



Examples of door hoods, bracket ornaments, and denticular details that are indicative of development on Munjoy Hill following the Great Fire of 1866 and give the neighborhood buildings their distinctive character.

The Case for Munjoy Hill

It is critical to create a historic district now to conserve the neighborhood's historic character.

BY JULIE ANN LARRY

What is happening on Munjoy Hill?

For over a year Greater Portland Landmarks has been working with local residents to advocate for a historic district on Munjoy Hill to help manage change and loss of historic character in a neighborhood that is rapidly transforming. Time and again, through the designation process, Portland has successfully balanced the preservation of historic resources with economic growth. With only five properties currently protected by the preservation ordinance, a Munjoy Hill historic district would conserve a neighborhood that has been home to generations of families that helped to shape the city.

In partnership with the City of Portland and the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization, Landmarks helped fund a survey of over 400 buildings that could potentially contribute to a Munjoy Hill Local Historic District. Utilizing this survey, the city's Historic Preservation Program is moving forward with plans to designate a large area of the Hill as a historic district.

Landmarks supports the city's proposal to create a historic district on Munjoy Hill. The resources within the proposed boundary tell the story of the Munjoy Hill neighborhood's development over a broad period of time and retain significant levels of architectural integrity. Over the coming months we'll be part of the ongoing conversation about the formation of an historic district and we hope that you'll join the conversation as well. Landmarks will post updates and meeting dates to our website: www.portlandlandmarks.org/urgent

Why is Munjoy Hill significant?

Munjoy Hill's extant buildings tell the story of three successive waves of development that reflect three major periods in Portland's history. The first wave of residential subdivision on the Hill was due a growing need for worker housing upon the arrival of the railroad in the 1840s and the subsequent expansion of activity on Portland's waterfront; the second wave was caused by the flurry of building activity that occurred following the Great Fire of 1866; and the third wave was spurred by the arrival of European immigrants at the turn of the 20th century.

For the last century Munjoy Hill has been one of the city's most densely populated and ethnically diverse neighborhoods, but it was one of the last neighborhoods on the peninsula to be developed. From the city's founding in the 1630s until the 1840s the Hill was an occasional gathering place and a pasture for cows.

An upsurge in industrial activity along Fore and India Street in the 1840s and 1850s led to a residential boom on the Hill, attracting workers from the nearby Portland Company and Atlantic & St. Lawrence Railroad. Many of the homes built in this era are located on the southwest side of the Hill and were built in the Greek Revival style that predominated during this period.

In 1866 the Great Fire of July 4th and 5th spread from Commercial Street to North Street. It destroyed 1,500 buildings in the city and left over 10,000 residents homeless. Among the buildings to survive the fire are several early homes to the east

of North Street including the Benjamin Noble House (1856) at 65 North Street and the double house of Eliphalet Clark and Moses Gould at 79 North Street (c1847).

Following the Great Fire, the city's need for housing drove development on Munjoy Hill. This development was largely middle-class homes, with a few high style residences, in the Italianate and Second Empire styles. Many gable front dwellings on narrow lots were built in this period of expansion. These dwellings characterize many of the Hill's streetscapes and usually have bracketed cornices, bay windows, and hooded entries.

In the early 19th century the city of Portland started purchasing land along the waterfront, but it wasn't until the late 19th century and the extension of the street car line to Morning Street that lots were developed along the Eastern Promenade.



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Then wealthy local families began to appreciate the Promenade's sweeping views and erected grand homes in the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles opposite the city-owned green space.

Between 1895 and 1915 triple-deckers were built in large numbers on Munjoy Hill. These dense residential building types housed the Hill's increasingly diverse European immigrant population in the first decades of the 20th century.

Why Should We Preserve the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood?

Munjoy Hill's historic buildings are significant features of the neighborhood's streetscapes and help make the area a desirable and attractive place to live, work and play. These buildings tell the story of the neighborhood and the role its residents played in the social and cultural history of Portland. The history embedded in this neighborhood is just as important as the story of Portland's West End or Old Port and just as worthy of our preservation efforts. It is critical to create a historic district now, before more of the Hill's historic identity is lost. ■

Benefits of a Local Historic District

Historic Preservation is about keeping buildings alive, in active use, and relevant to the needs of the community. To best accomplish this, zoning and building regulations need to be flexible and responsive to change even as they try to preserve what is special about each building.

Local districts encourage better quality design. Better design can produce a greater sense of cohesiveness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal all of which are shown to occur more often within designated districts than non-designated ones.

Local districts give communities a voice in their future. By participating in the process, citizens can help direct their communities' path. Making these decisions together in a structured way rather than behind closed doors or without public comment gives everyone involved a sense of empowerment and confidence.

Local districts allow density without demolitions of historic houses. Accessory dwelling units, additions, and new housing units within existing houses, are all ways that a historic district can offer more housing options, without destroying the history, beauty, integrity, and urban tree canopy of these neighborhoods.

Local districts help tell the story of our city in all its complexity and diversity. Historic districts have a reputation of only featuring grand historic homes and affluent residents, but historic districts also celebrate modest communities that have been home to generations of working-class families. The history embedded in these communities is just as important, and just as worthy of our full preservation efforts.

Local districts can protect a property owner's investment. Regulations are intended to prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of historic properties, and thus, the fabric of the historic district that gives properties their value. They offer predictability for residents and for those considering investing in the community.

Local districts do not preclude the use of renewable energy technologies. Portland's Historic Preservation Board reviews the use of renewable-energy technologies on a case by case basis and has approved the use of solar panels in local historic districts.

Reuse of historic buildings typically offers greater environmental savings than demolition and new construction. The 2016 Preservation Green Lab study found that it can take up to 80 years for a new energy efficient building to overcome the climate change impacts created by its construction.