

January 24, 2026

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment,

My name is Bill Arakelian, rear abutter of 21 Elwyn Avenue. I am writing to oppose the variance application seeking relief to demolish the existing detached garage and construct a larger, two-story accessory structure with increased building coverage and expanded setback encroachments.

While I understand the desire to improve an existing property, this application goes well beyond maintaining an existing nonconforming condition and instead proposes a significant intensification of nonconformity. The existing garage already encroaches into the rear and side setbacks; however, the proposal would reduce the rear setback from approximately 11 feet to roughly 5 feet, where 20 feet is required by ordinance. This represents a substantial departure from the zoning standards and cannot reasonably be characterized as “minimal”.

The application also seeks to increase building coverage from an already nonconforming 31.4% to approximately 34.4%, despite a maximum allowance of 25%. The combination of increased footprint, added height, exterior stairway, lighting, and second-floor studio materially increases the mass and scale of the structure in very close proximity to abutting properties.

In addition to privacy impacts, of particular concern is the shadow impact on neighboring properties. Because the proposed structure would be west of my property, shadows cast by a 20-foot-tall building would forever darken my property.

The hardship cited by the applicant appears to be based primarily on personal preferences for a larger garage and a second-floor artist studio, rather than conditions unique to the land itself. The property is already in active and reasonable use as a single-family residence, and zoning relief is not intended to guarantee accessory structures of a particular size or configuration.

I would also note that this property received variance relief as recently as 2020 for expansion of the primary dwelling. That prior approval involved a modest increase largely within the existing footprint. In contrast, the current proposal seeks additional and more impactful relief, further eroding the intent of the setback and building coverage requirements.

Setback standards exist to preserve light, air, privacy, and spatial separation between properties, particularly in neighborhoods with undersized lots. Reducing the rear setback to approximately five feet, especially for a two-story structure, directly undermines these purposes and creates a precedent for continued intensification of nonconformities throughout the neighborhood.

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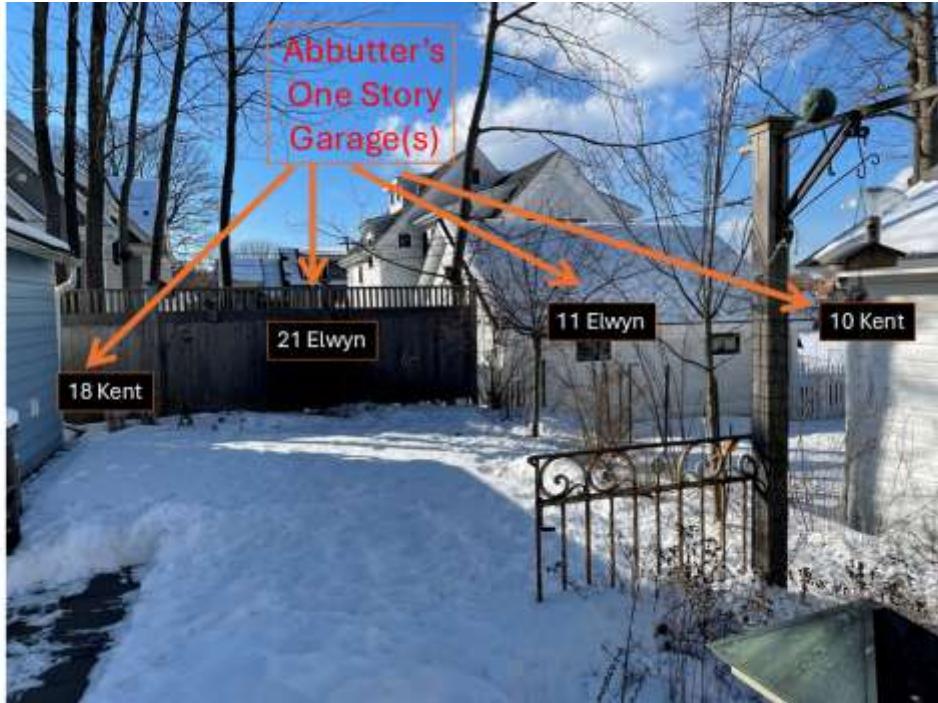
As an abutter, I would be negatively impacted by the cumulative effect of these requested variances, particularly the increased height, mass, and proximity of a two-story accessory structure. For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Board deny the requested variances.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

