

**NARRATIVE TO ADDRESS BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS**

The corner of Congress Street and Washington Ave is a prominent location and has tremendous opportunity to be a proud anchor building for the City of Portland. The Developer, Architect and project team members are extremely motivated to create a building that achieves this goal. We feel that the India Street Form Based Code and the Urban Active Subdistrict helps support this goal and in our opinion, many of the IS-FBC Building Design Standards reflect our shared values in design. The following narrative and diagrams are intended to help demonstrate that the proposed design meets these design standards and values.

Caleb Johnson, AIA and Patrick Boothe, AIA

**1 - NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT**

The project is bounded on its west by the India Street Historic District. In this district, there is a high concentration of Italianate and Second Empire style structures with red brick facades built predominantly after the great fire between the years 1866 and 1890. As a result, the neighborhood has a very cohesive aesthetic. The proposed design is meant to be "of its era" however lend thoughtful attention to its context. The proposed design continues the timeless quality of brick facades but rather than mimic this using standard red brick, we propose the opportunity provide more contemporary brick trends and technologies.

The neighborhood also has a highly active streetscape with many mixed use buildings with large historic storefronts. The design of the new project continues the vibrant activity at the street level with transparent glazing for visuals to the active commercial space within. These public spaces are easily identifiable and are recessed from the brick facades above. This recess deepens at the private lobby entrance to provide an architectural distinction between public and private spaces.

\*Information and text obtained from the India Street Historic District website.  
[www.portlandmaine.gov/1738/India-Street-Historic-District](http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1738/India-Street-Historic-District)

**2- MASSING & PROPORTION**

The building design concept is a cohesive three level brick mass which is delicately lifted above the street plane by a glass wall. We sought to minimize aggressive changes in building materials and form along the street frontages as an homage to the historic neighborhood. In addition, the top of the brick mass is intended to match the height to the neighboring four story brick building, "The Snug".

The prominent corner at Washington and Congress is expressed via a 4'-0" fillet radius at the brick mass. This same radius is carried to the northeastern and northwestern corners of the property as these are visible when approaching Congress Street from Washington Ave to create a complete and consistent building form. The decision to use a radius corner versus a more traditional chamfered corner was a deliberate choice in order to accentuate the softness of a ribbon of brick wrapping the building, strengthening the building concept. As the rounded brick corner is oriented to the south, the expectation is that it will catch a soft vertical beam of light and shift across the radius as the sun moves throughout the day. It is our opinion that this is a stronger and more timeless aesthetic than excessive detailing or signage at the corner.

At the 5th floor, the building mass steps back 15'-0" from the streets and 5'-0" along the northern property line to distinguish itself from the brick mass. By incorporating a high percentage of glazing at this level, similar to the ground level, it provides a modern take on a classical three-part mass building typology.

**3- ARTICULATION & COMPOSITION**

Among the design values that our firm holds strong is "honesty" in materials and their expression. We chose to use brick as a primary finish because it is a material that not only is used predominantly in the neighborhood, but has graced buildings for thousands of years. At the same time, advancements in technologies have pushed the brick beyond the typical common load-bearing red brick. The brick used in this project is intended to be a gray or iron-spot brick of Norman proportions with slight color differentiations, subtle reflective qualities and custom shapes.

We believe that subtle moves to reinforce design integrity hold a stronger appeal over time rather than excessive ornamentation or decoration. As such, the brick mass is articulated by gentle moves that enhance the overall aesthetic. Brick jambs at the recessed windows are radiused to complement the grander radius at the building corners. As the sun moves over and across the building, light caught at these radiused jambs will change throughout the day much like the building corner. Running bond style coursing switches to one level of soldier coursing at the intermediate levels and two levels of soldier coursing are provided at the 2nd level as an honest expression of additional structural height at the 2nd level and at the top of the mass where the additional layer of coursing provides a parapet for the green roof.

**4 - FENESTRATION**

The windows for the residential units on levels 2-4 are floor to ceiling and act as a vertical rhythmic pattern between the solid and void of glass and brick. The design of the structural system is that of a load bearing exterior wall with an edge beam within the height of the soldier coursing. This frees the building facade from the need of "expressed" vertical columns and instead allows the window fenestration to shift dynamically at the street facades.

