

From: [Jannice Hodges](#)
To: [Planning - Info - Shr](#); garrettmarchand1@gmail.com
Subject: 33 Harrison Ave Marchand variance
Date: Monday, October 14, 2024 4:57:16 PM

You don't often get email from jannicehodges@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I reside at 35 Harrison Ave, the property adjacent to the Marchand's. I hope the city approves the variance, even though after the fact, to allow their shed to remain in the current location as it sits as well as the land coverage percent allowance. Their shed is located in the same corner of their lot that mine and one other neighbors are located. It causes no issues to my property either physically or visually, as you can see from the attached picture they look well established in their locations. The location of the shed and house on the land also leaves plenty of usage space of their yard, so I would ask the city to allow the percentage overage.

The Marchand's have always kept their yard up well, and are very nice neighbors. I hope the city will approve these variances for them, we are certainly okay with their shed as it sits.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jannice Hodges

From: [John Carty](#)
To: [Planning - Info - Shr](#)
Cc: [Laura Currier](#); [Peter L. Britz](#)
Subject: Comment on proposed building at 332 Hanover St, Portsmouth NH
Date: Monday, October 7, 2024 10:31:50 AM

You don't often get email from jpcarty0@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good morning;

My name is John Carty. My wife Laura and I own the property at 324 Hanover St, Portsmouth NH. Our property is next to 332 Hanover St.

We have had the opportunity to meet with the new owners, Jen and Kent Bonniwell. Jen and Kent joined us and several of our neighbors to meet, share the detailed plan, and address any questions.

Laura and I are in favor of the Bonniwell's proposed project. The property is a very nice corner lot, but the existing buildings are abandoned and deteriorating. We feel that the development that Jen and Kent have proposed would be a good addition to the neighborhood and the City. The proposed buildings fit the character of the neighborhood very nicely. This project adds two new residential units to Portsmouth's housing stock and tax base, without overwhelming the site.

The variances requested, which impact our property most directly, seem reasonable.

We have also found Jen and Kent to be very pleasant people, and thoughtful about how their project would impact the neighborhood. We believe that they would be a great addition to our community.

Laura and I may not be able to attend this week's meeting, so please take this email as our vote in favor of the Bonniwell's proposed project.

Thanks very much,

John Patrick Carty
Principal, The Carty Group

508-397-3300

From: [John Carty](#)
To: [Planning - Info - Shr](#)
Cc: [Laura Currier](#); [Peter L. Britz](#)
Subject: Update: Comment on proposed building at 332 Hanover St, Portsmouth NH
Date: Monday, October 14, 2024 4:29:00 PM

Good afternoon;

Upon review of the proposed construction at 332 Hanover Street, we would like to amend our position on this project.

We have reviewed the height and mansard roof details of the proposed projects, and discussed this in detail with our neighboring abutters.

In principle, we support the approach to this project. However, we agree with our neighbors that the combination of increased lot density, the finished height of the building, and the bulky appearance of a mansard roof, would be too much for the lot and the neighborhood. We believe that this combination is not in the best interests of the character of the neighborhood or our property values.

We continue to support the Boniwells' desire to build and occupy a property which fits with the neighborhood, and also makes it a reasonable investment for them. We would be very interested in seeing this project amended so that the height and mansard roof shape are not quite such dominating characteristics of the neighborhood.

Therefore, we would request that the granting of variances be made contingent upon reducing the overall building height to match that of the existing structure.

Thank you for your consideration, and many thanks for all that you do for the City of Portsmouth

Sincerely

John and Laura Carty
324 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

On Mon, Oct 7, 2024 at 10:31 AM John Carty <jpcarty0@gmail.com> wrote:

Good morning;

My name is John Carty. My wife Laura and I own the property at 324 Hanover St, Portsmouth NH. Our property is next to 332 Hanover St.

We have had the opportunity to meet with the new owners, Jen and Kent Bonniwell. Jen and Kent joined us and several of our neighbors to meet, share the detailed plan, and address any questions.

Laura and I are in favor of the Bonniwell's proposed project. The property is a very nice corner lot, but the existing buildings are abandoned and deteriorating. We feel that the development that Jen and Kent have proposed would be a good addition to the neighborhood and the City. The proposed buildings fit the character of the neighborhood very nicely. This project adds two new residential units to Portsmouth's housing stock and tax base, without overwhelming the site.

The variances requested, which impact our property most directly, seem reasonable.

We have also found Jen and Kent to be very pleasant people, and thoughtful about how their project would impact the neighborhood. We believe that they would be a great addition to our community.

