



Helen Donaldson <hcd@portlandmaine.gov>

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**Fwd: 30 Merrill**

2 messages

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**Philip DiPierro** <pd@portlandmaine.gov>

Mon, Aug 15, 2016 at 10:47 AM

To: "Donaldson, Helen" <hcd@portlandmaine.gov>, "Barhydt, Barbara" <bab@portlandmaine.gov>

FYI.....

Philip DiPierro  
Development Review Coordinator  
City of Portland Planning Division  
389 Congress Street  
Portland, Maine 04101

Phone [207 874-8632](tel:207-874-8632)  
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Allyson Jordan** <[eatlocalfish@me.com](mailto:eatlocalfish@me.com)>

Date: Mon, Aug 15, 2016 at 10:26 AM

Subject: 30 Merrill

To: [evan@bildarchitecture.com](mailto:evan@bildarchitecture.com)

Cc: Philip DiPierro <[PD@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:PD@portlandmaine.gov)>

I am writing to not support this project on 30 Merrill Street. I live on Quebec and have spent the entire summer dealing with construction of a monster, flat roof 2 unit the is obnoxious and is taking 2 parking spots off the street.... People are flocking here for the charm- and with building all of these modern, multi- units we are loosing the charm and parking on the hill. Even though they provide parking where are there guest going to park? This is going to turn out like Charlestown or Southie before you know it- and the price will plummet and it will be ghetto.

How about making it smaller and quaint and worth more money then bringing in 7 units to what use to be a 2- unit..

Allyson Jordan  
Quebec Street

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**Barbara Barhydt** <[bab@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bab@portlandmaine.gov)>

Mon, Aug 15, 2016 at 11:47 AM

To: "Donaldson, Helen" <hcd@portlandmaine.gov>

Barbara Barhydt  
Development Review Services Manager  
Planning Division  
389 Congress Street 4th Floor  
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(207) 874-8699  
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[bab@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:bab@portlandmaine.gov)

[Quoted text hidden]

Bruce Davis  
45 Quebec Street, Portland Maine 04201

Planning Board  
Portland, Maine

September 10, 2016

To whom it may concern:

I am an owner-occupant at my property at 45 Quebec Street, an abutter to the proposed multi-family project for 30 Merrill Street, and I attended the public meeting held by architect Evan Carroll and developer Michael Boissoneau on August 15th at East End School. As a neighbor I consider myself a significant stake-holder in how new development affects the fabric of the much-valued community that currently exists in the East End. I am in no way opposed to new development or appropriate changes to the existing fabric of the neighborhood. As a stake-holder I am sensitive to architectural interventions' potential to add value to the context of the existing neighborhood, or conversely to potentially work against making the neighborhood even better.

My impressions from attending the public meeting on August 15th are not entirely reflected in the notes provided by the presenters as part of the public record. I heard numerous comments from attendees about the project as presented not being respectful of the existing fabric and context of the neighborhood, and no comments in favor of the presented architectural renderings for use at this site. Comments from the record included:

"It's a big square ugly block", "This is an embarrassment to the neighborhood with no context. Its cheap looking and unimaginable.", "Can tell EC and MB are passionate about the project, just wish it would be put to good use.", "I appreciate the design, just not in this location.", "just wished the project had more respect for the neighborhood."

There were further negative comments, the discussion became quite heated and Mr Carroll ended up stopping discussion of aesthetics, contextuality and respecting neighborhood fabric. Mr Carroll then asked for other areas for comment only, stating that he takes his design efforts very seriously and he made it clear that attendee comments were personally difficult for him. I believe that comments were terminated preliminarily, and this gives me concern that this permitting/planning process may not fully allow meaningful community input.

Mr Carroll did report that early comments from Planning staff had asked for more contextualism (not reflected in the minutes), and he stated that he planned to address such concerns in subsequent design presentations to the Planning Board. I have since reviewed the architect's resubmittal that Helen Donaldson has sent to me, and I do not perceive any significant changes to allow the project to fit in with its neighbors more successfully. I again raise concerns whether community concerns may go unheeded.

