# Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts, Pllc ATTORNEYS AT LAW

127 Parrott Avenue, P.O. Box 4480 | Portsmouth, NH, 03802-4480 Telephone: 603.436.0666 | Facsimile: 603.431.0879 | www.hpgrlaw.com

July 11, 2022

#### HAND DELIVERED

Peter Stith, Principal Planner Portsmouth City Hall 1 Junkins Avenue Portsmouth, NH 03801

James Woods & Anneke Meinardi, Applicants Re: 1 Walton Alley Tax Map 103/Lot 27

General Residence B ("GRB"), Historic Overlay District

Dear Mr. Stith & Zoning Board Members:

On behalf of James Woods & Anneke Meinardi ("Woods"), enclosed please find the following in support of a request for zoning relief:

- Digital Application submitted 6/1/2022.
- Owner's Authorization.
- 7/11/2022 Memorandum and exhibits in support of Variance Application

This submission replaces in its entirety the 6/1/22 submission.

We look forward to presenting this application to the Zoning Board at its July 19, 2022 meeting.

Very truly yours,

R. Timothy Phoenix Monica F. Kieser

Stephanie J. Johnson

Encl.

cc:

James Woods and Anneke Meinardi

Ambit Engineering, Inc. McHenry Architecture

### **OWNER'S AUTHORIZATION**

I, James William Woods, Owner/Applicant of 1 Walton Aly, Tax Map 103/Lot 27, hereby authorize law firm Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts, PLLC, to represent me before any and all City of Portsmouth Representatives, Boards and Commissions for permitting the project.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 26 May 2022

James William Woods

#### **MEMORANDUM**

TO:

Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment ("ZBA")

FROM:

R. Timothy Phoenix, Esquire Monica F. Kieser, Esquire

Stephanie J. Johnson, Esquire

**DATE:** 

Rev. July 11,2022

Re:

James Woods & Anneke Meinardi, Applicants

1 Walton Alley Tax Map 103/Lot 27

General Residence B ("GRB"), Historic Overlay District

Dear Chairman Parrott and Zoning Board Members:

On behalf of the Applicants, James Woods & Anneke Meinardi ("Woods"), we are pleased to submit this memorandum and attached exhibits in support of Zoning Relief to allow construction of a detached garage upon the property at 1 Walton Alley, to be considered by the ZBA at its July 19, 2022 meeting.

#### I. EXHIBITS

- A. <u>Plan Set issued by Ambit Engineering, Inc.</u>
  - <u>C1 Standard Boundary Survey.</u>
  - C2 Variance Plan
- B. <u>Architectural Plans and Plan Set issued by McHenry Architecture</u>.
  - Garage Floor Plan and Elevation
  - Architectural Plans and Renderings of Finished Garage and Driveway <sup>1</sup>
- C. Site Photos.
- D. <u>Photographs of nearby garages</u>.
- E. <u>Tax Map 103</u>.
- F. <u>Letter of Support, Patrick and Judy Nerbonne, 189 Gates St.</u>

#### II. PROPERTY/PROJECT

One Walton Alley is a 5,672-s.f. lot containing an 874 s.f. (footprint) two-story single-family residence, large landscaped front garden, gravel driveway, and brick patio ("the Property"). (**Exhibit A**). As part of a comprehensive overall renovation project, Woods intends to construct a two-story 8 ft. by 14 ft. addition to the rear of the existing home. The first floor will hold a powder room and mudroom, with a full bath on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The existing gravel driveway will be lengthened and composed of cobblestone/riverstone, leading to a new 12' x 18' x10.17 detached one-story garage with related landscaping improvements located next to an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The rendering is for illustrative purposes. The garage rendering does not show the retaining walls necessitated by existing elevation. Also, the rendered driveway has been amended, see site plan Exhibit A)

existing 6 foot stockade fence, which will be replaced with a new fence (the "Project").

(Exhibits A&B). Windows and a door will be placed in the left wall of the garage. No windows or doors will be located on the right side or rear. The exposed concrete foundation of the garage will be covered with a natural stone veneer, improving it aesthetically and more in keeping with the look of historical foundations. While the rear addition to the home is entirely compliant, the garage requires relief from side and rear yard setback requirements.

Aside from the addition and garage, the comprehensive renovation project includes:

- Repair and replace the wood clapboard siding
- Restore the wood double-hung windows on front and left side where possible
- Remove existing skylights in the house roof
- Replace existing asphalt shingles with cedar shingles
- Install cedar shingles on the garage roof
- Renovate home, extend driveway with cobble strips/centered riverstone
- Clean up/landscape the grounds

The only other reasonable location for the garage would be in the open landscaped northwesterly quadrant of the lot at the Gates St., Walton Alley intersection. It is believed that such a garage could be built while meeting all yard setback requirements. The owner, however, considers this a character-defining area both for the existing lot, and the neighborhood. Woods does not want to put the garage in front of the front door, preferring to leave it is a landscaped area. To that end, Woods is willing to, and <u>offers to place a conservation restriction on this area permanently prohibiting the construction of any building (s) in this area.</u> Other structures such as walkways, steps, fencing, decorative benches etc. would be permitted.

The surrounding area is mostly residential, with the exception of a couple of small businesses/historic sites. There are numerous homes and/or accessory structures in the area that do not meet side or rear yard requirements. (Exhibits D & E). The Project will significantly improve the aesthetics of the home/property, provide additional needed living space and covered parking/storage while improving/preserving the home's historic nature and the property's large open space with upgraded landscaping.