Laura and I may not be able to attend this week's meeting, so please take this email as our vote in favor of the Bonniwell's proposed project.

Thanks very much,

John Patrick Carty
Principal, The Carty Group

508-397-3300

From: [Chiavaras, Daphne](#)
To: [Planning - Info - Shr](#)
Cc: chiavaras@gmail.com
Subject: 332 Hanover St proposed development
Date: Monday, October 14, 2024 4:45:17 PM
Importance: High

You don't often get email from dchiavaras@nathealthcare.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Daphne Chiavaras
40 Parker St.
Portsmouth, NH03820
10/14/24

Dear Portsmouth Planning board members,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed development at 332 Hanover St. I have reviewed the detailed letter submitted by my neighbors, Kate and Bryn Waldwick, and I fully concur with the points they raised.

In addition to their concerns, I would like to emphasize a few specific issues from my perspective at 40 Parker St. The proposed structure will be positioned very close to Parker St., which I believe will significantly reduce natural light and airflow as I exit my front door. Furthermore, the proximity and scale of the building will affect the privacy of my home, as it will allow other structures to overlook my windows.

In conclusion, I share Kate and Bryn Waldwick's concerns, particularly regarding the potential impacts on privacy, light, airflow, and the overall feel of our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daphne Chiavaras
40 Parker St.
Portsmouth NH 03820
603-923-2132

-

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail and any files transmitted are confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. This communication may contain material that has protected health information or is legally

privileged. If you are not the intended recipient or the individual responsible for delivering the e-mail to the intended recipient, please be advised that you have received this e-mail in error and any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing, or copying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender by replying to this email and then delete this message.

30 Parker Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

October 14, 2024

Zoning Board of Adjustment
City of Portsmouth
1 Junkins Avenue, 3rd Floor
Portsmouth NH 03801

Re: 332 Hanover Street Development

Dear Zoning Board of Adjustment Members:

As abutters to the proposed development at 332 Hanover Street, we have concerns about the current design and variances requested. While there are aspects of the proposed design that have some benefits, these benefits are outweighed by:

- I. **Our diminished property value due to the increased density (building size, roof type) and out of proportion building height.** The 38% increase in density of this lot (coupled with building heights not in proportion to neighborhood) will block a significant portion of our views from the second and third floor of our house, including completely blocking our view of the Piscataqua River Bridge, S.M. Long Bridge, trees in Union Cemetery, and much of the area along Maplewood Ave and north of Portwalk Place.
Note: 38% was calculated by 3000 sq ft / 2167 sqft since, if granted, the variance would allow density to go from 1 dwelling unit / 3000 sq ft to 1 dwelling unit / 2167 sq ft.
- II. **Aspects of the project are contrary to the public interest** since they are out of character of our historic neighborhood and set precedents for future development in the neighborhood. These precedents could create mal-incentives to quit maintaining historic homes and instead incentivize buying lots to demolish them for increased density above ordinance. Islington Creek is part of the [Portsmouth National Historic District](#) (note that this district is separate and distinct from Portsmouth's Local Historic District.)
- III. **Setting questionable standards for the use of the term “hardship” that we do not feel are in the spirit of the ordinance.** This reduces what the term hardship means and could be abused by speculators and developers moving forward.

We would not be in support of these variances unless concessions are made in the design of the building, particularly with reducing the height of the design to be equal to the current three story structure. We feel this is what would be needed to offset the 38% increase over the zoned density this project is requesting.

I. Diminished Property Value

One of the key requirements of a variance request is ensuring the values of surrounding properties will not be diminished. The current variance request for increased density (coupled with maxed out building heights that tower over the other homes on Hanover) would result in us losing our view of two out of the three bridges we currently are able to see from our third floor window. *The assumption that we have a view of the Piscataqua River Bridge, the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge, trees from Union Cemetery, and much of Maplewood Ave were used by the city in assessing our property value in the recent property reevaluations. Thus, even the city agrees there is financial value to these views, and losing access to them would result in diminished property value.* Aside from any economic impact, these views were very important to us when we purchased our house and losing them would create an emotional toll for us larger than the economic one.

The following images show an original and annotated view out of a third floor window of our house. There are five windows with similar views on our third floor.



Existing view from 30 Parker St. third floor



View from 30 Parker St. third floor annotated with approximate locations of building plan, demonstrating effect of ~7ft of extra height compared to existing building.

II. Granting Aspects of this Variance are Contrary to Public Interest

We believe the current proposed design is contrary to public interest for two key reasons.