My personal concerns about the project are entirely about what kind of neighbor this property will be on Merrill Street and beyond. I don't have any issues with the scope or scale of the property or creating greater density at this site - those are broader Portland Planning goals that I support. I am fine with the building's massing. The almost complete lack of contextual elements as presented in the preliminary AND revised renderings are my biggest concern: the vertical balcony elements that Mr Carroll states in his Design Standards Assessment as "stacked and articulated to pay homage to the traditional bay window" entirely unconvincing from reviewing his renderings. Similarly, the standing-seam cladding is a material alien to the streetscape, and the scale of the cladding elements is out-of-scale with local materials, so that his argument that the horizontality of the cladding makes it appear contextual is unconvincing as well.

In order to actually be contextual, I believe the siding should be actual clapboard or shingle elements - abstract "homages" that are not evident to a room full of neighbors viewing the renderings are not meeting criteria for being contextual. Similarly, the fenestration is also entirely out of synch with residential architecture on the Hill, as the renderings made evident. Abstract language attempting to substantiate contextualism needs to be evident to real people who live on the street and the city.

This project seems to fit the cliché of a "box that dropped out of the sky" – the opposite of contextual. Mr Carroll made a strong argument for new construction in Portland to be forward-looking, with which I agree. I would never say additions to the neighborhood need to look like they were always there, however Mr Boissoneau stated in the meeting that context is subjective, to which I replied it can also be objectively assessed, which is what I am advocating for here. The proposed project does not appear to be trying to be contextual. There are numerous examples on the Hill of new construction that is both forward-looking and contextual. To suggest that this project is one of them would be disingenuous. Mr Boissoneau stated that "We want the neighborhood to be accepting of it" (the design). I question why the essentially same design was resubmitted if this is the intent.

Mr Carroll lists "ingenuity, thoughtfulness, empathy" on his logo/letterhead, however I do not believe his responses thus far to public comment give evidence of sincere efforts to adapt to neighbors' concerns. I do not understand how Mr Carroll can state at the public meeting that he intends to address Planning staff and meeting attendees' concerns about contextualism, and then resubmit his design without substantive changes to address these.

As a neighbor and stake-holder who cares deeply about the future of my neighborhood, I expect to remain involved with the existing process for this and future additions to our great neighborhood. I am hoping that the involvement of stakeholders like myself has potential to positively influence how this proposed project contributes to our neighbor and great city.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Davis



Helen Donaldson &lt;hcd@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**revised submittals for 30 Merrill Street**

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**Katy Harkleroad** <katyharkleroad@yahoo.com>

Tue, Sep 20, 2016 at 9:23 PM

Reply-To: Katy Harkleroad &lt;katyharkleroad@yahoo.com&gt;

To: Helen Donaldson &lt;hcd@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Cc: "donhead66@gmail.com" &lt;donhead66@gmail.com&gt;, "czand@meca.edu" &lt;czand@meca.edu&gt;, "elizabethspenceradams@gmail.com" &lt;elizabethspenceradams@gmail.com&gt;, "petersaylesadams@gmail.com" &lt;petersaylesadams@gmail.com&gt;, "sharonmcgauley@gmail.com" &lt;sharonmcgauley@gmail.com&gt;, "eastendpropertymgmt@gmail.com" &lt;eastendpropertymgmt@gmail.com&gt;, Bruce Davis &lt;bruce.davis21@yahoo.com&gt;

Hi Helen,

My name is Katy Harkleroad. I would also like to submit a letter to the planning board regarding the proposed project at 30 Merrill Street. Like my neighbor, Bruce Davis, I am also copying this email to those who included their email addresses on the community meeting sign-in. Please let me know if I should send my letter to someone/anyone else. I would appreciate being notified of any further public meetings.

Best,  
Katy Harkleroad  
47 Howard Street

Katy and Ryan Harkleroad  
47 Howard Street, Portland, ME 04101

September 20, 2016

To whom it may concern,

My name is Katy Harkleroad. My husband, Ryan, and I own our home on 47 Howard Street. On August 15 we attended the public meeting held for the project at 30 Merrill Street. It was a rather disappointing meeting, where many of us who were concerned with the project's proposed exterior were cut short from voicing all of our concerns. Since that meeting I've been wanting to write and express to the Portland City Planning Board some of those concerns. I wasn't sure whom to write until I received the CC'ed email from Bruce Davis at 45 Quebec Street. As it turns out, Bruce succinctly and accurately summed up all of my husband's and my concerns. I do not want to completely repeat what Bruce said, but I DO want the planning board to know that there are more neighbors who are equally concerned about the 30 Merrill Street building project.

