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BY PDF / EMAIL

June 6, 2022

Historic District Commission  
City of Portsmouth  
1 Junkins Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Attn: Jon Wyckoff, Chairman  
Reagan Ruedig, Vice-Chairman  
Rich Blalock, City Council Representative  
Members: Dave Adams; Daniel Brown; Margot Doering; Martin Ryan  
Alternates: Heinz Sauk-Schubert; Karen Bouffard.

Re: Work Session Requested by 445 Marcy Street, LLC for June 8, 2022

Dear Historic District Commission Members:

I write to offer additional comments on the revised proposal of 445 Marcy Street, LLC prepared by ARCove Architects. In summary, my comments are twofold:

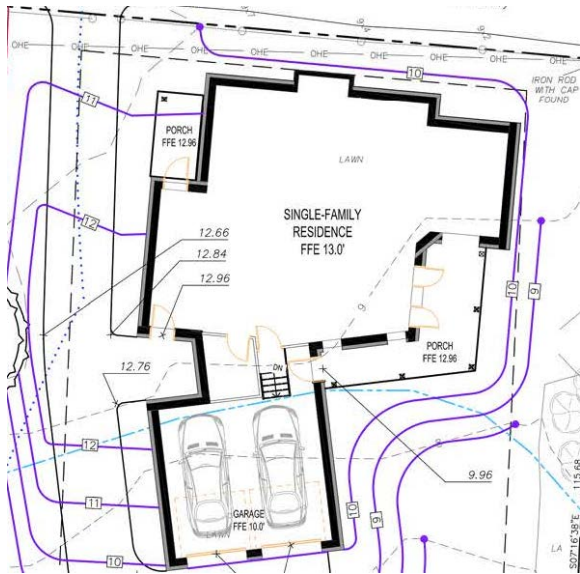
1. The massing of the proposed house (as revised for June 8th) is still too large for the particular location in the Historic District and continues to violate the HDC guidelines.
2. The revised solar panels are inappropriate for the Historic District, and another Net Zero solution is possible as New Hampshire law permits Group Net Metering, which allows for off-site solar panel arrays to offset usage.

### **Massing Still Violates the HDC Guidelines**

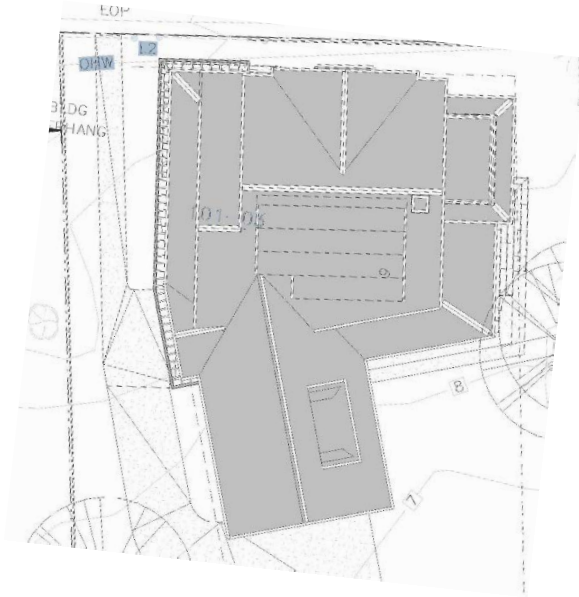
The size of the proposed house dwarfs the opposite houses on Pray Street and the Candy Shop. Since Work Session 1 on February 9, 2022, the footprint of the proposed home has not changed in any significant way. The most recent cosmetic change to scale back the gable does not address this basic fact. As I noted orally at the May 11, 2022 HDC meeting, half of the claimed three foot reduction in overall building height in that iteration resulted from the reduction in the average grade of the proposed house, and not a reduction in building mass.

So, despite these small changes since the first Work Session, the massing of the house has not been significantly reduced. The following shows the footprint from Work Session 1 compared to the most recent footprint for Work Session 4.

**February 9<sup>th</sup>**



**June 8th**



The HDC Guidelines for Small Scale New Construction & Additions state that:

The proportions of a new building and its relationship to neighboring buildings establish its consistency or compatibility within a neighborhood or block.