William Arakelian

Abutter, 18 Kent Street



West view from back yard of 18 Kent Street towards shared lot line with 21 Elwyn. Abutting one story garages are noted. I would point out that the garage at 11 Elwyn did not undergo any sizing changes during major renovations of the residence, due to massing concerns raised by the ZBA at the time.



Proposed Structure at 21 Elwyn as viewed from rear of 18 Kent Street (Scale Unknown)

- *“The Property is naturally buffered from the abutting properties on Kent Street by a dense treeline along the common boundary(ies). The property at 18 Kent Street, which is one of the two abutting properties to the rear, also has a detached garage that encroaches into the rear setback. Accordingly, granting the setback variances will have little impact on the air, light and space of abutters and is in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.”*
 - I would not agree with the interpretation of dense treeline nor the impact on air, light and space.
- Only access to second floor is via the rear staircase. The stairs, landing, glass door eliminate our privacy in the back yard and first floor of our home
- Required lighting will illuminate our back yard and house
- Shadowing introduced by structure will eliminate afternoon sun from the yard and garden.
- Reducing setback from 20 feet to 5 feet will substantially magnify the impact of all of the above

Re: 94 Langdon/98 Cornwall St
Zoning Board of Adjustments
Date: January 27, 2026

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustments,

It is most interesting that the property listed is for 94 Langdon St AND 98 Cornwall St. is ONLY requesting a variance for 10.521 to allow a variance for 88' of frontage where 100' are required. They have failed to include a variance from 10.5A42.40 regarding View Corridors. These View Corridors were established including Cornwall St while it existed as a "paper street".

Please do NOT move this project forward until this zoning ordinance has been addressed as well.

The argument was brought up that Cornwall St is a paper street. It is remarkable that the street address for the proposed project includes 98 Cornwall St. The existing property had a fence facing Cornwall St which by choice but it exited onto Langdon St. The address was not likely used for mail since there has been no box there but the address was never relinquished. It should also be remembered that Cornwall St is plowed by the City of Portsmouth on that end. That end of Cornwall, including its parking spaces, were included in the Portsmouth Pilot Parking Program in Islington Creek. One could argue that it is a paper street by name only but it is similar to Cabot St and Salem St. which dead end at the RR tracks.