The garage is placed essentially in the optimal location. Moving it farther away from the right sideline will interfere with vehicular access due to the location of the house. Similarly, moving it forward, away from the rear lot line, will interfere with access to the rear yard.

#### III. RELIEF REQUIRED

<u>Variance Section</u>	Required	Existing	Proposed
PZO§10.520, Table PZO§10.521 <sup>2</sup>			
Left-side setback	10'	N/A	1.6' garage
Rear setback	25'	N/A	9.0' garage

### IV. VARIANCE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. The variances will not be contrary to the public interest.
- 2. The spirit of the ordinance is observed.

The first step in the ZBA's analysis is to determine whether granting the variances are not contrary to the public interest and are consistent with the spirit and intent of the ordinance, considered together pursuant to Malachy Glen Associates, Inc. v. Town of Chichester, 155 N.H. 102 (2007) and its progeny. Upon examination, it must be determined whether granting the variances "would unduly and to a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance's basic zoning objectives." Id. "Mere conflict with the zoning ordinance is not enough." Id.

Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance ("PZO") Section 10.121 identifies the general purposes and intent of the ordinance "to promote the health, safety and general welfare of Portsmouth...in accordance with the...Master Plan." These purposes are accomplished by regulating:

1. The use of land, buildings and structures for business, industrial, residential and other purposes – The intended use of the property is and will remain residential. The upgrades to the home will significantly improve the stature and historic look via removal of skylights, converting the roof to cedar shingles, restoring rather

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See also PZO§10.573 An accessory building or structure more than 10 feet in height or more than 100 square feet in area shall be set back from any lot line at least the height of the building or the applicable yard requirement, whichever is less. Here the applicable setback requirement is 10 feet as the building height slightly exceeds 10 feet.

- than replacing windows, and restoring/replacing wood siding as needed. The proposed garage, is small, tastefully designed in keeping with the historic nature of the home, placed in a reasonable location behind the home next to a to-be-replaced six-foot fence. The requested relief will satisfy the need for enclosed parking and storage, similar to several other homes and lots in the area.
- 2. The intensity of land use, including lot sizes, building coverage, building height and bulk, yards and open space A single-family home exists and will remain. The garage is to the rear of the property in a reasonable location, particularly compared to the effect of placing the garage in the northwesterly corner where Woods proposes to permanently remain a landscaped area. The lot is slightly larger than others nearby but "L"shaped, with the existing curb cut and driveway on one side and an open landscaped area facing Gates Street. The use and intensity of use will not change. 21.77%, proposed building coverage is well below the 30% maximum coverage, and open space remains generous at 58% where a minimum of 30% is required. Measured from average grade to the midpoint of the sloped roof, the proposed height of the one-story garage is 10.17 ft., well in-keeping with the size and height of nearby detached garages.
- 3. The design of facilities for vehicular access, circulation, parking and loading The garage and extended driveway afford additional off-street parking.

  Orientation of the garage allows cars to enter it easily, as well as access to the rear yard.
- 4. The impact on properties on of outdoor lighting, noise, vibration, stormwater runoff and flooding The proposal sites the garage at the end of the existing driveway at the rear of the residence. The significant open space allows adequate space for stormwater treatment. The slope of the driveway will direct stormwater to the area between the home and garage.
- 5. The preservation and enhancement of the visual environment The design of the proposed garage compliments the home, fits with the historical character of the neighborhood. The proposed location nestled in right rear corner of the lot is in keeping with the location of other accessory buildings on nearby lots and maintains open space on the north side and rear of the lot. The nearest neighbors will see only an aesthetically pleasing cedar shingle roof peeking above the sixfoot fence. The comprehensive redevelopment plan, including skylight removal, cedar shingle roof on the home, restoration of historic windows, additional landscaping and permanent preservation of the northwesterly corner landscaped area all preserve or enhance the visual environment.
- 6. The preservation of historic districts and building and structures of historic architectural interest The comprehensive redevelopment plan, including the small addition and small garage is tasteful, in keeping with the historic character of the existing home and neighborhood. The project has been before the Historic District Commission for preliminary review. Upon information and belief, it was received favorably. Formal Historic District Commission review will proceed upon receipt of relief from the ZBA.

7. The protection of natural resources, including groundwater, surface water, wetlands, wildlife habitat and air quality – No negative effect.

The intent of the GRB Zone is to "provide areas for single-family, two family and multifamily dwellings, with appropriate accessory uses, at moderate to high densities (ranging from approximately 5 to 12 dwelling units per acre), together with appropriate accessory uses and limited services." PZO §10.410 (emphasis added). At 5672 s.f., this lot falls between 5 (8712 s.f.) and 12 (3630 s.f.) homes per acre. The proposal thus meets the intent of the GRB Zone. It permits the significant and more historical improvement of an existing single-family residence with a density consistent with that of the surrounding area. Many properties in the neighborhood contain a home and/or accessory buildings which do not comply with front, rear, or side setbacks. (Exhibits D,E) The small, one-car garage at the end on the existing driveway, placed as far from abutting homes as reasonably possible given the shaped lot, existing home and driveway location, and effort to preserve the open landscaped area at the northwest quadrant. Given these factors, granting the requested variances will not conflict with the basic zoning objectives of the PZO.