New buildings with form and similar massing to adjacent construction will allow the new building to be consistent or compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

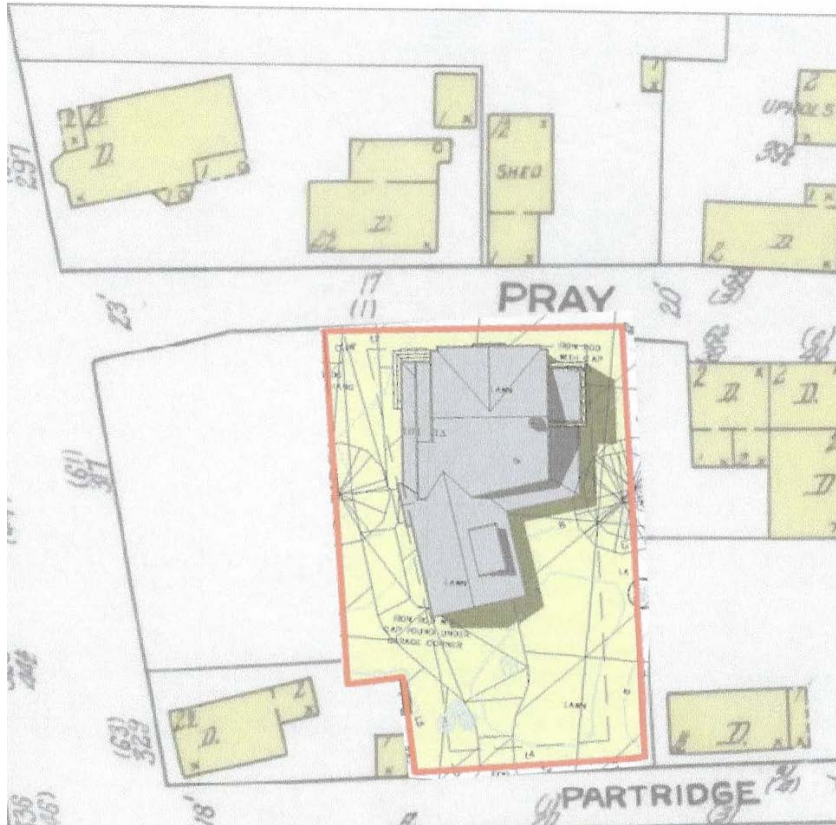
According to the Guidelines:

It is Generally Appropriate to...

Construct a new building that is similar in height and width to buildings on adjacent sites.

Construct a new building with similar form and massing to buildings on adjacent sites.

The slides presented to the HDC by Mark Mininberg of 437 Marcy St. on March 9, 2022 demonstrated this was not true of the proposal as of that date:



Since that date, the changes to the massing of the building have not been significant. If the HDC's Guidelines are to mean anything, a significant reduction in overall massing should be required of the applicants.

**Group Net Metering is Alternative to On-Site Solar Panels to Achieve Net Zero**

In the May 11, 2022 HDC meeting, Mr. Ryan and Ms. Bouffard both expressed concern over the solar panels proposed for the new construction. The most recent proposal does not address the basic incompatibility of the panels with the character of surrounding houses in the Historic District. Fortunately, New Hampshire law

permits Group Net Metering (see New Hampshire RSA 362-A:9, XIV and Chapter PUC 900 NET METERING FOR CUSTOMER-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION RESOURCES OF 1,000 KILOWATTS OR LESS). For more information, see:

<https://www.puc.nh.gov/sustainable%20energy/GroupNetMetering.html>

*In 2013, with the enactment Senate Bill 98, New Hampshire established group net metering. This law ([RSA 362-A:9, XIV](#)) permits net-metered renewable energy facilities, known as hosts, to share the proceeds from surplus electricity generation with other electric utility account holders, known as group members. Group members do not have net metered renewable energy facilities and do not have to make any changes to their existing electric service.*

The applicants should be encouraged by the Commission to pursue this alternative. This will allow them to achieve their laudable goals of Net Zero construction, without having to site the solar panels on the roof within the Historic District.

In summary:

1. AR Cove has responded to continued Commission and community concerns over the massing of the proposed house by making a series of small, incremental changes that do not fundamentally address the size mis-match with the houses on Pray Street and the Candy Shop.
2. Solar panels as proposed are incompatible with this particular location within the Historic District and another Net Zero solution is available to the applicants.

Very truly yours,

  
John A. Eberlein

cc Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner; Izak Gilbo, Associate Planner

Dear Members of the HDC,

June 6, 2022

A VERY brief history on awnings with pictures which you likely already know but may find interesting.