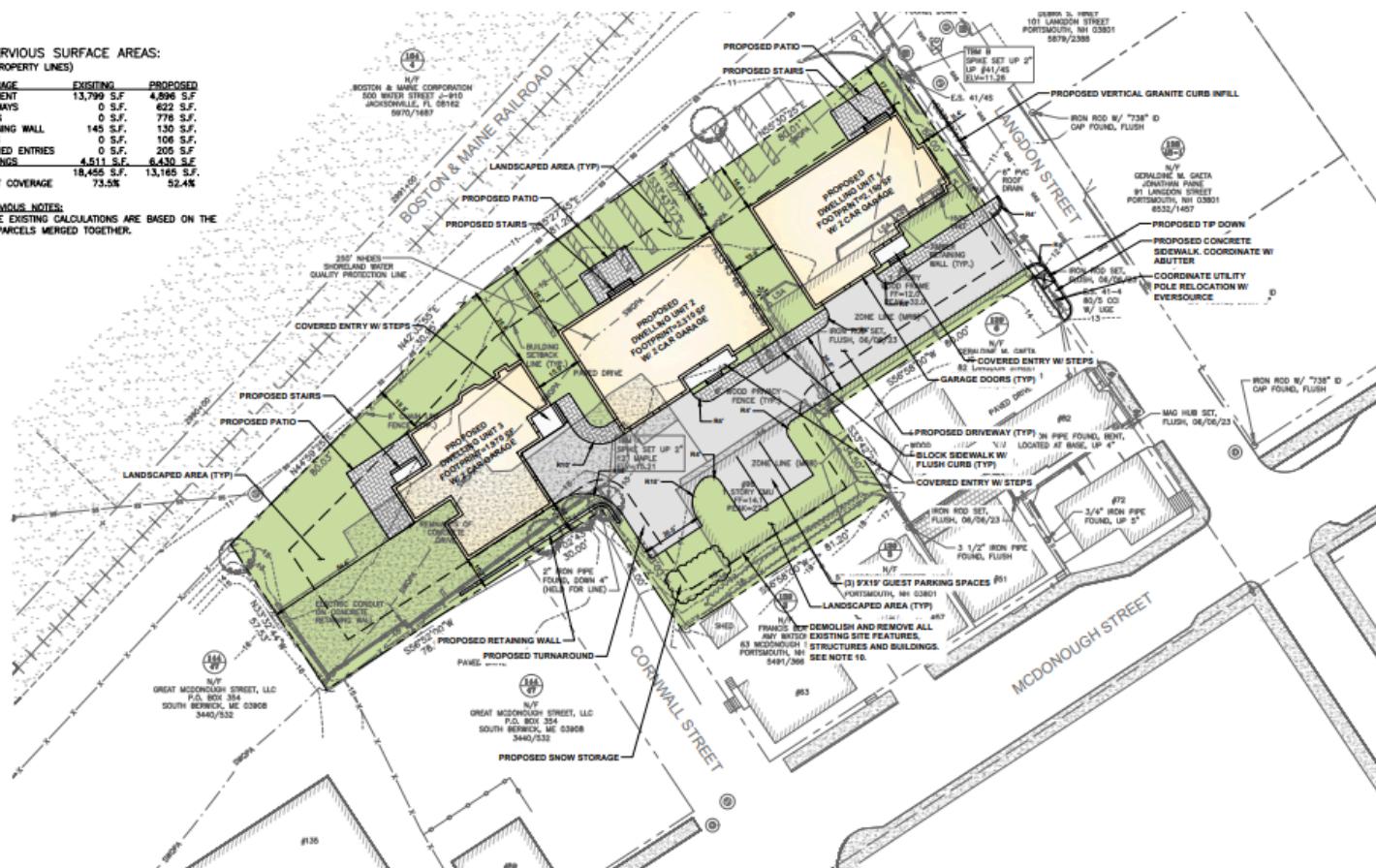


105 Bartlett St was a new build and had to comply with this ordinances. This project is as well.

This property could move the proposed structure to include the View Corridor (see next graphic below), providing more privacy for the end home and thereby making it a more valuable unit. The existing parking lot at 135 McDonough St, of which part seems to be owned by the city, could easily be screened with shrubs or trees. The end home could be allowed to exit onto Cornwall St if desired, making it even more private and valuable.

PREVIOUS SURFACE AREAS: > PROPERTY LINES		
VERGE	EXISTING	PROPOSED
VEMENT	13,796 S.F.	4,896 S.F.
LRKWAYS	0 S.F.	622 S.F.
ROS	0 S.F.	770 S.F.
TANNING WALL	145 S.F.	100 S.F.
DRIVING	0 S.F.	204 S.F.
VERED ENTRIES	0 S.F.	204 S.F.
LDINGS	4,511 S.F.	6,430 S.F.
TAL	18,455 S.F.	13,165 S.F.
LOT COVERAGE	73.5%	52.4%

PREVIOUS NOTES:
THE EXISTING CALCULATIONS ARE BASED ON THE
0 PARCELS MERGED TOGETHER.



Sincerely,
Elizabeth Bratter, Property Owner
159 McDonough St