Our concerns are as follows:

1. We want the exterior of the condos at 30 Merrill fits in with the "charm" of the rest of the Munjoy Hill neighborhood. (And for the record, when I say "fit in," I mean *to blend in, to conform to, or to be in harmony with*. When pressed for his definition of "fit in," project developer, Michael Boissoneau, didn't use any of those words, but rather thought that "fitting in" meant to enhance a place. Enhancement is great but it's not a substitute for harmonizing.) My husband and I completely agree with Bruce Davis that for the 30 Merrill Street project to fit in, the exterior cladding of the condos needs to have traditional elements, be that color, material, and/or design.
2. We want current and future developers/builders be required to have building designs that stay within a traditional aesthetic context, in order to maintain the charm that attracts so many people to the neighborhood. At the public meeting, architect Evan Carroll argued that we always need to be moving forward with our thinking and design. While I don't disagree with him, I don't believe that to move forward means that we must forget the past. I also think that creating aesthetic harmony in a neighborhood *is* forward-thinking, even if it means the structures being built aren't the most modern designs possible.
3. We want the neighborhood residents' voices to be heard by the city planning board. It currently seems that, while residents are informed of impending building projects, there is not much they (we) can do accomplish any changes, should those projects have significant negative outcomes for the neighborhood. (And, in case we weren't clear, we believe that the current design for the condos at 30 Merrill St. will negatively impact the neighborhood by changing the block's aesthetic charm.)
4. We are worried that the 30 Merrill Street project as currently proposed will set a precedent of allowing development with no contextual relation to the neighborhood. The Cumberland Avenue, North Street, Quebec Street, and Howard Street blocks of Munjoy

Hill are poised for a significant amount of redevelopment in the near future. We know of several existing multi-unit rentals currently for sale in this area, as well as several that have been recently sold. Not having seen proposals for all of these properties, we can only guess that multi-unit condos will be the plan for nearly all of these properties. Never mind that this sort of development will be removing 10-20+ affordable rental units and replacing them with condos (that's the subject of another important conversation). The issue at hand is that the approval of projects such as 30 Merrill Street will set a precedent for how properties are developed on Munjoy Hill:

- Buildings with little to no contextualism;
- Development designs meant to maximum space for minimum costs and without regards to aesthetics;
- Lack of meaningful dialogue between developers and community members.

We are writing this letter because we care a great deal about the Munjoy Hill neighborhood. We want to see it progress, but without losing sight of its roots. The neighborhood appears to be rapidly approaching a tipping point as to the type of neighborhood it will become for the foreseeable future. In our opinion, it would be tragic for it to lose its classic charm for the sake of insensitive development.

Please continue to include us as part of the ongoing permitting process involving the 30 Merrill Street project.

Sincerely,  
Katy and Ryan Harkleroad

[Quoted text hidden]



Helen Donaldson &lt;hcd@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

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**revised submittals for 30 Merrill Street**

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**Bruce Davis** <bruce.davis21@yahoo.com>

Wed, Sep 21, 2016 at 5:27 PM

Reply-To: Bruce Davis &lt;bruce.davis21@yahoo.com&gt;

To: Helen Donaldson &lt;hcd@portlandmaine.gov&gt;

Cc: Katy Harkleroad &lt;katyharkleroad@yahoo.com&gt;, Alice Shea &lt;alice.shea@gmail.com&gt;

Hi Nell,

Thank you for sending these renderings to me. From my perusal it appears the siding has changed from 12" coursing to 8" coursing, a slight improvement. Not clear whether the material is still standing seam metal or a more common residential siding material. Also good that the center section is similar coursed material.

The 'nod' to bay windows is awkward and they simply do not read as bays in any way to me. I have avoided suggesting specific alternatives so far, but actual bays would make a huge difference. While I understand the developer wants to contain costs, some additional expense may need to be allocated to become a contributing element in this neighborhood. Additionally, there is no fenestration on the street that relates to this project, thus neighbors' concerns that it seems alien to the streetscape.

I do not think this is nearly enough progress, and it does not yet feel like a good-faith effort on the developer's part at this point.

Further, based on Mr Carroll's comments at the neighborhood meeting, I am not convinced that style isn't driving the proposed project's aesthetic more than financial considerations of providing some architectural detail.

Please keep me apprised of any updates, and I look forward to attending the upcoming Planning Board meeting(s).

