up the bridge." In thirty-three years of hoping to shed the "from away" label,

I've learned that there is too often a knee-jerk reaction to change triggered by new people and ideas, even when that change represents economic growth and cultural evolution. Is this same shortsightedness threatening to choke off the new vitality found in our neighborhood?

I've been a resident of Munjoy Hill since 2007 and so have personal experience with the wave of renovations and new construction. On Waterville Street, we've seen one tear down / new construction, two vacant lot / new construction and nine extensive renovations in the last several years. Note the ratio of tear-downs to renovations (1 out of 12 projects). All work was completed satisfactorily from a design viewpoint without the imposition of the constrictive measures that are being considered now. So I don't understand why these new measures are necessary. What is the problem?

If a city is to grow, its neighborhoods need to present a welcoming, dynamic environment. Stroll the streets of Munjoy Hill and you'll experience a wonderful layering up of Portland's history from pre-Civil War to 2018. Most common are the Victorians large and small as well as turn-of-the-century three flats. But the neighborhood is more, much more. Push your viewpoint past 1930 and you'll discover much of interest. Mid-20th century colonial-inspired garden apartments, typical of those built to house war workers. 1960s modulars on top of cement foundations. 1970s brutalistic public housing and high rises. It's all here. This latest wave of new construction is simply the next in a continuum. In no other neighborhood in Portland can you see such an intriguing array of contemporary architecture.

If anything, the City should be encouraging greater density, particularly along its major corridors, such as Congress Street and Washington Avenue. Development pressures being experienced on and off peninsula show that it's time to stop being a big town and grow into a real City.