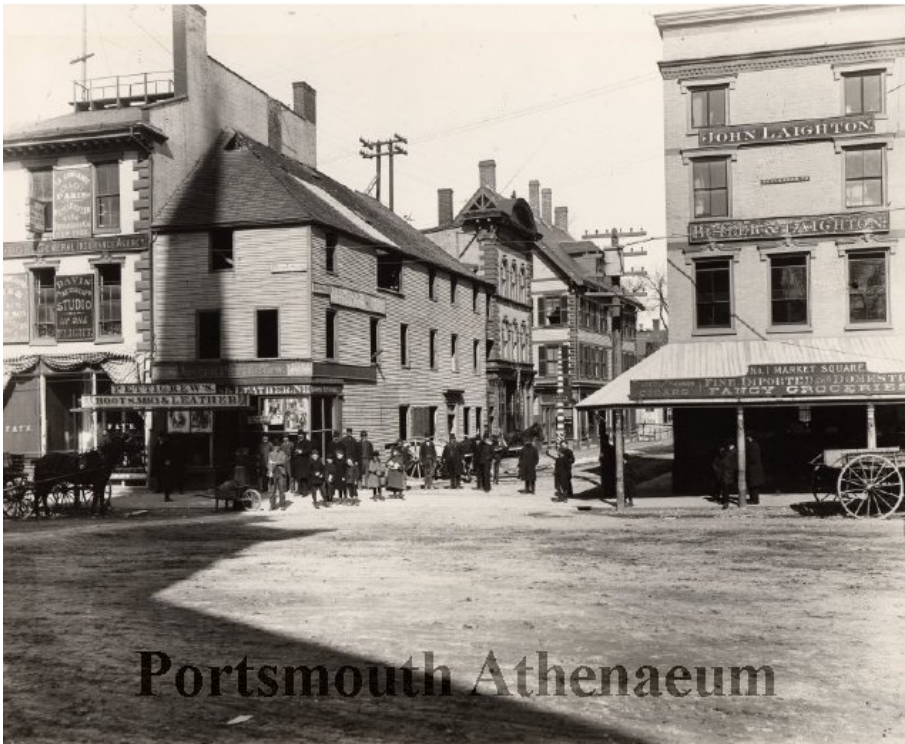
Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Bratter

### National Parks Service Preservation Brief 11

Commercial establishments of the 18th and early 19th centuries were frequently located on the ground floor of buildings and, with their residentially scaled windows and doors, *were often indistinguishable from surrounding houses*. In some cases, however, large bay or oriel windows comprised of small panes of glass set the shops apart from their neighbors. **Awnings of wood and canvas and signs over the sidewalk were other design features seen on some early commercial buildings.** The ground floors of large commercial establishments, especially in the first decades of the 19th century, were distinguished by regularly spaced, heavy piers of stone or brick, infilled with paneled doors or small paned window sash.

Please notice the wooden and some canvas awnings over *the entire sidewalk* on Congress St most with signs. Notice no cars, just horses and buggies.