In considering whether variances "in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that they violate the ordinance's basic zoning objectives," <u>Malachy Glen, supra</u>, also held:

One way to ascertain whether granting the variance would violate basic zoning objectives is to determine whether it would <u>alter the essential character of the locality</u>... . Another approach to [determine] whether granting the variance violates basic zoning objectives is to examine whether granting the variance would threaten the public health, safety or welfare. (emphasis added)

There are numerous other properties in the area that are similarly sized and include a home and/or accessory structure within side or rear setbacks. The tax map demonstrates that a number of lots close to the Property, specifically those along Walton Alley, Gates Street, Mechanic Street and Gardner Street, show buildings that encroach on front, side, and/or rear yard setbacks. (Exhibit D & E). A broader view of the surrounding area on Tax Map 103 demonstrates that of 99 properties, approximately 65 (65%) appear to contain main or accessory structures that violate front, side, or rear setbacks. (Exhibit E). Accordingly, this proposal, which adds a small, one-car garage (with no windows or doors on the sides facing the closest neighbors) in the side and rear setbacks while preserving open space is in keeping with the surrounding area. There will also be no threat to the public health, safety, or welfare by granting the requested variances, which will merely permit a detached accessory structure in a location similar to other accessory buildings in

the neighborhood. The Project provides a longer driveway and covered parking in a thickly settled historical neighborhood while permanently preserving open space on the northwest side of the Property. The historic treatment of the existing home and grounds all act to preserve the character of the neighborhood, with density and setbacks consistent with the surrounding area. Clearly, the requested variances neither alter the essential character of the locality nor threaten the public health, safety, or welfare. Accordingly, the variances are not contrary to the public interest and observe the spirit of the ordinance.

### 3. Granting the variances will not diminish surrounding property values.

The Project includes a dimensionally compliant addition and a small 12x18 single car garage only10.17 ft. in height, nestled in the right rear corner next to a six-foot fence. The slightly expanded home, additional parking, garage and grounds, all improve the property, thus its value and matches conditions throughout the South End neighborhood. Given the limited scope of the requests, and Woods' significant efforts to preserve and improve the historical look of the existing home and garage, as well as preserving the open space at the northwest, it is clear that granting the variances will not diminish surrounding property values.

#### 4. Denial of the variances results in an unnecessary hardship.

a. Special conditions distinguish the property from others in the area.

The Property, at 5,673 +/- s.f. is small, irregularly "L" shaped, and located in a densely developed historic area with many other homes/accessory structures that do not comply with rear and side yard requirements. The location of the garage is driven by the lot size/shape, location of the existing house and driveway together with the reasonable intention to permanently preserve the existing open space at the northwest corner of the lot. (Exhibit C) These circumstances combine to create special conditions.

b. No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance and its specific application in this instance.

The purpose of setbacks and building coverage requirements is to prevent overcrowding and overburdening of land, provide sightlines for pedestrians and motorists, ensure adequate light and air circulation, and provide sufficient area for stormwater treatment. None of these purposes are impaired by granting the requested variances. The proposed garage is a single story located at the rear of the property. Building coverage remains well below the permitted 30%, and open space is well over the minimum 30%. The proposed setbacks will afford sufficient

space to treat stormwater on the lot. Moreover, the neighborhood overall is similarly densely developed with multiple nearby parcels non-conforming for setbacks. See Walker v. City of Manchester, 107 N.H. 382, 386 (1966) (Hardship may be found where similar nonconforming uses exist within the neighborhood and the proposed use will have no adverse effect on the neighborhood). See also Belanger v. City of Nashua, 121 N.H. 389 (1981) (Variance proper where ordinance no longer reflects the current character of neighborhood). The location of the garage will likely be unnoticed by the general public given its location tucked at the far rear right corner of the lot. The closest neighbors will not see most of the garage given existing fence lines and vegetation. The most that will be seen is a portion of the roof above the fence. Balancing the clearly *de minimis* effect upon neighbors against the reasonable request to have a garage for parking cars and storage in 21<sup>st</sup> century Portsmouth, New Hampshire, together with the significant restoration and grounds preservation efforts proposed by Woods, there clearly is no fair and substantial relationship between the purposes of the ordinance side and rear setback requirements and its application in this instance.

### c. The proposed use is reasonable.

If the use is permitted, it is deemed reasonable. <u>Vigeant v. Hudson</u>, 151 N.H. 747 (2005). Residential use is permitted in the GRB Zone and includes accessory buildings incidental to the permitted use. The proposed garage is modest, complements the existing residence, and provides covered parking and storage, which is entirely reasonable in New England.

#### 5. Substantial justice will be done by granting the variances.

If "there is no benefit to the public that would outweigh the hardship to the applicant" this factor is satisfied. <u>Harborside Associates, L.P. v. Parade Residence Hotel, LLC</u>, 162 N.H. 508 (2011). That is, "any loss to the [applicant] that is not outweighed by a gain to the general public is an injustice." <u>Malachy Glen, supra</u> at 109.

Woods is constitutionally entitled to the reasonable use of his land. For all of the reasons previously stated, it is entirely reasonable to place a garage within the side and rear setbacks as proposed given: the lot size and shape; location of the existing home and driveway; significant effort to renovate and preserve the home and grounds in a manner in keeping with the intention of the historic district and zoning; and the character of the surrounding neighborhood. "The right to use and enjoy one's property is a fundamental right protected by both the State and Federal Constitutions." N.H. CONST. pt. I, arts. 2, 12; U.S. CONST. amends. V, XIV; Town of

Chesterfield v. Brooks, 126 N.H. 64 (1985) at 68. Part I, Article 12 of the New Hampshire Constitution provides in part that "no part of a man's property shall be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people." Thus, our State Constitutional protections limit the police power of the State and its municipalities in their regulation of the use of property. L. Grossman & Sons, Inc. v. Town of Gilford, 118 N.H. 480, 482 (1978). "Property" in the constitutional sense has been interpreted to mean not the tangible property itself, but rather the right to possess, use, enjoy and dispose of it. Burrows v. City of Keene, 121 N.H. 590, 597 (1981). (emphasis added).