# Thank you, Bruce Davis

## 207 756-0185

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**From:** Helen Donaldson <[hcd@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:hcd@portlandmaine.gov)>  
**To:** Bruce Davis <[bruce.davis21@yahoo.com](mailto:bruce.davis21@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 21, 2016 11:25 AM  
**Subject:** Re: revised submittals for 30 Merrill Street

[Quoted text hidden]

Notice: Under Maine law, documents - including e-mails - in the possession of public officials or city employees about government business may be classified as public records. There are very few exceptions. As a result, please be advised that what is written in an e-mail could be released to the public and/or the media if requested.

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### 3 attachments

-  **A2.3-RENDERINGS.pdf**  
354K
-  **A2.4-RENDERINGS.pdf**  
272K
-  **A2.5-RENDERINGS.pdf**  
260K

Elizabeth Spencer Adams  
49 Merrill Street  
Portland, ME 04101

Planning Board  
Planning and Urban Development Department  
Planning Division  
City of Portland  
389 Congress St  
Portland, ME 04101

Re: 30 Merrill Street

October 4, 2016

To the Members of the Planning Board and Planning Division Staff:

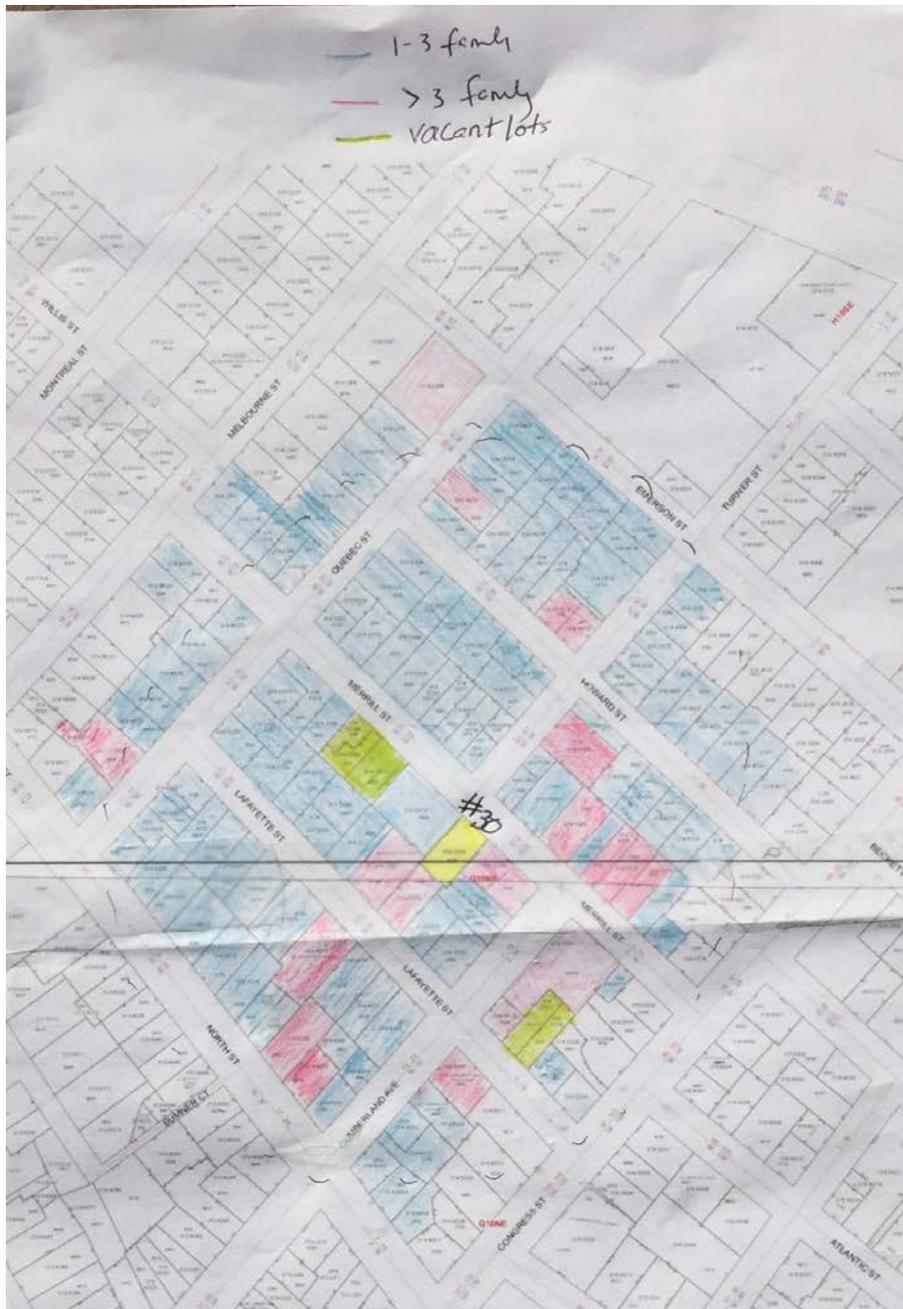
My husband Peter and I live at 49 Merrill Street. We also own a two-family house at 51 Merrill and an empty lot across from our house at 46 Merrill. We attended the neighborhood meeting and I have met with Helen Donaldson who very kindly helped me to better understand the review process. The following are my concerns, the first one an overarching concern and the others relating to specific aspects of the proposed design.