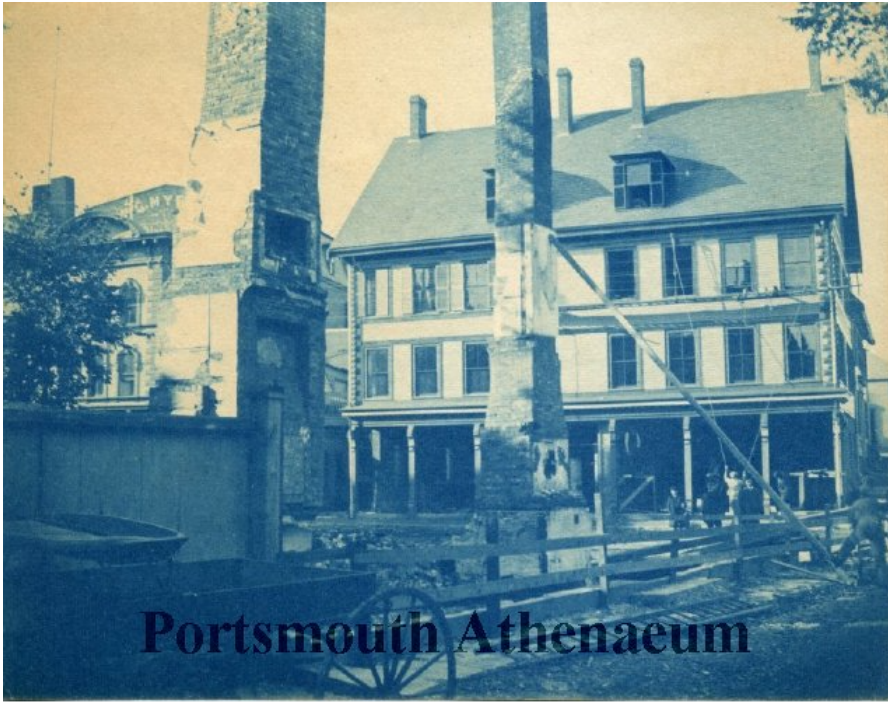
### **Congress and High St c 1890**





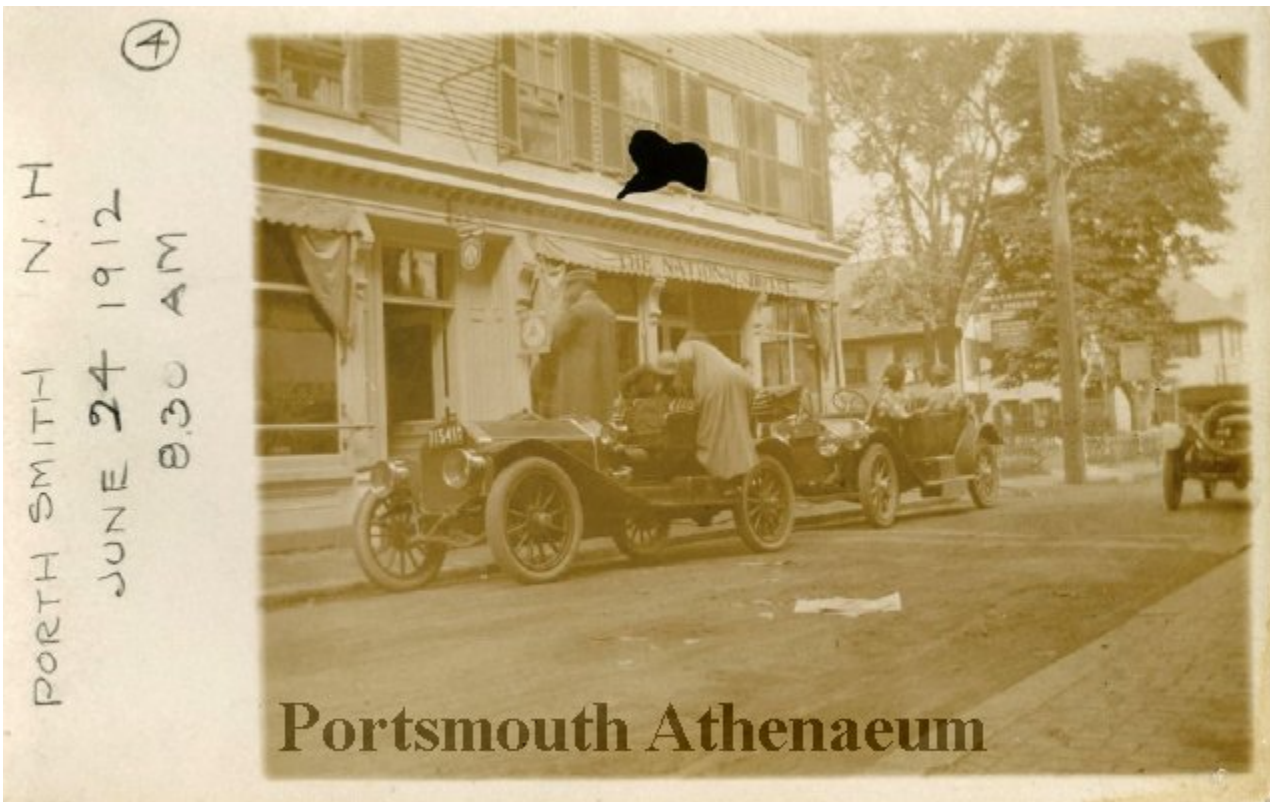
**Dolphin Hotel 1890-1900, Wooden Awning**

The first car was invented in 1886 by Benz. First cars rolled off the Ford Assembly line in 1908. Not likely parked under any awnings during this era. It is believed there were only 4192 cars in the US in 1900.