The fenestration at the ground floor is well above the minimum 60% of the design standards. This glass is intended to be highly transmission and will achieve a VT rating of at least .61 as recommended in the design standards. The only locations where fenestration is not provided at the street level is at the garage entrance at the northeastern corner of the property. The overhead door is setback a minimum of 20'-0" from the property line (approximately 28'-0" from the street edge) and screening is provided to deemphasize its location while still expressing a void much like the glass facade elsewhere at the ground plane.

**5 - BUILDING MATERIALS**

As mentioned earlier in the narrative, it is important to the integrity of the design to reflect the neighborhood context. As a result the primary material visible from the public way is brick to exhibit longevity and integrity. Other materials will be carefully selected for durability and cost.

**6 - BUILDING ENTRIES**

There are several distinct points of entry to the building at the grade plane, all of which are recessed inward from the brick mass above. There will be entry on Congress Street which leads to the commercial tenant space, at least one additional entry to the same tenant space will be provided along Washington Ave. Another entry will be provided for the second commercial tenant accessed from Washington Ave. Moving north along Washington Ave will be the residential lobby entry which is intended to be a distinct "module" recessed slightly deeper than the adjacent commercial spaces. Lastly, a door next to overhead garage door is provided for residences to have direct access to/from the parking structure. This also acts as the third "module" to meet the requirements of IS-FBC UA dimensional requirements for additional building length.

We note that the UA guidelines recommend an entrance at the corner. However, the dimensions of the Congress Street frontage and the depths of the sidewalks proved to be limiting factors. We studied this as an option, including building in a chamfer at the storefront, but felt that in order to strengthen the radiused corner of the brick mass the storefront should come to a butt-glazed mitered corner.

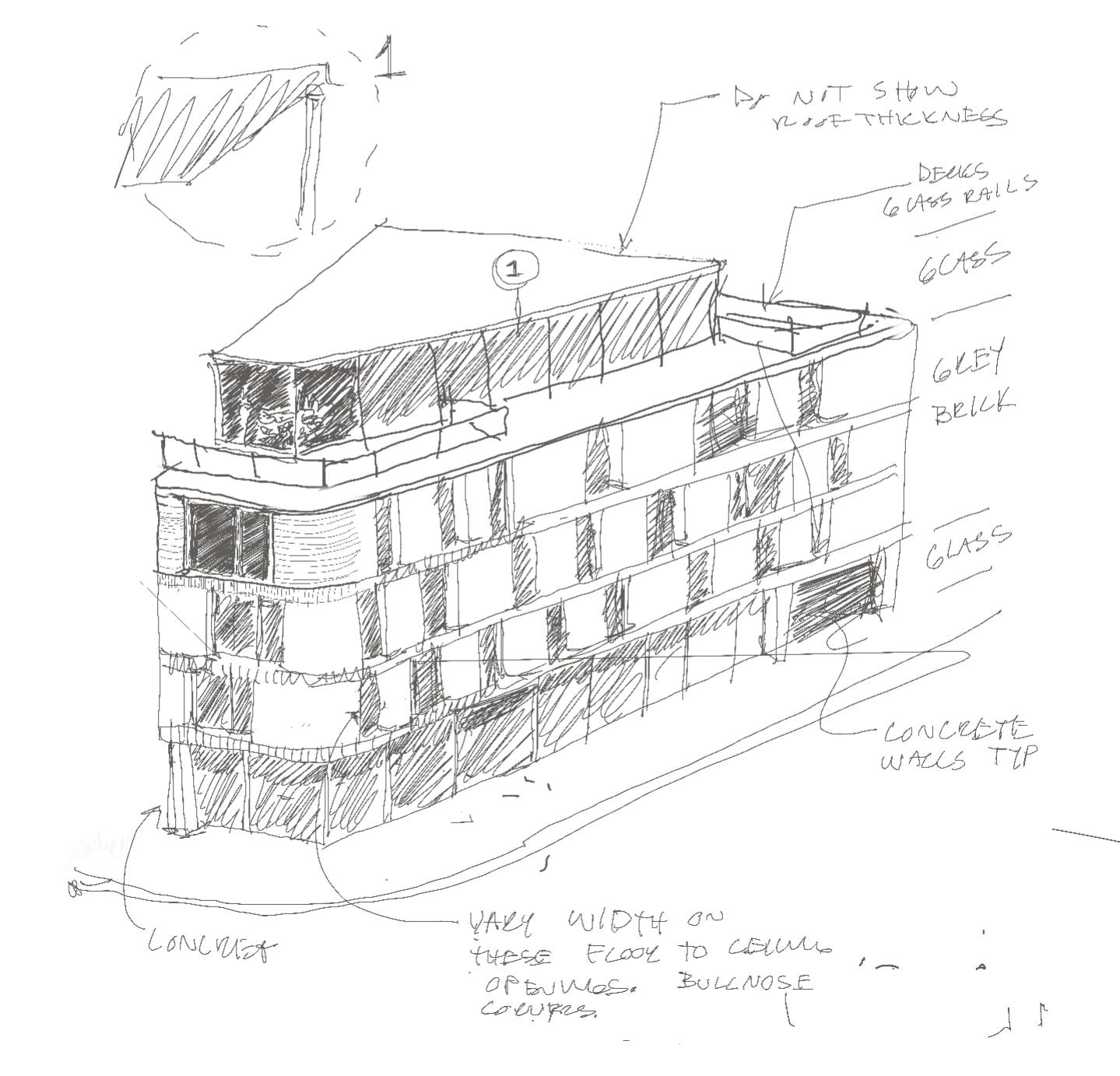
However, recognizing that this corner must be emphasized at the pedestrian layer, we have indicated improvements as shown on the site plan. These include granite blocks with street name inscriptions and a new boundary marker.