Increased R-6 density means large buildings in neighborhoods of smaller homes. The Board must carefully consider the Design Guidelines in this situation to preserve the character of our neighborhoods.

My overarching concern is the immediate and cumulative effect of allowing construction of large infill buildings that fail to respect the architectural details of the neighborhood. Munjoy Hill is an extremely important neighborhood to the city, drawing a wonderfully diverse

group of residents and providing an excellent tax base. The Hill, and Merrill Street in particular, are susceptible, however, to irrevocably losing their character given the number of empty lots, tear-downs, and smaller homes that seem likely headed for tear-down in the not distant future. The strong profit motive to capitalize on the new infill regulations by constructing the maximum number of units at the lowest possible price appears to be irresistible. The Planning Board needs to step up and be sure that an unintended consequence of the R-6 infill regulations is not a proliferation of maximum size/minimum cost buildings that are totally alien to the design elements of the neighborhood. It may not be the tear down of Union Station, but it will be a real shame for us and for the city if unrestrained R-6 infill destroys our neighborhood.

I would to emphasize the fact that 30 Merrill sits at the boundary between the large apartment buildings to the south and the small residences to the north. To the south of 30 Merrill (towards Congress) are a few small residences plus two 5–10 family buildings and one 10–20 family building. Around the corner on Cumberland are several more large apartment buildings. At present, Merrill Street from Cumberland Avenue north (towards Melborne Street) consists of 9 single-family homes, 4 two-family homes, 2 three-family homes, 2 vacant lots and 1 office/business building. Most are older buildings and the few new ones preserve the architectural flavor of the neighborhood. The map below shows the size of the buildings in the nearby neighborhood and demonstrates the demarcation between the large apartment buildings to the south and the small residences to the north.



The architect and developer consistently ask the Planning Division to look south towards the large buildings for its claimed support for the design. They make no mention of the rest of the neighborhood except to mistakenly refer to the doublewide triple deckers “that exist throughout the neighborhood.” They do not. It is critical that these new large infill structures are sympathetic to the entire neighborhood, not just those structures that are purportedly similar on just one end of the street. And it is important to recognize that if the Board relies just on the

design elements of the large buildings to the south towards Congress Street, the next R6 infill project on the street may do the same, and the next and the next, with a potential domino effect that overwhelms the neighborhood with large insensitively designed buildings.

The proposed project fails to consider the “overall context” of the neighborhood

This building does not in any recognizable way reinforce positive features of the surrounding area. Within the block the unique identity of the large buildings to the south are their bays and cornices and mansard roofs, to the north, for the smaller residence are their gable ends, their bays, window shapes and emphasized entrances. It is not impossible to design a larger building that is sympathetic to an existing neighborhood of smaller residences. An excellent example is the new 5-family building at 72 Munjoy Street. Although it is the largest building on the street it, it does not overwhelm the neighborhood; rather, it adopts numerous of the existing characteristics of its neighborhood and employs them in its design.



72 Munjoy Street

Furthermore, contemporary architecture is not anathema to the neighborhood. 39 Lafayette a beautifully designed single family home that at 1360 sq. feet is roughly 1/5<sup>th</sup> the size of the proposed structure.