**National Hotel on High Street 1912, Canvas Awning with name on outer edge**

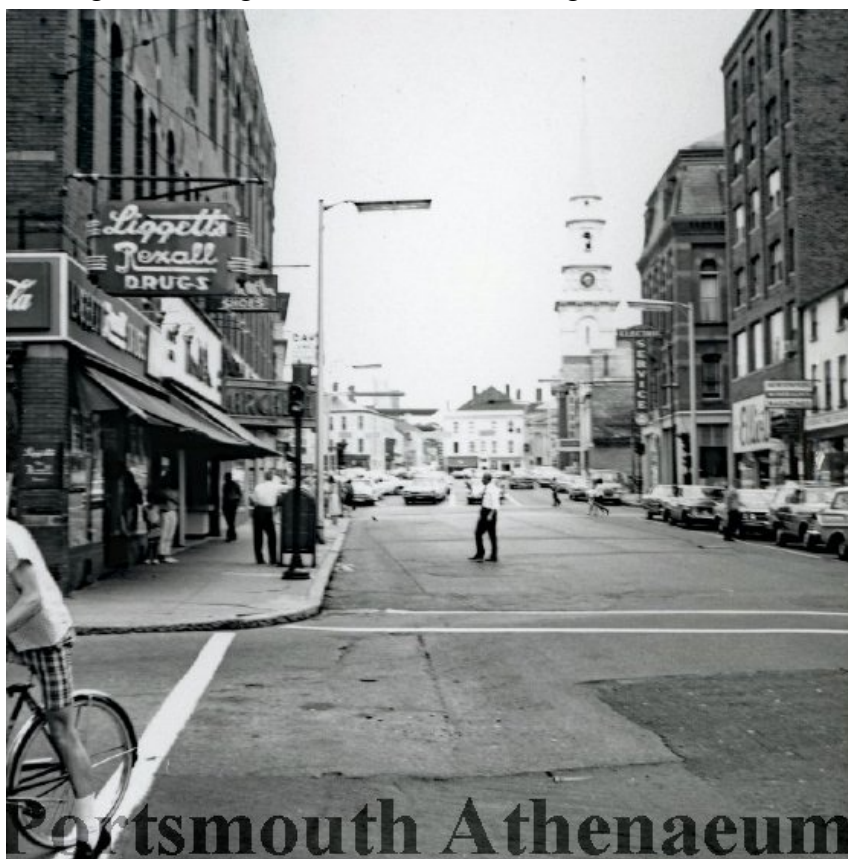
Original National Hotel/City Hotel was on Fleet and Congress St. It burned in 1877 and it is believed they moved to the Dolphin Hotel on High St and changed its name. This structure burned in 1969.



**Now Worth Lot on Congress St c 1890, large canvas awnings**  
Notice multi-pane windows on store fronts



**Vaughn and Congress 1965, Smaller canvas awnings**  
Awnings over large solid windows but signs were neon and on the buildings



**RE: 1 Congress St**  
**Meeting: HDC 06/08/22**  
**Meeting Packet pages 120- 145**

Dear Members of the Historic District Commission

June 6, 2022

Starting in the rear, H4-36 (pg 140) shows the dramatic improvement changing the windows made. Looking down the street in either direction the very modern look of the terracotta cladding (H4-42 pg 144) *seems to create a stark contrast to the North Church, the traditional style of the parking garage and building across the street on High St*, distracting from all other structures. This building is in the middle of the main historic district in Portsmouth and will be the first thing people will see as they park their cars and begin to explore the city. The proposed cladding with what looks like a high gloss sheen (H4-42 pg144) does come in other colors but seems way out of place for this historic part of downtown.

The roof with the tipped sky lights is very intriguing and really seems to pull the height and mass of the building away from the street. It does beg the question as to where will the snow fall when it slides off those windows? Short metal awnings have catch bars for fast moving snow.

H4-14 pg 128 shows the drop off area and the internal area. It doesn't make sense that cars will pull in on High St, then pull out and be moved to Haven Ct to be parked in the underground parking. Why not just pull the cars directly in and move them to the underground elevator internally? Could the vehicle elevator be moved to a closer location to the front? This would make Haven Ct truly pedestrian friendly.

The changes to the obelisk, with the viewing area on the top, its curved peaked roof, the internal access and the open area on the bottom give it an art piece feel. The white area across the bottom of the obelisk and along the bottom of the building looks like it could be illuminated or just the sheen seems a lot, perhaps a lesser sheen and definitely no illumination.

