

Matt Thayer
339 Nevin St.
Lancaster, PA 17603

RE: 65 Munjoy St. development project.

Dear Matt,

I have briefly reviewed the plans and other information that you forwarded regarding the 65 Munjoy St. project. I understand that you are trying to provide comments to the developer and the city so they may benefit from public input into the process. Here are my comments on the design of the project, which you may feel free to share with others.

Observations:

- Munjoy St. is a narrow street, with mostly historic 1 and 2 family houses, occasionally there are 3 unit buildings as well.
- The modal front setback to the building facades appears to be from 0 to 5 feet of the sidewalk line.
- At intersections, some houses are fronting onto Munjoy, some front on the cross street, but setbacks on Munjoy are still very small.
- Predominant building height is 2 story, some 2.5 story gables, and rarely a small triple decker.
- Given the small setbacks, and narrowness of the street, a double-wide 3-story bldg pushed close to the street will have a very significant, imposing, impact on the street.
- A 3 story building represents a change from the historic scale of the street.
- Houses seem to be from 1870's to 1920's primarily. Usually have small porches, and modest Victorian, or classical revival detailing. Tall windows.
- Typically there are raised 1st floor levels, which provide privacy for 1st floor residents, and a sense of buffering.
- Materials-typically clapboard, double hung windows, wood porches, some "ornamental" shutters.

Suggestions

- Eight units is very dense for this site,
- The site plan would be improved if usable open space could be increased on the site.
- No handicapped units are shown on the ground floor. Confirm that this would comply with Federal Fair Housing Act, and HUD 504 regulations. (I don't think it does.)
- No handicapped parking spaces are shown, as far as I can tell. Again confirm this complies with Fed Fair Housing Act and HUD 504. (I don't think it does.)
- Could the 2 parking spaces facing Adams Park be eliminated? (They have a very long back-up route to get out of those spaces.)

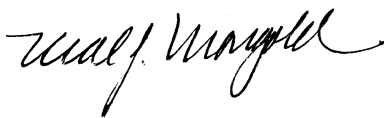
- Consider providing better buffering between sidewalk and building front wall at ground level.
- Consider changing the massing of building so facade is not as wide so close to the street. Perhaps more of an “L” shaped plan. Perhaps build over the parking/driveway at the rear of the lot, so the front facade could be more vertical and narrower.
- Consider changing small windows at 1st floor to taller, vertical windows, even though they go into the parking area they would be more in character with other windows on the street front.
- Consider more detailed wood work at the bay windows. The detailing could be more contemporary or it could be historic, but the purpose is to modulate and identify the bay as a feature...
- Consider pairing, or grouping other windows on the front facade to provide more interest, variety, less uniformity. (Also note windows shown on elevations do not correspond to windows shown on plans.)
- Consider using a different coursing (spacing) of the clapboards at the first floor level to add interest to the texture of the building.
- Consider other ways to break down the scale of the facade with step backs, recesses, and the use of colors to reduce the “boxy-ness” and mass of the facade.

I hope these observations and suggestions may be helpful to you as you provide your input to the community process. In our experience, different municipalities have a range of mechanisms to allow for design input on affordable housing projects. In Boston, the city’s neighborhood development department requires a very in-depth review process with city design review architects and with community input. Sometimes it seems a little too heavy-handed. In other towns, the zoning or planning board may have an architect on staff, or they may also subcontract to a design firm to provide design review. We have provided that service for some towns in Massachusetts, and we also provide design review services on a contract basis for the State of Massachusetts (DHCD).

If you have any questions about these comments, let me know. Again I hope they are helpful for your community input into the development.

Regards,

Neal



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