39 Lafayette Street

39 Lafayette incorporates the window dimensions of neighboring buildings, has a strongly recessed entry with steps, and is clad in horizontal material evoking the clapboard found throughout the neighborhood. The excellent design and small scale of 39 Lafayette makes it an interesting and respectful counterpoint to the older architecture in the neighborhood. The proposed design for 30 Merrill is 5 times larger than 39 Lafayette and will loom over the neighboring houses to the north. Because of its size it will have a very significant impact on the neighborhood making it imperative that its design embrace the context of the neighborhood, reinforcing its positive features and demonstrating compatibility with the nearby buildings. This is not to suggest that blowing 39 Lafayette up to five times its size would be an appropriate design for 30 Merrill. I am pointing out that contemporary design is not the problem. Non-contextual design is the problem.

## Lack of Articulation

As for the balconies that the architect relies on heavily to satisfy the B-5 façade articulation standard (this because no other of the architectural elements of facade articulation exist: no gables or dormers, no recessed entry, no bay windows, and surely the small awning over the entry does not constitute a “covering”), the railings across the sliding doors used as windows do not in any way read as balconies and if they are also designed “pay homage to the traditional bay window,” ( a two’fer? balcony and bay?) they have missed the mark by a long shot. And does not Standard D-3 state that balconies must be a minimum of 6 feet in depth? What is presented to the Board as a balcony (or bay) in an attempt to satisfy the facade articulation standard in fact neither actually articulates the building nor does it create an impression of articulation. The most recent iteration has created an indentation running from the ground to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor along the vertical line above the “front door.” Although it is an improvement to my eye, it is inadequate to satisfy the articulation standard.

Recent contemporary apartment buildings and condominiums developed in Portland in commercial areas have more architectural detail than the current 30 Merrill design. The Redfern development at 89-91 Anderson is one example, with real balconies, a true recessed front door above ground level, and significant “in and out” of the façade.



## 89 – 91 Anderson Street

The Avesta building at 409 Cumberland, presumably built with minimizing cost forefront in the mind of the developer, is superior in articulation to the 30 Merrill design. And this building sits in a neighborhood of other very large square commercial buildings.



409 Congress Street

## Massing and Roofing

Most definitely, when considering design, size matters. The bigger the project, the bigger the impact of the design, the bigger the effect on the neighborhood. The architect argues that the proposed building has massing and roofing much like the double-wide triple decker buildings “that exist throughout the neighborhood.” I believe he is referring to the three large multi-families towards Congress Street on Merrill and the several nearby on Cumberland Ave. Otherwise, I can find no double-wide triple deckers in a 2-block radius. There are a few two-entrance buildings, but no double wide triple deckers which seems reasonably interpreted to mean this:



And, of these nearby early 1900's multi-family buildings that might possibly be described as a double-wide triple decker, those that have flat roofs all have substantial bay windows and a large cornice created by the protrusion of the bays giving them significant articulation. The others have attractive mansard roofs creating harmony with a number of smaller mansard houses in the neighborhood and making the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor part of the roofline, thereby lowering the impression of the height of the building. The large boxy 4-story shape of the proposed 30 Merrill building has nothing in common with these earlier buildings other than size. And notably, again, these are all to the south, towards Congress street and most definitely not "throughout the neighborhood." Perhaps the architect is referring to the new construction at 33 Lafayette that he designed. However, I don't think anyone would refer to that as a "traditional double-wide style."

### The "Front Door "Is Not a Real Front Door

Design Standard C-1 states: "Emphasize and orient the main entrance to the street." The 30 Merrill design includes a minimally-enhanced "main entrance," which we learned at the neighborhood meeting is not a main entrance at all. In fact, it is an entrance to the basement that contains only storage areas for the units. It seems to be the argument that so long as it looks like a main entrance that is enough. It is not. There is a rationale behind this design standard that has been well articulated by numerous urban designers (Jan Gehl , Cities for Real People; Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities; Christopher Alexander, A Pattern Language), planners and articulated in municipal standards. The rationales relate to the life of the street, community, walkability, and the safety of the inhabitants and passersby.

The interaction between people living on and walking along a street happens at the front door and in the "transition space" between the sidewalk and the door. People pause at the front door to find their keys and someone walking by says hello. A conversation starts and they linger chatting for a few minutes, community begins to form and street life is enhanced. In the proposed design, the residents will use the front door only for storage purposes, occasionally putting a bike in or out a few months of the year, pulling out the snow tires, grabbing skis for a weekend trip. This is not the 2, 3, 4, 5 times a day in and out of a

building to go to work, run for groceries, make a trip to the gym, etc. that happens from the true main entrance to a building. Instead, they will enter the building at the back, unseen by passersby, a much less safe proposition, and much less likely to result in contact with the neighborhood. And will they linger at the sidewalk? Not if they are already in their car, of course, and even if on foot, they will have already begun their walk to wherever they are going and are not in a transition space and are far less likely to pause. Jane Jacobs explains that

A central challenge of [a] city, therefore, is to make its inhabitants feel safe, secure, and socially integrated in the midst of an overwhelming volume of rotating strangers. The healthy sidewalk is a critical mechanism for achieving these ends, given its role in preventing crime and facilitating contact with others.