The proposed crown lifting bifolding doors for the rear restaurant are shown two ways. H4-43 (pg 134) shows them as small doors sitting about half way up the wall. Reviewing H4-37 (pg 141) the restaurant section, the doors appear to reach almost to the ground with no outside barrier. It is questionable if this would be allowed.

The restoration of the front 5 Congress St details are wonderful (H4-21 pg 131). The design of the dormer (H4-33 pg 137) on the left side is not found in the history of the structure but it does seem to fit and has features which complement the building. The overhanging cornice (?) could be replaced by a flat cornice with dentils which complements the rest of the building. The overhang seems to interfere with the many window features added to the left side and the details in the dormer. All the windows on 5 Congress seem to have some kind of cornice in the design, not sure why the overhang was added.

H4-22 pg 132 shows a wonderfully restored building with the original 1800s look. The beautiful metal marquis and glass seem like they *are from another era*. H4.02 pg 122, the far left photo shows there was no marquis. The glass marquis seems to include a very modern door underneath it looking at H4-34 pg 138. H4-22 pg 132 does not seem to mention details about the door.

There is a significant amount of vehicle traffic on High St as well as pedestrians who cross High St at Congress St. The sidewalk should remain curbed until the proposed drop off area (H4-34 pg 138).

It seems after the 28.9' average grade plane on the rear of the building is added to the front of the building it appears on H4.24 (pg 134) to end up having a height of 73.1 on Congress St. It makes one wonder if the grade plane has to be added to the front of the building at all considering H4.15 (pg 129) shows all the underground parking in the rear.

The original plans attempted to provide some reminder of the fire escapes which will be removed. Restoring one small section of them could become a conversation piece/art for the ground floor of the hotel or even in the bottom area of the obelisk. Some developers restore parts of them and have them on the side of the buildings.

Thank you for your consideration of these thoughts, Elizabeth Bratter, 159 McDonough St (property owner)



**RE: 1& 31 Raynes, 203 Maplewood**

**Meeting: HDC 06/08/22**

**Meeting Packet Pages 85-119**

Dear Members of the Historic District Commission,

June 5, 2022

Please find below the link to the **05/11/22** meeting to compare those design plans to those presented for this Wednesday's meeting.

[https://files.cityofportsmouth.com/agendas/2022/hdc/May+11%2C+2022/RaynesAve\\_1\\_HDC\\_WS\\_051122.pdf](https://files.cityofportsmouth.com/agendas/2022/hdc/May+11%2C+2022/RaynesAve_1_HDC_WS_051122.pdf)

The first thing noticeable is it seems the colors are muted this time. Please consider opening both May and June on the toolbar to appreciate the differences listed. Some of the Plans have the same numbers as previously, some have new numbers. Those are clarified in the list.

Time to "Spot the Differences"; hopefully too many weren't missed.

**Mixed Use Building:**

**June, Plan 2.0** (May 2.0) shows 2 new windows on the North Mill Pond side, it looks like the entrance is more recessed to fit them in. Shows a narrowed facade but it doesn't seem different. Oddly looking at **June's Plan 2.1** (May 2.1) the recessed entrance on the Maplewood Ave side doesn't look as far back (no windows there-like NMP side). The balconies were white inside, now they appear green and the middle entry has a wider glass canopy.

**June's Plan 2.2** (May 2.2) seems to have different windows on the retail floor facing Vaughn St. (were 2 panes now some are 3)

**Hotel:**

**June's Plan 2.3 was Plan 3.0 in May** - The white glazing was changed to green diamond shaped. The window shapes were changed in that area from 4 pane to 2 pane. The canopy's are now all cable style black and two signs have been proposed. The updated stair entrance is now green on 2 sides.

**Plan 2.4 in June was Plan 3.3 in May** - The door changed color from beige to orange. The left side of the garage entrance looks louvered instead of concrete rectangles from May.

**June's 2.5 was Plan 2.4 in May** - The windows were 3 pane and are now 2 pane. The top floor had black frames white trim and now they are just black frames. The top floor added some building to where the new railing is.

**2.6 in June was Plan 4.0 in May**- There are now what looks like 2 doors and a window on the 5th floor of the Hotel, facing the NMP, where the new railing is shown.

Hope this helps.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Bratter  
159 McDonough St  
Portsmouth Property Owner