

RE: 238 Deer St

Meeting: August 10, 2021 Work Session

Dear Historic District Commission,

August 8, 2021

I appreciate 238 Deer St is coming before HDC as a work session and public hearing. Sadly the one thing asked for last time was **pictures looking down Bridge St from Islington**. These would show the 2 story homes and condos on the left side, the Bridge St street level Parking Lot on the right, the 2 story building on the corner of Bridge and Hanover St (30 Maplewood), the ground level parking lot for 46 Maplewood as well as its step down to 3 stories and the plumbing store which is one story across the street which steps up to two stories away from Bridge St. This image would really have given a better idea of heights, mass, texture and how the building will fit in.

Although the other side of Deer St (DSA Lot 5) and DSA Lot 4 (no longer approved), along with the other side of Maplewood Ave (Port Walk, etc) are presented, they are zoned CD5, 2 to 4 story. This lot is **zoned CD4 2 to 3 story (maximum 40')**. They currently show a height of 41' with the 8' grade and the penthouse (allowed to be 2' taller) is at 50' with the 8' grade. Grade is something to keep in mind when visualizing how tall the structure will be once completed, although it is allowed. *CD4 is transitional, mixed use, variable landscaping, and sidewalks with trees.*

They are showing 4 stories with the top floor recessed by about 13' which will make it less visible and more pleasing to the eye. I was not able to find **HVAC** on the rendering of the penthouse: 4 units, stairs, decks and storage.

These units are NOT going to be work force housing that would involve a contract with the city. They will be rented at the *current market rate*; therefore please do not fall for the cost plea that has been brought up before. Take a minute to look up rents for studio apartments on Maplewood Ave and downtown. Downtown employees will need roommates!

I realize HDC looks at mass, textures, structures and continuity of design. I included a picture of the existing building with 46 Maplewood sided coming from the Foundry Garage. Notice the existing building; purple and its purple, green and yellow shutters actually go quite nicely with the dark gray, the hint of green accents and the white bricks on 46 Maplewood. The proposed classic 4 pane windows go nicely with Bridge St since **most of 238's visible structure faces Bridge St**. *The clapboard stylings are a nice touch*, not sure about the yellow but it may look nice next to the greens and whites, a rendering would be nice. The yellow would tie the Islington St end of Bridge to the Deer St end of Bridge St. There is a LOT of brick going on a lot of the nearby buildings. The clapboards might break that up and be a link to the residential section of Bridge St. The top "crown" (larger molding all around the top of the building) could be white to tie into the white bricks on 46 Maplewood. The bottom could be white as well. The penthouse looks great as blue, not sure about panels going up and down as opposed to across, seems like it would make the high roof top look higher. How big is the commercial area? Will the commercial door be on Deer St? What kind of door? A side door is shown in the "public walkway", is it for employees or customers? Where will the dumpster be?

The "public walkway" between 46 Maplewood and 238 Deer St **causes one to think of security**. This building is showing 22 units. **It was approved for off-site parking ONLY for 21 units**. Residents and guests will be walking down the alley from the Foundry Garage or other parking areas, and then down another alley (public walkway) to their front door within 200' of the Railroad Tracks and close to downtown. Employees may also be using this "public walkway" for breaks as well. Would it be possible to have the front door be on the Bridge St or Deer St side? Would that be safer?

There are many questions and ideas to be discussed. Thank you for taking the time to review this letter.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Bratter
159 McDonough St
Portsmouth Property Owner



RE: 361 Islington ST

Meeting: HDC 08/11/21 Work Session and Public Hearing

Dear Members of the Historic District Commission,

August 8, 2021

361 Islington St is before you again. I tried to find a picture online of when the Getty opened in 1956. An original picture could be helpful.

The pictures of the gas station seem to be from 2018. The pictures presented are taken at a very odd angle. However, if you've ever driven down Islington St there is a gray colonial on the left, a white colonial on the right, a newly restored colonial at 322 Islington St (just before HDC last week) on the corner of Cabot and Islington and two colonials directly across the street. There are NO pictures of the back side where two very old colonials on Cabot exist and 3 new colonials on Salem St which share an easement or the city does in the back left corner when facing the Getty from Islington.



Back of Getty from Cabot St.

This lot is very unique in that it is surrounded by 3 very small low impact first floor businesses: a small used clothing store, a make-up place and birth right with limited hours and **LOTS of rental units and privately owned homes within 20' to 50' of the gas station. *It has been very quiet since 2007(14 years) when the gas station closed, creating a new standard for neighbors.***

In light of this the presented overhead doors or ANY large windows should NOT be considered if they open. If just a few of the smaller window in the overhead doors open that would be okay but NOT the whole thing! Any noise, talking or music will travel out the overhead doors or large windows and reflect off the existing canopy and into resident's rooms as they come home from work to relax, especially in the Spring, Summer and Fall. These types of doors have created excessive amounts of noise issues at Liar's Bench as well as Great Rhythm for those living as far as 500' from those businesses.

The Wrap Shack had no inside or outside music and were quiet and respectful neighbors. They had limited outdoor seating. Not having music allowed customers to talk to each other in “normal” voices keeping the sound at a comfortable level for all. Music always increases vocalization volumes, the louder it gets, the louder the employees and customers have to get.