The Supreme Court has held that zoning ordinances must be reasonable, not arbitrary and must rest upon some ground of difference having fair and substantial relation to the object of the regulation. Simplex Technologies, Inc. v. Town of Newington, 145 N.H. 727, 731 (2001); Chesterfield at 69.

The requested variances allow a tasteful, single story, one-car garage nestled in the right rear corner of the lot, matching the conditions of numerous surrounding properties. The garage will be screened by vegetation and fencing. Accordingly, there is no gain to public from denial of the variances. Conversely, Woods will be greatly harmed by denial of any of the variances because he will be denied a reasonably sized garage, without which the intended overall restoration product project will be unlikely to proceed. Without question, substantial justice will be done by granting the variances, while a substantial injustice will be imposed upon Woods if denied.

#### V. **CONCLUSION**

For all of the reasons stated, Woods respectfully requests that the Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment grant the requested variances.

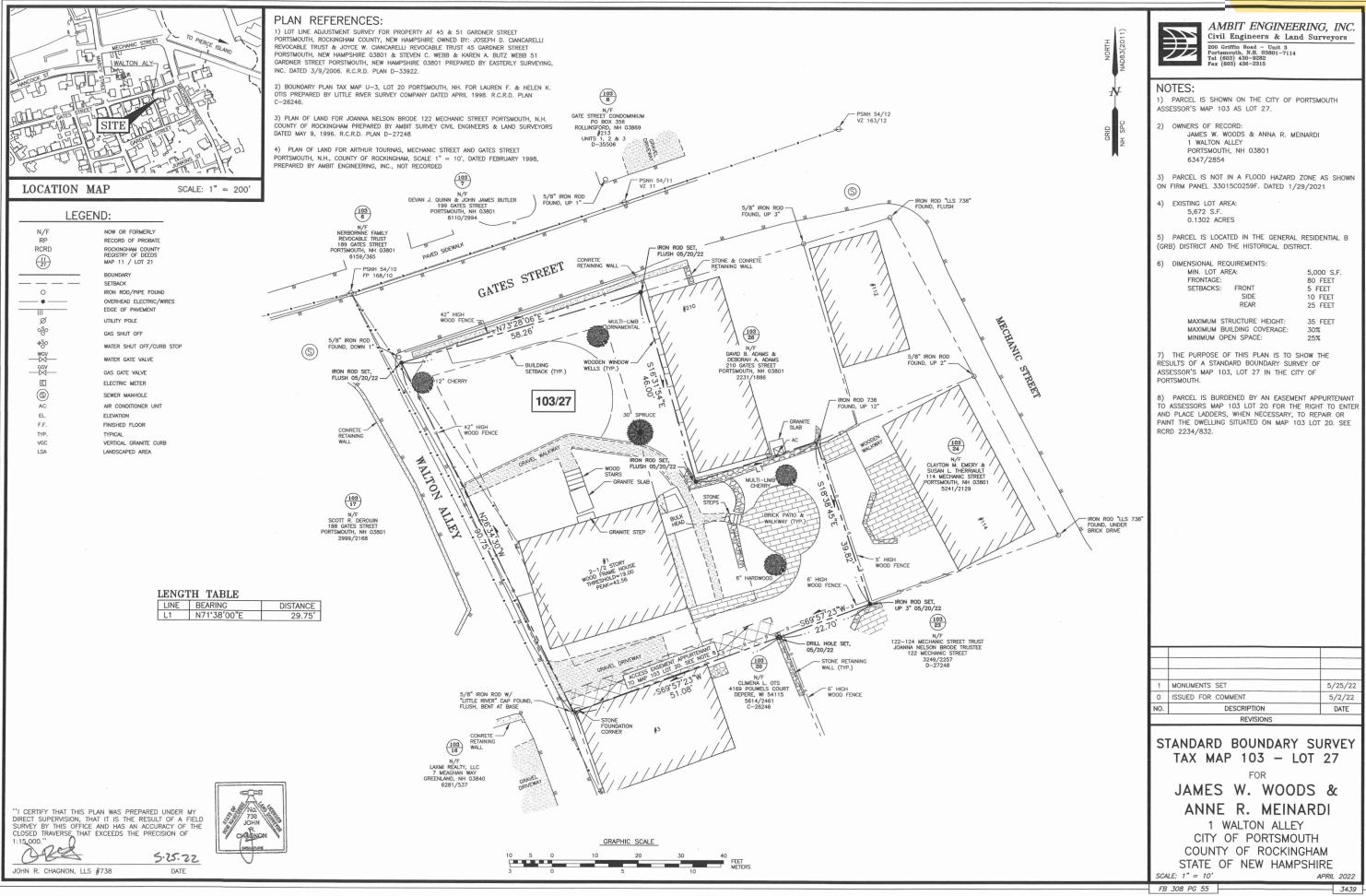
Respectfully submitted,

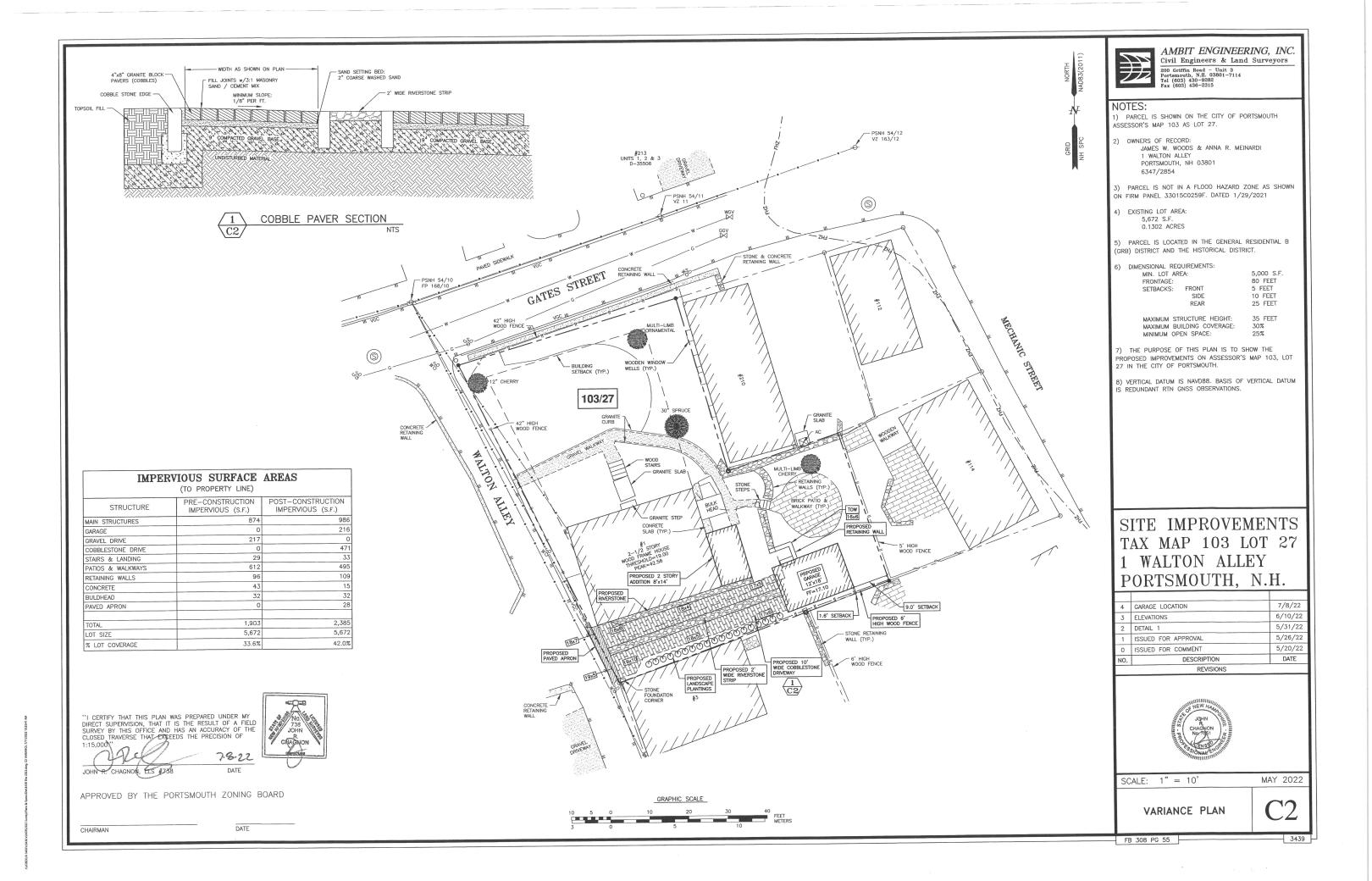
James Woods and Anneke Meinardi

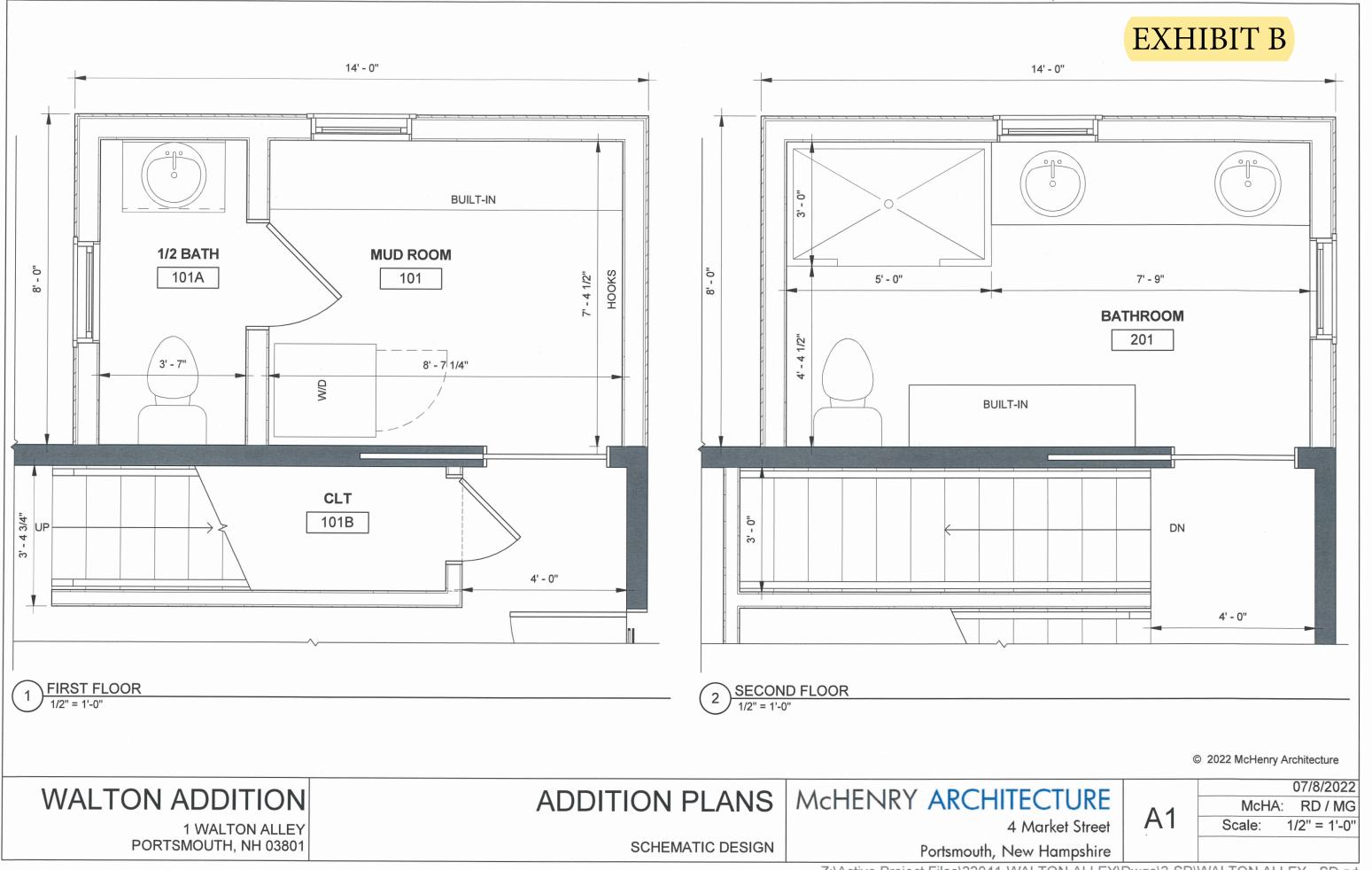
By: R. Timothy Phoenix

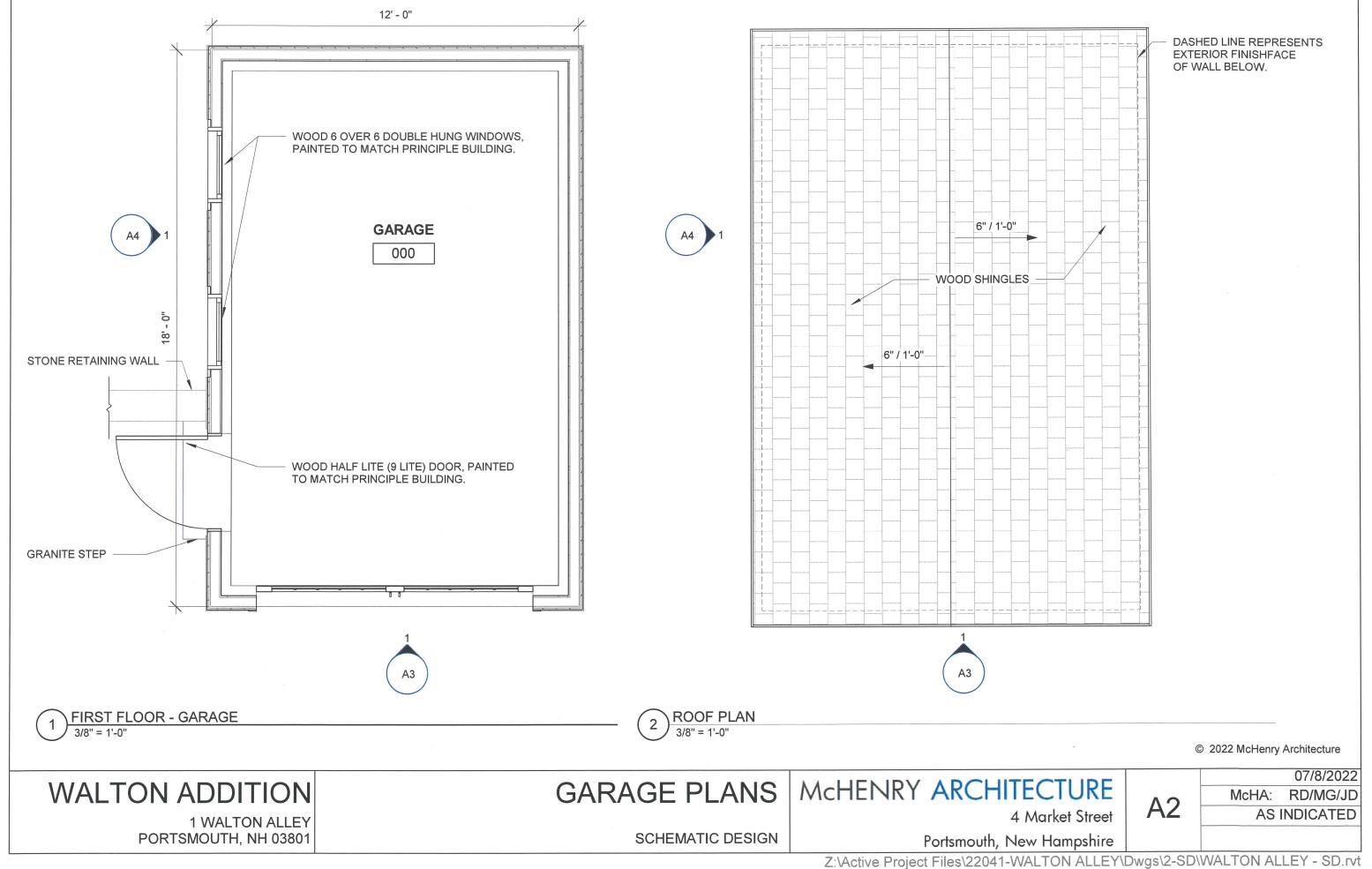
Monica F. Kieser

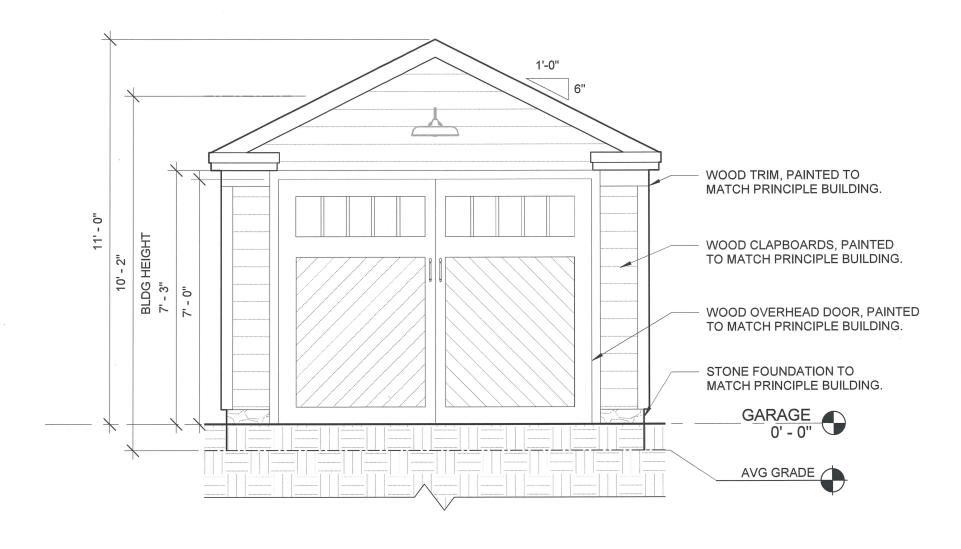
Stephanie J. Johnson











1 WEST ELEVATION
3/8" = 1'-0"

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**WALTON ADDITION** 

1 WALTON ALLEY PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801 **GARAGE ELEVATION** 

McHENRY ARCHITECTURE

