

May 4, 2018

Portland Planning Board
City of Portland
Planning & Urban Development Department
389 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101

Re: R-6 Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District

Dear Chair Dundon and Planning Board Members,

Thank you for your efforts to maintain and protect the special qualities that make Munjoy Hill such a valuable part of our city. In the face of zoning changes in 2015 that have resulted in incentivizing tear downs of existing building stock and new construction of out of scale buildings containing high end condos unaffordable for most Hill residents, we appreciate your considering carefully how best to balance the City's goals of preserving historic areas of buildings that have architectural significance and tell the story of Portland's early development, with goals to provide affordable housing and to encourage new development in a manner that fits the context of the Hill.

We encourage you to recommend to the City Council to direct the Planning Department to initiate the historic designation process for the two historic districts identified by Greater Portland Landmarks. Both Landmarks and the City staff are deeply engaged in meetings with neighborhood stakeholders to provide education and information about the potential impact of such designations.

If designation reports for the two districts can be completed by the end of August, 2018, interim protections can be put in place, and designations should be completed by the end of December, 2018. These designations can help with maintaining affordable housing, addressing the City's goals of environmental sustainability and strengthening the brand of Portland that depends importantly on the historic character and ambiance of our City.

We support establishing an 18 month demolition delay that includes a process for public notice and public comment.

Additionally we urge you to discourage demolitions by amending the dimensional standards so that the scale, form and massing of a project's context is taken into account when determining the maximum dimensions allowed. Inserting language into the ordinance as is currently proposed that has the effect of granting maximum heights as of right with design standards as a secondary consideration, will result in

increased pressures for teardowns and in new structures that will likely be incompatible with the scale and mass of others in the neighborhood.

Finally, while we have had strong concerns about the results of reviews under the previous system of providing an Alternative Design Review option, the proposal to allow alternative design review with reviews conducted by the City's Historic Preservation Board seems a reasonable approach.

Thank you for considering these views as you make your recommendations to the City Council.

Sincerely,

Sally & Ted Oldham
25 Vaughan Street
Portland, ME 04102