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Planning Board  
City of Portland  
389 Congress Street  
Portland, ME 04101

Re: Maine Medical Center

Dear Planning Board Members:

I am sorry that, due to the icy road conditions, I will be unable to attend today's workshop.

As you know, I have been participating in the MMC Expansion Group for over a year, representing Western Prom Neighborhood Association. This comment however is being made personally, not for that organization.

1) I am concerned, as has been expressed by staff, about the choice of the color white for the façade of the East Tower addition. While I appreciate the architects' "Sky, Sea, and Land" design concept, it seems to me that the massive white metal wall will be glaringly institutional and will not visually blend with the brick below. I am not advocating for brick, but for a more recessive color or different material (e.g. copper). While white panels frame the existing windows below, it seems to me a more compatible color and/or material would not be the jarring counterpoint that the proposed white panels present. As noted by staff, this issue is especially important if this design approach informs future choices in later phases.

2) Almost everyone acknowledges that it has been a disappointment that the Congress Street retail space has been vacant since it was partially finished many years ago. I understand that the space will be used for construction purposes. But I think it is essential to establish a requirement that a use be in place in that space within so many months after the project completed or a penalty of some sort will be assessed. While not an ideal space, especially in its unfinished condition, there must be some viable use for that space that will enliven the street, as required in the IDP!

3) I think it is very important to develop a realistic detour plan for Congress Street during the time it is closed during construction. The initial detour plan to divert traffic within the neighborhood does not make any sense, in my view. Unlike the debacle on State Street during the recent closure, the City should affirmatively direct traffic to a well-developed detour route, not just leave the heavy volume of traffic that uses Congress Street to find its own way...

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