Standard C-1 requires that the main entrance either be at the front of the building or on a covered porch to the side that extends all the way to the front of the building. It makes a mockery of this design standard to interpret it to mean that something that looks like a front door is good enough. It also fails to add to the city's goal of walkability and health. Sam Newburg in his 2014 article "Front Doors and Walkable Cities" writes:

A city that is genuinely trying to be walkable must not only build public infrastructure that truly prioritizes the pedestrian, not just accommodates them, but also has buildings that relate well to those streets, and therefore front doors are very important. In a perfect world, a common sense approach would suffice; if the developer, architect and planning commission agree they'd be comfortable walking in and out of that door every day, then it is probably good enough.

The current design cannot even attempt to pass the test of "be[ing] comfortable walking in and out of that door every day" because it is not actually a main entrance that one will walk in and out of on any regular basis. That it might be dressed up to look like a main entrance is most definitely not good enough.

Finally, on this point of where the true main entrance is sited, the requested waiver for a narrowed driveway aisle makes stopping to visit even less likely for a resident who must take care not to be hit by a fellow resident turning into or coming out of the driveway. Many design standards require a full walkway in the event that an entrance to a building is at the back so people coming and going are not walking along a driveway. Not having a walkway is bad enough; narrowing the driveway is clearly unsafe.

### Street Level Front Door

There is absolutely no precedent for street level front doors in residential buildings on Merrill Street. And the examples cited by the architect are all buildings that have attractive primary entrances on the side. The street level doors on the buildings he refers to are basement doors and they look like it.





## Windows

One of the reasons the building looks so out of place in the rendering is the size and horizontal effect of the front windows. The windows are in fact two sets of sliding doors put together and the net effect is a window of 11'10"H x 6'9 ¾"W, most definitely horizontal in effect. Again, there is nothing like this on Merrill Street. This design fails to recognize and be responsive to the patterns and characteristics of the buildings of the neighborhood. In addition, it ignores the design standard relating to windows (D-1), which states that the majority of windows shall be vertically proportioned, and encourages classic proportions. These grouped sliding doors are neither. In addition, it is startling to see first floor windows of this size. They would be appropriate for a commercial space, but despite being 48" from the ground are not in keeping with a first floor living space and again fails to find any sympathy with the predominant design features of the neighborhood. Where such large windows do exist on Congress Street they are all office and retail spaces, not residential.

In summary, given the very significant impact of this building on the neighborhood, it is vitally important that great care and time be given to assuring that the building meet all the applicable design principals and standards. It is a disappointment that there was no public workshop to allow for a more cooperative approach to the challenges presented by this design. It is incumbent on the Board to proceed carefully as it

develops a thoughtful and fair approach to allowing R-6 infill while protecting the neighborhoods where this development will occur.

Thank you for your consideration.

Elizabeth (Lisa) Adams  
49 Merrill Street

Additional signatories:

Peter Adams  
49 Merrill Street

Carolyn Swartz  
27 Merrill Street

Wayne Valzania  
27 Merrill Street

Britt Knowlton  
43 Merrill Street

Stephanie Doyle  
43 Merrill Street

Teo Doyle  
43 Merrill Street

Tim Adams  
38 Howard Street

Birch Hincks  
38 Howard Street

cc: Evan Carroll

Carolyn Swartz and Wayne Valzania  
27 Merrill Street  
Portland, ME 04101  
and  
28 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street 8D  
NYC 10003

Planning Board  
Planning and Urban Development Department  
City of Portland  
389 Congress St  
Portland, ME 04101

Re: 30 Merrill Street

October 5, 2016

To the Members of the Planning Board and Planning Division Staff:

One of the big challenges in the jarring, unbalanced design for proposed development of 30 Merrill is that you can't measure the value of a neighborhood's character in dollars and cents.

And dollars and cents appear to be the only measure driving this tired, corner-cutting design.