A3

07/8/2022 McHA: RD/MG/JD AS INDICATED

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

4 Market Street



1 NORTH ELEVATION
3/8" = 1'-0"

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**WALTON ADDITION** 

1 WALTON ALLEY PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801 **GARAGE ELEVATION** 

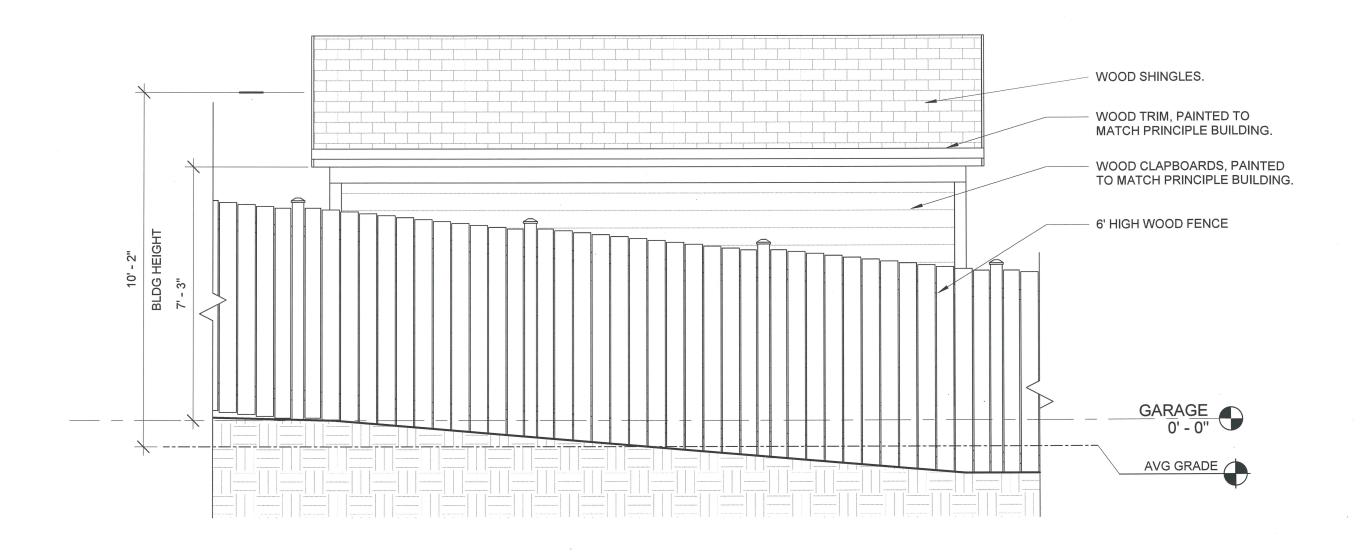
McHENRY ARCHITECTURE

A4

07/8/2022 McHA: RD/MG/JD AS INDICATED

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

4 Market Street Portsmouth, New Hampshire



1) SOUTH ELEVATION
3/8" = 1'-0"

