

From: Susan Baker-Kaplan <suegdi@earthlink.net>
To: Jean Fraser <JF@portlandmaine.gov>
Date: 1/22/2014 9:18 AM
Subject: Letter to the Planning Board re: 118 Congress St Proposed Development

Dear Jean,

Thank you for your information and updates regarding the development at 118 Congress St. I appreciate your time and patience. Thank you very much!! It doesn't look like the developers have paid much attention to the comments made at the December 17th meeting...not much has changed to reduce the overall scale and mass of the project nor protection of the public's scenic corridor including trees, that have little hope of growing in the shadows of this massive building. There are also several public safety issues that still need to be addressed. Thank you for forwarding the following letter to the Planning Board.

Most Sincerely,
Susan Baker-Kaplan

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January 21, 2014

City Planning Division
Congress St
Portland, Maine 04101

Dear Planning Board Members,

Thank you for your serious consideration of the impact that the proposed building development at 118 Congress St will have on our neighborhood.

This building would be a major change on Munjoy Hill in terms of MASS and scale. There are no other buildings like it in the area.

It will dwarf the corner of Congress and St Lawrence streets casting shadows and blocking sunlight. Trees will not be able to grow and thrive here. Portland's vision of a tree canopy will not be possible with this building as proposed.

The development means destroying established trees already in place. The developers offer to replace them, but there are no guarantees here, especially without enough soil and light to grow.

Traffic visibility is already difficult pulling out onto Congress St from St Lawrence St. This will further reduce safety for pedestrians as well as entering vehicles.

The massive building site is at the TOP of Munjoy Hill and may adversely effect wind and ventilation in the surrounding area. I believe this should be addressed as a safety issue.

The balconies and overhangs also pose safety issues in terms of falling ice and snow and safe access to public sidewalks below. The easements for the overhangs should be given serious consideration. Are these outcroppings over our public rights of way really necessary? They will greatly enhance the view of the people who will purchase these units but at what cost to the rest of our community? They will not add to scenic or historic beauty to most of us at the pedestrian level.

The developers have provided line drawings of the project set within the neighborhood. Fill in the lines and you can see the mass as it relates to its surroundings.

The recent redesign presents an insignificant ONE foot adjustment and a promise to "try to save" an established Pin Oak on St Lawrence Street....a proposal for a rain garden (whatever that is) and possibly planting some wisteria.

(Note: Wisteria is a vine and not a tree. it needs a very sunny location and many years to become established. It is also a favorite food of the brown tail moth, the scourge of the islands and the coast of Maine several years ago.)

The developers have provided proposed visuals as requested by the board. These visuals are line drawings. I ask you to look at them closely AS IF they were filled in. The visuals are more effective this way.

I am not opposed to a development here. I am not opposed to this particular project if it could be scaled down (and greened-up) enough to fit in with the neighborhood in a safe and less imposing MASS.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of the impact this project will have on our historic neighborhood.

Sincerely,
Susan Baker-Kaplan