The planters were required to be added by the Wrap Shack to keep cars from cutting through the parking lot. It would be surprising if the presented 16.5” height would be sufficient to satisfy liquor laws for outside seating, which was eluded to by the presented “no alcohol beyond this point” sign (pg 4).

There is an empty space next to handicap space, making the presented parking only 14 spaces. In most cases some screening for parking is required when businesses abut residential homes as well as around dumpsters for future renderings.

There are no changes in lighting presented at this time. The Wrap Shack used camper/yard lights to tone down the overhead lights when they were closed. The gas station has some older very BRIGHT lights (pg 3 S) which could be changed or removed to create a more appropriate ambiance for a neighborhood business. The type of business has not been revealed. It does present that the addition is for the kitchen, however, the size of the addition does NOT seem to be listed. It does not state what the kitchen will be used for.

Please take the time to drive by the bank on Islington St next to the Dunkin Donuts to help decide if the presented façade is really appropriate for a NEW business in the middle of an area with original and restored colonial homes.

In the past all other proposals shown and approved for this gas station ended very different from what was presented. It seems a lot of changes are left to the tenants and some took months to come to fruition; some never happened at all. Most importantly please remember this business is going right in the middle of two neighborhoods. Yes, it is Islington St but this lot has not had a noisy, lit up gas station since 2007 and its tanks have been removed!! Whatever changes happen to this building should be an improvement to the two neighborhoods it abuts.

CD4-L2 is called a “limited” zone to some offices or residential on the first floor. It does allow some limited types of restaurants and retail uses with medium density made up of mostly residential units all along Islington Street with its line of colonial homes on this soon to be revitalized roadway!

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Bratter
159 McDonough St
Portsmouth Property Owner

RE: 1& 31 Raynes and 203 Maplewood Ave

Meeting: HDC 08/11/21 Word session and Public Hearing

Dear Historic District Commission,

August 9, 2021

Following this development has been quite interesting; since December of 2020 it has moved through various boards; the common theme has been this is way too much building in this location. The members of the North End Charrettes must be shocked that these buildings, currently look a lot like a college dorm have remained unchanged for over 6 months.

The objective of the building heights along the North Mill Pond and on Maplewood Ave were to welcome people to Portsmouth with the historic homes (CD4-L1, 2 story 35') on the right (driving from Dennett St) and newer architecture on the left. The CD4 zoning allows for medium to high density moving away from Maplewood Ave and the North Mill Pond toward Vaughn St. The rest of the North End is zoned CD5.

Looking at the themes (height and zoning) in Map Geo one quickly notices the idea is low at the Maplewood Ave Bridge, 1 story 20', then 2 story 35' along the water front and Maplewood Ave. It climbs to 2 to 3 story 40' on both sides of Raynes Ave and the very back rear corner where Raynes and Vaughn St meet and the CD5 zoning begins, it is suggested 2 to 4 story 50'. Just because 2 to 4 story, 50' maximum are allowed doesn't mean that is the best way to present the lot. The buildings should be inviting, interesting and represent the luxury of staying in proposed water front apartments and hotel rooms.

The development does NOT show the area nearest the Maplewood Ave Bridge as low. Page 18 & 29 shows a 5 story building right next to the bridge. It does lower to 1 story 20' directly facing Maplewood Ave (page 20), which is very appealing, however the surface area of the 1 story area seems eluded. Turning left down Raynes from Maplewood, the building is shown as 4 story (page 25) in the front and 5 story in the rear. Again the actual surface area of said step down is not clear. The hotel is shown as 5 story. On page 25 one recognizes that the actual size of the step downs (two windows deep) on Raynes and Maplewood (2 garage doors) are not clear.

The building at 145 Maplewood showed step downs as well. Those step downs are so small they are insignificant compared to the rest of the building when driving by (pg 14). 145 Maplewood heights overshadow the historic buildings and visually is an eye sore due to the extreme height difference BECAUSE the step downs are not deep enough to change the appearance visually. The architecture makes a statement but the height steals its beauty driving in either direction on Maplewood Ave.

The interesting thing about 1&31 Raynes presentation is page 23 shows a building with depth and texture. Pages 24 and 17 show flat buildings, with little to no reliefs to add character or interest, especially for the entire hotel! 6 pages are devoted to the landscaping, the possible dock and yet there are only a couple pages which show glimpses of the proposed hotel, another institutional looking building. The Port Inn and Suites on Rt 1 bypass has more character than this proposed waterfront hotel.

It should be noted that the Conservation Commission did NOT approve this project. TAC is not moving forward until mass, height, textures, building concepts are more developed. The issue of parking and traffic flow are still open and the fact that the land has known pollution monitoring going on has been a topic of discussion at other meetings.

This project is moving in the right direction but as the welcome to Portsmouth building on Maplewood Ave it could use some serious tweaking of mass, textures, heights and building concepts. It should have more flow to balance the straightness of the bridge and the round edges of the pond. It would be nice if there was some flow as one moves from one extra large building to the other, changing the color to black offset with yellow does nothing in the context of the architecturally more sophisticated buildings being built and proposed in that area. Having two large building does not give the same aura as having two balanced buildings within the context of the water front, historic homes and a neighborhood 100' away.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Bratter
159 McDonough St
Portsmouth Property Owner