**7 - ROOF LINES**

The 5th floor houses the penthouse unit along with terraces and vegetative roofing. The green roof is sized to meet the requirement for the bonus story per IS-FBC. The 5th floor mass is setback a minimum of 15'-0" from both street frontages and 5'-0" from the northerly boundary. At the upper roof level, outdoor HVAC units for the residences and other mechanical equipment are set back further from the street and screened with a material to complement the penthouse finish as our studies show that these would be otherwise visible from different locations particularly as you move higher on Munjoy Hill.

**8 - STRUCTURED PARKING**

The proposed design includes a below grade automated parking structure which is accessed from the northeasternmost corner of the property and is the furthest location from the corner of the intersecting streets. The effort was to deemphasize this as much as possible while still providing appropriate maneuverability for vehicles. The identifiable area as parking constitutes about 32'-0" of the overall 113'-0" building length along Washington Ave. This is 28% of the building length along the street and well below the 50% max as established in the guidelines. The garage door is entrance is set back from the street a minimum of 20'-0" as establish in UA siting standards. The exposed side of the parking entrance visible through the parking lot of the adjacent Big Apple Gas Station is screened with slatted wood.



ORIGINAL CONCEPT SKETCH



CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING AS SEEN FROM MONTFORT STREET FROM EYE LEVEL



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF CORNER



VIEW FROM WASHINGTON LOOKING SOUTHWEST

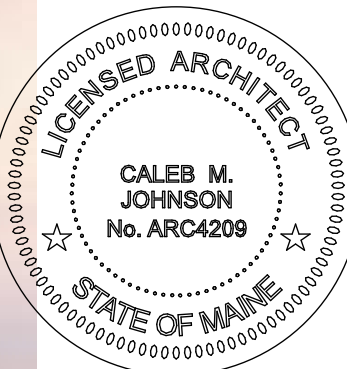


VIEW FROM CUMBERLAND AVE LOOKING EAST



VIEW FROM CONGRESS LOOKING UP TOWARDS MUNJOY HILL

The Views above show neighborhood context by using "3D Building" layer information using Google Earth®. The proposed project's Google Earth .kmz file is available upon request to allow unlimited viewing angles.



PERMIT SET

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 7/21/17  
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ZONING ANALYSIS OF IS-FBC  
 BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS  
 A-0-1