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WALTON ADDITION

1 WALTON ALLEY PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801 **GARAGE ELEVATION** 

McHENRY ARCHITECTURE

4 Market Street A5

07/8/2022 McHA: RD/MG/JD AS INDICATED

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

Portsmouth, New Hampshire



STREET VIEW

REAR YARD VIEW

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**WALTON ADDITION** 

1 WALTON ALLEY PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801 RENDERED VIEWS

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

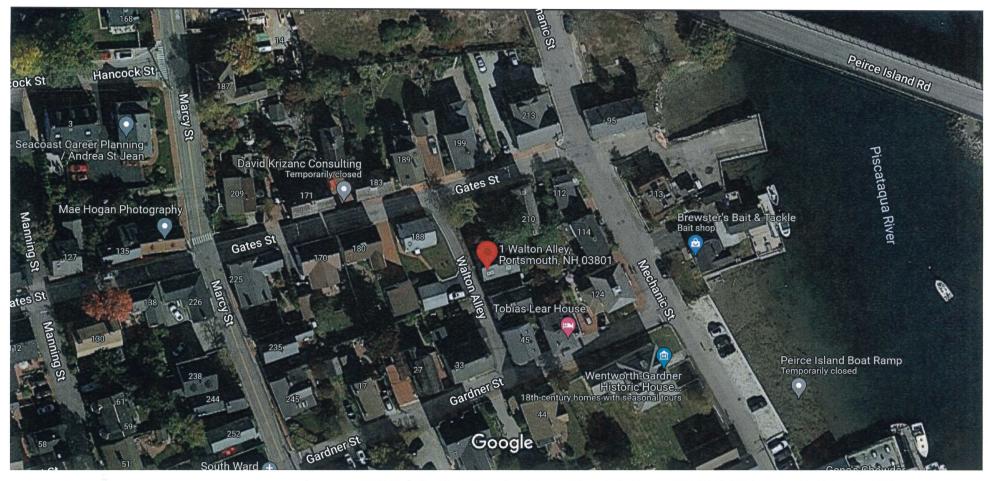
McHENRY ARCHITECTURE

4 Market Street

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

07/8/2022 McHA: MG

A6 NOT TO SCALE

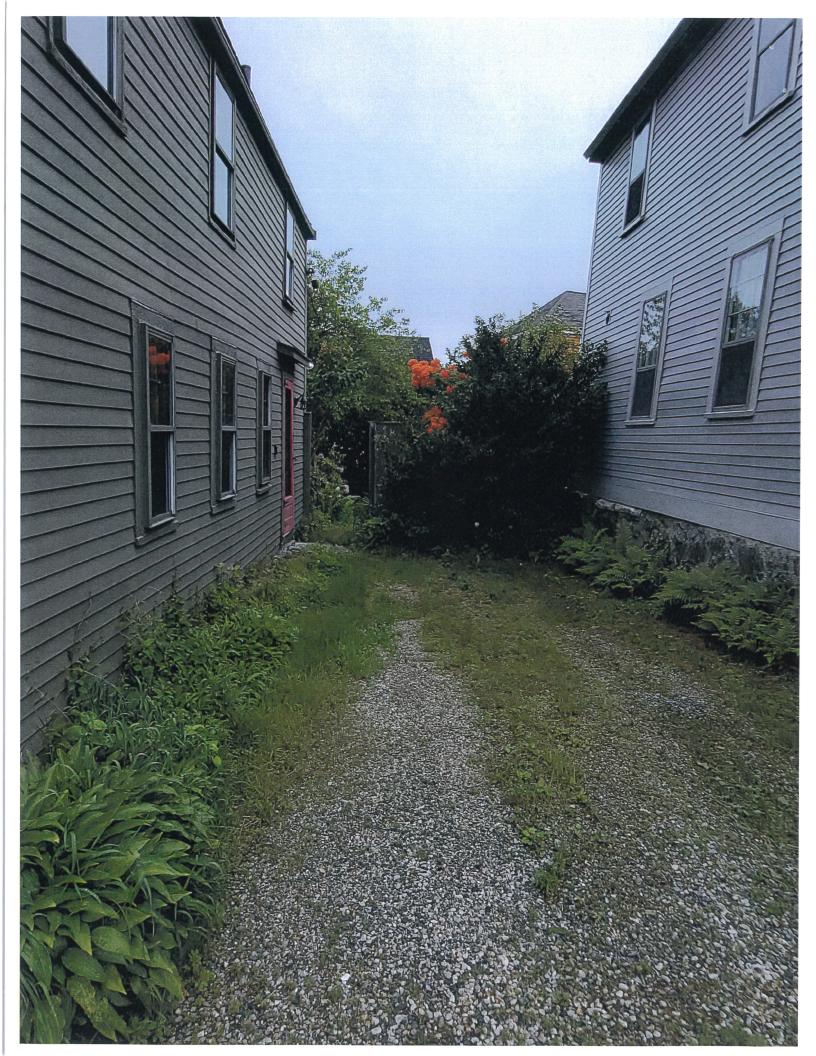


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# Google Maps 17 Gardner St



Image capture: Sep 2017 © 2022 Google

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Google

ree View - Sep 2017



267 Marcy St.

# Google Maps 35 Gardner St



Image capture: Sep 2017 © 2022 Google

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

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City of Portsmouth
Planning Board
Reference to: 1 Walton Alley
Owners: James William Woods and Anna Roeline Meinardi

1 Walton Alley

Portsmouth, NH 03801

We live at 189 Gates Street and have reviewed the plans for 1 Walton Alley

We approve the plans.

G. Patrick Nerbonne and M. Judy Nerbonne