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Jean Fraser
Planner
Planning Department, City of Portland
389 Congress Street, 4th Floor
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Dear Jean,

As you are aware, our plans for the Munjoy Heights project have evolved substantially since our initial October 22nd workshop. We have attempted to address each of the questions, issues, and concerns raised by City Staff and by the Planning Board at the October 22 workshop. In preparation for the upcoming November 26th workshop, this letter will summarize the issues raised and how we have addressed them in our current and updated plans.

Trees and natural surroundings

Many stakeholders, including the Planning Board, at the October 22nd workshop, have expressed concern about the loss of trees, and have emphasized the importance of ensuring a healthy vegetated environment.

At the recommendation of Jeff Tarling, City Arborist, we have hired a licensed forester, Rene Noel, to conduct an assessment of the site and to advise on replanting strategies. Rene Noel has an expertise in Urban Forestry and has worked with the City of Portland in numerous instances.

Rene Noel's assessment of the site and mapping of the trees has been submitted to you separately. He concluded that the site is currently predominantly vegetated with non-native invasive species. His report is excerpted below:

"...there are no natural soil types on the property...the understory is composed almost entirely of invasive species....these undesirable plants occupy most or all of the growing space...The community of overstory trees is composed mostly of stems of an undesirable specie, Norway Maple...Norway Maple is 96% of this forest...Removal of this forest and replacement with more suitable species in the

landscaping and buffer areas could improve urban forest and plant community of this area.”

Our landscape plan focuses on aggressive planting of trees and shrubs, well beyond the requirements of the Ordinance. The updated Landscape Plan contemplates planting 67 new native specie trees and many more shrubs. The planted shrubs will cover nearly the entirety of the unbuilt space (roughly 27,165 square feet). The re-vegetation strategy proposes native plants in densely planted woodland gardens that mimics native forest plant communities. Plant selections and spacing will reduce erosion, lower long term maintenance, cut water costs, and provide wildlife habitat. We expect that the transition from invasive species to native plants and trees on the site will lead to improved ecological health for the neighborhood and City. Plant list and placements can be found on drawings L1.0 and L2.0.

Scenic Beauty

The “Scenic Beauty” provision in the Sub-division Ordinance is somewhat vague. However, we have taken steps to ensure that Munjoy Heights fits well and attractively into the urban environment. Attached to this letter are a series of images that present the project from a number of views, both far and near. Among the steps that we have taken to improve and soften the appearance of the project from various vantage points are as follows:

1. Integrate buildings into the hillside to minimize overall profile (see drawing “Building Sections with Wall Heights”), minimizing height of retaining walls.
2. Boston Ivy will planted at the base of the visible retaining walls at a spacing to maximize coverage, softening the built look.
3. Planted woodland gardens surrounding the buildings.
4. Trees species selected and located to visually tie into the surrounding neighborhood scale street trees and maintain continuity of the long view as an integral part of the urban fabric
5. Woonerf concept provides appealing Open Space and tree-lined lane.

Pedestrian Connectivity and Public Access

We remain committed to preserving and enhancing pedestrian connectivity through the site. At the urging of Portland Trails and the Planning Board, we have added a pedestrian connection from Munjoy Heights to the top of East Cove Street, which would provide pedestrian access to/from Washington Ave. The series of stairs and ramps connecting East Cove Street to the Jack Path trail is clearly delineated in Landscape Plan L1.0.

Redfern is working with Portland Trails to deliver a perpetual public access easement, effectively granting the public the right to use and enjoy the Open Space at the core of the Munjoy Heights development (the Woonerf), as well as to use the trail connections.

Livable / Usable Open Space

Residents can easily access a number of public open spaces in the immediate area: the Eastern Promenade, North Street Community Gardens, Standpipe Park, Backcove trail, etc. In addition, each unit has more than 250 square feet of outdoor terraces.

Additionally, benches will be located throughout the Woonerf to provide residents and the public opportunities to occupy the central space; enhancing the courtyard aspect and fostering a sense of place and social interaction. In a sense, the driveway (Woonerf) becomes an important Open Space.

Road Standards, Emergency Vehicle Access, and Pedestrians

The introduction of the Woonerf presents a new way of thinking about streets. The European concept, giving equal (or greater) priority to pedestrians and cycles versus cars, runs counter to a number of the City's Technical Standards. As you know, we have had several meetings and discussions with each of Captain Pirone of the Fire Department, Tom Errico of T.Y. Lin, and representatives from the City's Department of Public Services. We understand that our current design is satisfactory to each of these stakeholders. We hope that the Munjoy Heights Woonerf becomes a model for progressive, pedestrian orientated neighborhoods for the City of Portland.

Site Lighting

The light lumens will be compliant with city standards. There are (2) different scale fixtures (Pole and Bollard) throughout the woonerf to provide the requirements for safety while enhancing the nightscape qualities of a residential community. A Photometric Plan has been submitted separately.

Stormwater

We have separately submitted a detailed Stormwater Plan. The project anticipates incorporating Maine DEP approved stormwater Best Management Practices to meet the General and Flooding Standards.

The post development (proposed) peak stormwater surface flows tributary to the down gradient property owners shall remain below the predevelopment (existing) levels. This is a result of the project's LID techniques, subsurface detention, terracing the development, extensive landscaping and diverting a portion of the tributary area.

The proposed development was designed to meet the requirements implemented by the MDEP under the Stormwater Management Statute (38 M.R.S.A. § 420-D) as well as the City of Portland Technical Manual – Section 5 – Portland Stormwater Management Standards. As a result the design of the proposed development and stormwater system does not anticipate erosion, drainage or runoff problems either in the development or with respect to adjoining properties.


Erosion Control Concerns (particularly during Construction)

In conjunction with Wright-Ryan Construction, the project's construction manager, we have developed detailed Construction Management Plan, in addition to the Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control Plan (Drawing C-30). These drawings have been submitted separately. To properly manage erosion during construction, construction will be sequenced as follows:

1. Install a stabilized construction entrance in all locations where construction traffic will enter and exit the site.
2. Install perimeter silt fence or erosion control berm.
3. Install all other erosion control devices as necessary throughout the remainder of this schedule
4. Commence the installation of the downhill retaining wall(s).
5. Commence the installation of the down gradient foundation and wall for Units 19-29. Cut and fill only as necessary to backfill the retaining wall and foundation wall as designed within the appropriate plan(s).
6. Commence remaining earthwork operations, wall and foundation installation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,


Jonathan Culley