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October 6, 2016

Via Email

Mayor & City Council
City of Portland
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101

RE: *Draft Moratorium Proposal for City Parks and Public Grounds in the R-6 Zone on the Portland Peninsula*

Dear Mayor Strimling & Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of Saulnier Development in regards to the above-cited matter as it relates to plans contemplated for 155 Sheridan Street (the “Project”).

As a preliminary point, I want to communicate the Project development team’s appreciation of Councilor Ray’s courtesy advance notice of the announcement she made at last evening’s meeting. Open and robust lines of communication have been fruitful thus far, and it is in the spirit of continuing the same that this letter is written.

Painstaking efforts have been made to adjust the Project’s design in response to community and staff feedback, and we believe an accurate understanding of such changes is necessary in order to comprehend the Project’s alleged impacts in context as you deliberate the necessity of a moratorium. As a related note, development moratoria are reserved for situations in which existing regulations and other processes prove inadequate for protecting community welfare from serious public harm; as you can see below, however, existing means of addressing concerns have been proceeding exceptionally well—and the formal review process hasn’t even started.

In support of this contention, please refer to the enclosed plans, which demonstrate three view impact iterations culminating in the Project’s current design. As you can see, at present the Project design would do no more than block a tiny sliver (less than 2%) of water visible to the far right of the relevant vista when viewed from the park’s outermost edge. When viewed several steps in from the edge, where most users tend to congregate, the vista is virtually unaffected.

On the basis of the steps taken to reach this point, outlined below, we believe this is an extremely positive, and reasonable, outcome which should be agreeable for the most part to all interests concerned.



As originally conceived, the Project consisted of 34 units and more than 65,000 square feet in a configuration that reduced the vista from Fort Sumner Park by nearly 40%. In response to a recommendation from planning staff, this concept was discussed with community members including the local neighborhood association for preliminary feedback so the project could be tailored in a manner supporting a quality site plan poised for success and appropriate for Portland. Based on feedback received, the development team removed an entire corner from the building on three stories, reduced building size by more than 3,000 square feet (the size of a large single-family home), and expanded the vista significantly, leaving a mere 15% impact on the fringe of the view shed. This design was presented to and discussed with Councilor Ray and staff in an effort to continue to gauge its acceptability. In response to further feedback, the design was revised yet again by dramatically reducing the prominence of the top two floors, reducing the building's size by another 3,000+ square feet, and limiting the vista impact to a mere 1.25% at worst.

To summarize, after several months of voluntary and proactive consensus building, the development team has evidenced a willingness to drop thousands of square feet and several units, and massively reconfigure the Project's design in a manner that now has virtually no impact on the public's view. This design was well received by City administration and planning staff and represents the best in proactive community input solicitation and consensus building.

In light of the foregoing, a moratorium is unnecessary at this juncture because existing procedures have proven not only adequate but exceptionally capable of addressing stated concerns to date. We respectfully request that you decline to enact the proposed moratorium and entrust the Project's finalization to the eminently qualified members of the Portland Planning Board as reviewing authority.

If you have any questions, I would be pleased to speak further with any of you individually about this matter in advance of your next meeting.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very Sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Patrick Venne', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patrick Venne