This design reminds me of what the Berliners scornfully refer to as *plattenbau* (flat-build) construction. Just after World War II, the communist government – short of funds – had to scramble to create housing to replace hundreds, if not thousands, of buildings destroyed by bombs. The only criteria were fast and cheap, i.e. as many units as could be crammed into a single block. The buildings had no contour, no character, no pleasing detail. They were human warehouses: as many units as could be crammed into a single block. With Reunification, much effort has gone into remediation, adding contour and character to these structures. The city of Berlin recognizes that people were not meant to live in—or look out at—faceless boxes.

Back to the architect's justification of this particular faceless box. A few thoughts:

A metal bar "pays homage" to the neighborhood's bay windows? Let's be precise about language. Here, the same could be said about using glass.

Perhaps he thinks the “front door” pays homage to the stoops and steps that lead to welcoming entrances all over the hill. After all, it no doubt opens and closes to allow a person to pass through it.

The jolt of white that bisects the building vertically: I’m not sure what that pays homage to, since nowhere on Munjoy Hill is there precedent for this kind of color contrast. Perhaps the architect feels the white pays homage to the clouds.

Now let’s pay homage to safety. What kind of floodlights will be necessary to illuminate a rear or side entrance? And what impact will this have on the look and feel of the neighborhood at night?

Granted, esthetics are by nature subjective. But there is nothing subjective in the assertion that this design demonstrates zero sensibility for how life is lived - and has been lived for at least a century and a half – in the neighborhood of Munjoy Hill.

Finally, I’d like to note that not one of the Munjoy Hill homeowners or residents opposed to this design is against new development and changes in aesthetics resulting from new materials, advancing technologies and changing preferences and needs. Neither is anyone advocating against the expansion of the community.

By general consensus, however, this particular design is off the charts: both functionally and esthetically. I hope the Planning Board will send the designer back to the drawing board, and the developers see the value – to their future bottom line – in preserving the character of the neighborhood with more sensitivity and sophistication than is implied by this design.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Swartz', written in a cursive style.

Carolyn Swartz

**WAYNE VALZANIA**

27 Merrill Street  
Portland, Maine 04101  
207.274.4918

Planning Board  
Planning and Urban Development Department  
City of Portland  
389 Congress St  
Portland, ME 04101

October 6, 2016

Re: 30 Merrill Street

Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing to express concern with the proposed development of 30 Merrill Street and the impact that it will have on our neighborhood. Further, I am concerned with the overall disregard of the East End of Portland, particularly Munjoy Hill, as an area worthy of some level of forethought and preservation.

The 30 Merrill project is just the latest in a series of buildings, proposed and built, with no sense of the local flavor that makes "The Hill" an important part of Portland, both historically and in the present. Thankfully, there is an atmosphere here that is the result of homeowners who care about the neighborhood, who interact with one another, and who enhance and maintain their properties for the betterment of everyone living nearby. In short, this is a vibrant community of neighbors. My wife and I are embark on the restoration of a period home directly across the street from the proposed industrial looking complex at 30 Merrill. I am disturbed to imagine that what we will see as we walk down the steps from our front door (past what we envision as a lovingly landscaped front yard) is the back, storage room door of a gargantuan monolith (with a few horizontal and vertical slashes oddly justified as *design* features.)

To qualify my opinion, I am a master craftsman, a millwright, a restoration advocate and practitioner, and minimally, a resident with an aesthetic sense, aware of what proliferation of big-box residential development does to a neighborhood. As a builder, I also know that what is rendered on paper, is the best a proposed building will ever look, and that the reality, after ten years of aging, will be far less than the pristine drawing with well heeled people on the sidewalks, with trees that don't exist, next door to houses that have nothing in common with the proposed "high rise" developers dream.

To be clear, I understand and agree with the need for higher density housing, and realize that the future will see a change in the neighborhood. But that change must be for the better not the worse.

This is an important time for Portland. The hill, in particular, has been discovered and it is desirable. Because it not an area not of distinguished architecture in mansions and stately brick homes makes it no less worthy of memory and preservation with respect for the history and feel of the neighborhood.

I implore the Board to honor their responsibility to preserving the integrity of all of Portland's neighborhoods, whether its homes were built by wealthy merchants or humble fisher folk.

Growth requires forethought and direction. Please consider the future of the city as well as us who chose Munjoy Hill for a reason, and are working to make it a better place to live.

Thank you for considering my opinion,



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Thank You,

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