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Nell Donaldson  
City of Portland  
Planning Department

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Dear Planning Department:

I have been a real estate broker specializing in residential historic properties, rehab properties and multi units selling primarily on the peninsula in Portland for the past 33 years. I am interested in submitting to you 2 issues regarding the Seaport Lofts that although adversely affect both the immediate neighbor and the neighborhood, I feel can be addressed by the developer and the city giving some relief to both affected entities.

The already partially built Bay House with its imposing box like architecture without articulation or historic character of any type fills one side of the street on Newbury Street. Although it is not in character with the charm and history of the existing neighborhood, it is already built and therefore becomes an issue as to how to best offset its "box store" type housing stock and architecture with a more pleasing architecture across the street, perhaps creating more of a Portland Peninsula type neighborhood feel. The present facade planned for Seaport Lofts provides no such relief from the deviation in charm and desirability created by the Bay House. I have been selling real estate in Portland for 33 years and am well aware of what draws homeowners, investors and buyers to an area. The facade proposal before you, will over time not be desirable to future homeowners. It creates a wind tunnel type look to what is presently a charming, yet under-utilized, neighborhood. The developer used a thirty foot or more break between buildings on the Bay House side of the street, not only creating less shadow and more light for the occupants of their own development, but also a break from the box like larger building.

There are great examples of boxy architecture with historic articulation such as the last two buildings on upper Exchange Street. These easily incorporate charm and history into block sized buildings, the hallmark of the Portland Peninsula, and their design and articulation can be easily incorporated into modern architecture. The simple use of articulation, if not like the leaded glass awning and masonry work on Exchange then more modern yet historically pleasing substitutes would create a sense of Portland's waterfront neighborhood onto Newbury Street, offsetting the already constructed but architecturally uninteresting and imposing Bay House structure.

The second issue directly involves the abutting neighbor. Presently the plans show a 45 foot building within 5 feet of the historic brick town house at 123 Newbury Street. The proposed structure will completely block all light to the tall historic windows of the residence at 123 Newbury, leaving its occupants with light coming from the street side of the townhouse only. The shadow from the newly constructed Bay House across the street has already partially shaded this home and the addition of

another enormous structure just 5 feet away on the right side will throw the residence into total shade, robbing it of almost all sunlight.

There is a solution that will bring at least some relief to the property owners of 123 Newbury Street. The plans for the Seaport Lofts show a driveway running along the separating property line and above the first floor (driveway) they have cantilevered 4 apartments. Two over each other in the front and two over each other in the back. If the “Lofts “ eliminated the front two units (#15 and above) but kept the back two units, then more light would enter 123 Newbury and less shadow. While this is not the ideal for the historic abutting property at least it is a viable compromise. The rear two units would still be within 5 feet of the rear 123 Newbury unit but the light would be significantly improved in the front brick unit created by a set back of 25 rather than 5 feet in the front. It would also improve the overpowering feel of the Seaport Lofts, softening the look of the neighborhood. In addition, the first floor wall dividing the “Lofts” drive- through opening from the townhouse neighbor is unnecessary and creates a “looming over its neighbor” affect.

Sincerely,

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