- This current design neither complements nor respects the historic and architectural character of the community.
- By granting these variances, it sets development precedent that could irrevocably change the historic character of the neighborhood

Historic and Architectural Character of the Islington Creek Neighborhood

Portions of the Islington Creek neighborhood including 332 Hanover and all of the abutters are part of the [Portsmouth Downtown National Historic District](#) which was listed to the National Register in June of 2017 (note that this District is separate and distinct from Portsmouth's Local Historic District). Referenced in the Portsmouth Downtown National Historic District are a number of photos, one of which is a photo directly across the street from 332 Hanover street project



Hanover Street, looking northeast from the intersection with Pearl Street; 349-351 Hanover Street is in the foreground. Source: Portsmouth Downtown National Historic District [website](#)

Given the historic nature of our neighborhood, we believe the goals from the [Rockingham Planning Commission's Historic Resources](#) for guidance on new developments or redevelopment in historic districts applies here. In particular:

- Goal 1: Historical resources and community character are routinely considered and protected as part of the planning and development review process.
- Goal 3: New development and redevelopment respect and complement the historical and architectural character of communities.

The proposed structure is going to loom over other homes in the area, and the increased density exacerbates this effect. The proposed structure is currently three full floors with ceilings that appear to be 9-10 ft tall and a Mansard roof that allows no negative space the way a pitched roof does (see submitted applicant drawings in drawing A6). The effective height of this building becomes 39 feet 11 ½ inches from the sidewalk on Hanover to the peak of the roof. To compare to other homes on Hanover Street, most only have 8 ft ceilings on lower floors and often as short as 7 ft ceilings on top floors. Three story structures on Hanover (including the existing structure and the house in the adjacent lot) come to a height closer to 28 ½ feet to the peak of their roof, or 33 feet above the sidewalk on Hanover. These three story homes also often have pitched roofs that allow more light, air, and sightlines.

We ourselves live in the only Mansard roof home that is in the vicinity of this project (built circa 1875). Our ceilings are 9 feet on the first floor, 8 feet on the second floor, and 7 ½ feet on the third floor. There is no historical precedent for a Mansard roof home with 9-10 ft ceilings on each

floor, and building one would be out of character and out of proportion with the surrounding neighborhood.

Setting Precedent for Future Development

One of our main concerns with a project out of proportion with surrounding properties being developed is the way the Board of Adjustment uses existing construction as precedent for approving future projects.

By granting these variances, it sets developmental precedent that could irrevocably change the historic character of the neighborhood. Introducing development with height out of proportion to the neighborhood would punish those who keep their historic homes and reward those who buy lots to demolish them and proceed to go well over zoned density and build structures that loom over their neighbors. We can see a future where multiple more projects are created that use these new heights as a precedent, and the neighborhood ends up with owners of any remaining historical homes having a far reduced experience on their property, including but not limited to:

- Less light and airflow
- Less of a neighborhood feel walking out your front door and strolling in the vicinity
- Views of Portsmouth's beauty blocked or demolished in the case of surrounding architecture, and
- Decreased privacy with other buildings looking down into their windows.

This will incentivize more and more owners to abandon their historic properties and the neighborhood (and the city) will lose one of the main reasons people want to move here in the first place.

As an aside to the Board of Adjustment: While this particular project has taken a thoughtful approach to add parking (which we greatly appreciate), many developments we have seen recently in the neighborhood have been able to negotiate and get exceptions out of meeting required parking stipulations per [Section 10.1112](#) of the Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance. Creating a precedent of increased density being coupled with the continued trend of not honoring parking ordinances would lead to further traffic and safety issues that we already experience in our neighborhood.

III. Questioning the Definition of Hardship

We question the use of the word hardship to describe a situation in which one cannot convert a known single family lot into multi-unit without multiple variances, including increasing density by 38% and building to a height that is not proportional with the surrounding historical architecture.

If this is allowed to count as a hardship moving forward, we feel this cheapens the use of the term "hardship." Reducing the burden of proof for the term hardship could be abused by speculators and developers down the road.

IV. Conclusion

In closing, we ask the zoning board of adjustment to deny the variance to allow increased density unless concessions are made on lowering the height of the structure to match the three story structure that is currently on the lot. If this were addressed, we would be able to support this project as our property value would no longer be diminished and our concerns for future development in the neighborhood could be addressed. We are open to the idea of redeveloping the property in a way similar to the proposed plan, but not in a manner where the height of the building is far out of proportion with the surrounding architecture.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kathryn "Kate" Waldwick
Bryn Waldwick